2018 TREES OF THE YEAR

Podocarpus elongatus (Alton) L’Hér. ex Pers.

Family: Podocarpaceae  National tree nr: 35  Common name: Breede River yellowwood

Usually a spreading shrub or small, rounded, evergreen tree up to 8 m high. The bark is smooth, grey to brown, sometimes peeling off in long narrow strips. The leaves are narrowly oblong or oblanceolate with sharp tips, grey-green and with visible white patches (stomatal) on both sides. The leaves are spirally arranged and crowded at the ends of the branchlets. The flowering and fruiting structures, called cones, are male and female, are borne on separate trees (dioecious). The male cones are about 2.5 - 3.5 mm and borne in clusters in the space between the base of the leaves and the declivity clusters. The female cones are borne on a single pointed reddish tip called the receptacle, about 10 - 15 mm, which turns from green to red, appearing from January to May. One or two seeds are produced on each receptacle. The seeds are broadly elliptical, brown-blue-green and about 0.9 - 2.9 mm long. They are eaten by small mammals and birds.

Afrocarpus falcatus (Thunb.) C.N.Page*

Family: Podocarpaceae  National tree nr: 36  Common name: Cubemiba yellowwood

Medium to large tree, up to 45 m high. The trunk peels off in flakes in round or rectangular patches. The leaves are spirally arranged, very narrow, elongated, somewhat sickle-shaped, twisted at the base, with sharp or rounded tips, blue to yellow-green, about 30 - 50 x 3 - 5 mm and with visible white patches (stomatal) on both sides. The male and female flowering and fruiting structures (cones), occur on different trees. The male cones are borne singly or in small groups in the space between the base of the leaves and the declivity clusters. They are brown, occurring from September to May and are about 10 x 3 mm. The female cones are borne singly but not on a swelling tip. The seeds are globular, yellow, about 15 mm in diameter, appearing from December to January. The fruits are eaten by birds, bushbucks and fruit-eating birds.

Podocarpus henkelii Stapf ex Dallim. & A.B.Jacks.

Family: Podocarpaceae  National tree nr: 37  Common name: forest yellowwood

Evergreen medium to large tree, up to 30 m high. The trunk is large and can reach over 5 m in diameter. The bark is dark grey to pale grey-brown, peeling off in long strips. The leaves are spirally arranged and crowded at the ends of the branchlets, drooping, bright green to bluish green and glossy (shiny). Long and slender, very narrowly egg-shaped to oval (Cordata-elliptica). Spathing from about the middle to the sharp tip, 60 - 300 x 10 - 13 mm and with visible white patches (stomatal) on the lower surface only. The male flowering structures, called cones, are borne singly or in small clusters, about 3 - 4 mm and pink. The female flowering and fruiting structures, called cones, are borne singly on a greenish tip (receptacle). The seed is large, round, about 25 mm in diameter, olive green to yellowish green when ripe.

Podocarpus latifolius (Thunb.) R.Br. ex Mirb.

Family: Podocarpaceae  National tree nr: 38  Common name: red yellowwood

South Africa’s national tree. Medium to large tree, up to 30 m high. The wood is yellow. The bark is greyish, peeling off in long strips. The leaves are spirally arranged and often crowded at the ends of the branchlets, held horizontally, narrowly elliptic, 60 - 50 x 2 - 3 mm, glossy dark green but dull, brown in some areas and with visible white patches (stomatal) on the lower surface only. Rarely few on the upper surface. The flowering structures (cones) are borne in the space between the base of the leaves and the declivity clusters. Male cones are borne singly or in small groups, up to 30 - 55 mm, appearing from July to September. The female cones are borne singly on a thickened, fleshy, bright red, pink or reddish purple tip called the receptacle, about 10 mm long, from December to February. One or sometimes two seeds are produced. They are round, about 4 mm in diameter, blue-green, sordid tinged purplish. The sweet, ripe berry-like receptacles are edible.

Boscia albitrunca (Burch.) Gilg & Gilg.-Ben.

Family: Clusiaceae  National tree nr: 322  Common name: shepherd’s tree

Small to medium tree, up to 7 m high. The tree is stumpy with a rounded crown. The bark is smooth and white or whitish grey. The leaves are grey green and leathery, arranged in clusters, very narrowly oval-shaped egg-shaped-elliptic, 20 - 50 x 6 - 15 mm and have rounded tips. The flowers are small, yellowish green, scented aromatally and borne in clusters in the space between the base of the leaves and the declivity clusters. Flowers are borne from July to November. The fruit is a berry, yellowish and pink, globular ball-shaped, and 50 mm in diameter. Fruiting time: October to December. It is a food source for various mammals such as giraffe, genet and kudu, and also for birds. The roots of Boscia albitrunca are used as a substitute for coffee or chicory.

Attracts birds  Aromatic  Attaches roots
Attracts Insects  Edible  Noduled
Moderate water  Drought resistant  Rooted
Snags full sun  Frost resistant  Protected
Shadeable  Evergreen  Deciduous

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*Synonym - Podocarpus floribundus Thunb.-R.Br. ex Mirb.
Boscia albitrunca

Common names: sheathleaf tree, white leaf (Afrikaans), "wesselblad" (Zulu), "sotho" (Xhosa), "timbello" (Ndebele), "wezibule" (isiZulu)

Distribution and habitat: The sheathleaf tree is widely distributed in the drier parts of southern Africa, from Namibia in the west, Swaziland, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo in the east. It is found from South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.


Ecology and uses:
- It is a valuable protector of agriculture, providing shade and shelter for crops and livestock.
- It is used as a windbreak and for soil conservation.
- It is also used as a medicinal plant, providing remedies for various ailments.
- It is used in traditional medicine for its antiseptic properties.
- It is used as a ornamental plant in gardens and parks.
- It is used to make paper and beer, also used as a substrate for production of manure.
- It is used as a food source for various animals, including bees and birds.
- It is used to make furniture, such as chairs and tables.

As a garden tree: The sheathleaf tree is a fast-growing, hardy, and drought-resistant tree. It is a good choice for urban areas, providing shade and beauty to the landscape.

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Forests:
- Are the lungs of the earth and add 45% to the atmosphere.
- Cover 38% of the total land area.
- Provide shelter to people and habitats for biodiversity.
- Are home to 68% of our terrestrial biodiversity.
- Are home to 30 million people around the world.
- Play a vital role in maintaining a stable global climate and environment.
- Are a source of food, medicines and clean water. Are used for production of wood and non-wood products.

Let’s conserve and be aware of the importance of forests!