

## **BY SUNDAY NEWS Reporter**

**A** RECENT study shows that people have indigenous knowledge of plants that can use alternative methods to ward off mosquitoes.

The study was published in the 2014 Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine covering 202 respondents from four villages of Bagamoyo District, Coast Region.

It was followed by a participatory rural ap-

praisal with village health workers with the aid of questionnaires where about 40.3 per cent of the participants confirmed they use plants to keep insects at bay including mosquitoes.

“This study aimed at assessing communities’ knowledge, attitudes and practices of using plants as an alternative insect repellants among selected communities in a malaria-prone area in Tanzania,” the report read in part.

A broad profile of plants are used, including mwarobaini (*Azadirachta indica*) (22.5

per cent), mtopetope (*Annona* spp) (20.8 per cent), mchungwa/mlimau (*Citrus* spp) (8.3 per cent), mvumbashi/uvumbati (*Ocimum* spp) (7.4 per cent), mkorosho (*Anacadium occidentale*) (7.1 per cent).

Others are mwembe (5.4 per cent) (*Mangifera indica*), mpera (4.1 per cent) (*Psidium* spp) and maganda ya nazi (4.1 per cent) (*Cocos nucifera*).

The majority of respondents said they collected these plants from the wild (54.2 per cent), farms (28.9 per cent) and/or gardens t

home (6 per cent).

The report cited that the majority use these plants with or without bed-nets or insecticides.

Most respondents, about 90.6 per cent, were aware that mosquitoes transmit malaria while 46.5 per cent of the respondents associated elephantiasis/hydrocele and 24.3 per cent associated yellow fever with mosquitoes.

“Most of the ethnobotanical uses mentioned by the communities were consistent with scientific information gathered from the literature, except for *Psidium guajava*, (apple

guava) which was reported for the first time in repelling insects.,” the report read.

*Psidium guajava* is a fast growing tropical and subtropical species adapted to a wide range of environmental conditions. It is tolerant of shade, a precocious and prolific reproducer with seed dispersal aided by birds and mammals.

It can form dense thickets which displace native vegetation and is reported as an invasive weed in many countries.

The balance between its valuable fruit

production and its invasive potential requires careful monitoring.

The survey indicates a knowledge gap among community members in repelling mosquito using plant and the communities need a basic health education and sensitisation for effective exploitation of this valuable tool for reducing mosquitoes and associated disease burdens.

It suggests that government strengthens botanical pesticides development, registration and regulation of health benefits.