Maerua CAPPARACEAE

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Maerua Forsskål (Fl. Aegypt.-Arab., 104, 1775).
Type: *Maerua crassifolia* Forsskål. — **Distr:** Tropical and S Africa to India. **Etym:** Unknown.

Shrubs or small trees, sometimes with swollen woody underground **R**stock; **L** alternate or in fascicles, simple or palmately divided with 3 leaflets, thin-textured or occasionally leathery to sub-succulent; stipules small, deciduous or sometimes persistent; **Inf** terminal or lateral racemes or panicles, often corymbose, or flowers clustered in the axils of the upper leaves; **Fl** small, actinomorphic, (3- to) 4-merous, hypanthium (shortly) campanulate to slenderly cylindrical, rarely shallowly saucer-like; **Pet** absent or soon deciduous; **St** 6 to numerous, free, on an androgynophore; **Ov** on a long gynophore, globose to slenderly cylindrical, with 4 to many ovules; **Fr** berry-like, globose, ellipsoid or cylindrical, rarely torulose, glabrous or hairy.

A genus of 60 (to 100 according to Stevens 2001+: accessed April 2019) species, predominantly in Africa. Some species are locally used for timber or have edible fruits (e.g. *M. edulis* (Gilg & Gilg-Benedict) DeWolf or *M. crassifolia*

Forsskål). Doubtful succulence probably occurs in a few species in the form of swollen tuberous but predominantly woody rootstocks; detailed anatomical studies that would elucidate the amount of water storage tissue present are lacking, however. Little-expressed leaf succulence is sometimes mentioned for *M. crassifolia*, but the evergreen slightly thickish leaves do not possess a dedicated water storage tissue (Diop & al. 2012) and are probably merely xeromorphic. Taking all evidence together, true and undisputed succulence is not presently known for the genus.

References

- Diop, E. H. M. [& al. 2012], Coundoul, M. & Elie Akpo, L. (2012) Caractéristiques morpho-anatomiques des feuilles de *Maerua crassifolia* Forssk. Sécheresse 23(1): 31-37, ill. <https://doi.org/10.1684/sec.2012.0328>.
- Stevens, P. F. (2001+) Angiosperm Phylogeny Website, Version 14, July 2017 [and more or less continuously updated since]. St. Louis (US): Missouri Botanical Garden. <http://www.mobot.org/MOBOT/research/APweb/>

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