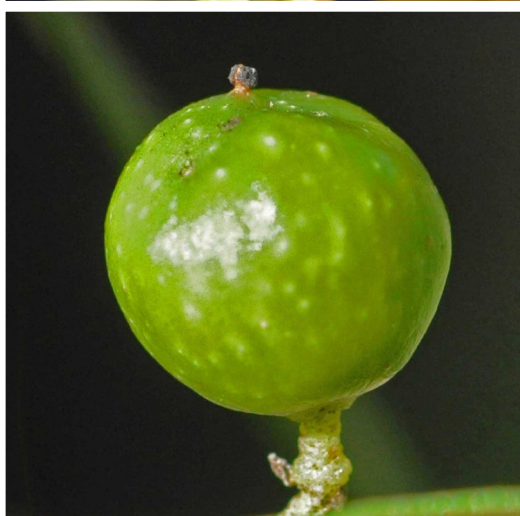


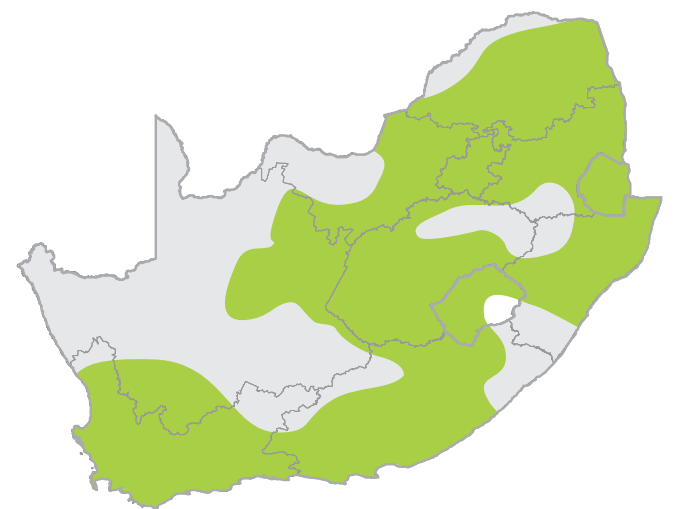
Olea europaea subsp. *cuspidata*

Family: Oleaceae
Common names: wild olive (English); *olienhout* (Afrikaans); *mohlware* (Sepedi); *motlhware* (Setswana); *mutlhwari* (Tshivenda); *umnquma* (isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati).

National
tree number:
617



The wild olive grows up to 10 m (occasionally up to 18 m) high, with a dense, spreading crown. In moist, sheltered kloofs, it grows tall and form a crown shape, but in unfavourable conditions, it is reduced to a shrub. The trunk gets twisted in dry conditions. The bark is rough, grey to brown and gets flaky with age. Leaves are glossy grey green to dark green above and grey underneath. Flowers are small, white to greenish, and have a sweet smell. Fruits are small and fleshy, glossy green in colour, turning a reddish-black or dark brown when ripe.



Text: Robetta Kandawire and Mashiane Mothogoane. Maps: Hester Steyn. Design and editing: SANBI Graphics & Editing. Photographs: David Beckings (tree, fruit, flowers and bark) and Krzysztof Ziarnek (leaves).

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(Wall. & G.Don) Cif.

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General appearance

The wild olive is an evergreen tree that grows up to 10 m (occasionally up to 18 m) high, with a dense, spreading crown. In moist, sheltered kloofs, it grows tall and form a crown shape, but in unfavourable conditions, it is reduced to a shrub. The trunk gets twisted in dry conditions. The bark is rough, grey to brown and gets flaky with age. Leaves are glossy grey-green to dark green above and grey underneath. Flowers are small, white to greenish, and have a sweet smell. Fruits are small and fleshy, glossy green in colour, turning a reddish-black or dark brown when ripe. Fruits appear from February to September.

Distribution and habitat

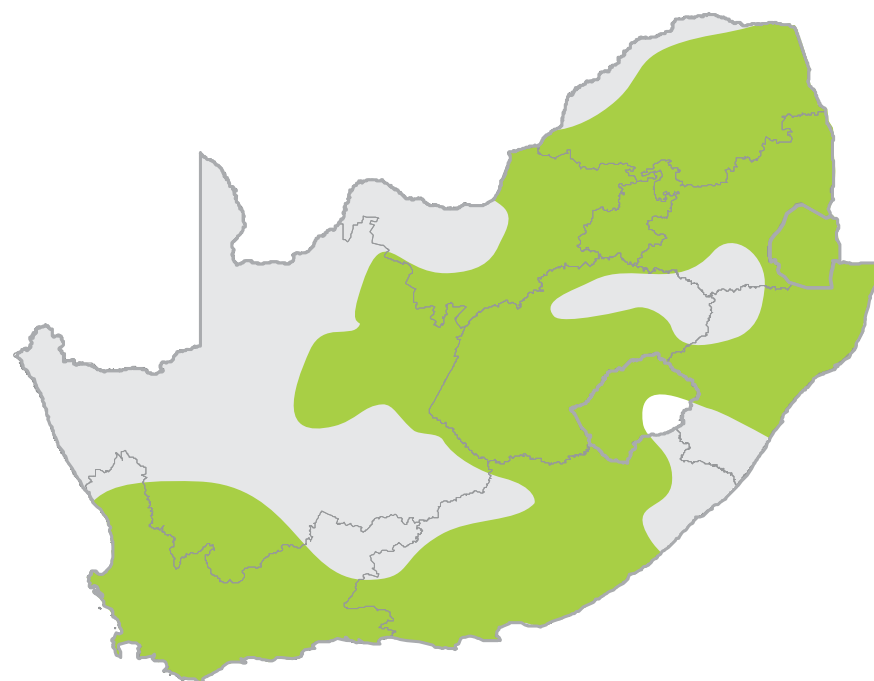
Wild olive is widely distributed in South Africa. It also occurs in other southern, central and east African countries, including Lesotho, Eswatini, Namibia, Angola, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Mozambique through to Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, as well as middle eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. It occurs in various habitats including rocky mountain slopes, riverbanks, forest, bushveld and grasslands. The tree can grow in extreme weather conditions.

Meaning of name

The genus name, *Olea*, refers to 'olive'; the specific epithet, *europaea*, means 'from Europe' and the subspecific epithet, *cuspidata*, is from the Latin adjective *cuspidatus* meaning 'pointed'.

Ecology and uses

- Dried and powdered leaves are applied on fresh wounds as a styptic (helps to stop bleeding).
- A leave and fruit decoction is used to lower blood pressure by Xhosa people in the Eastern Cape.
- The leaves can be used as a substitute for tea.
- Leaves are browsed by game and livestock.



- A leave infusion is used as eye lotion and a gargle to relieve sore throats.
- A bark, root and leave infusion is used to relieve colic.
- Boiled bark is used to treat tapeworms and itchy rashes.
- Boiled ripe fruits are used to treat cough.
- A fruit infusion is used to treat diarrhoea.
- Sap from the bark is used for bone fractures.
- The wood is hard, dense and durable, it is used to manufacture furniture, ornaments, fence posts and spoons.
- Flowers are pollinated by bees.

As a garden tree

The wild olives make a good shade or screen plant in gardens and serve as an ornamental tree. It is a slow growing plant. Do not plant too close to walls or buildings as its roots penetrate deep into the soil up to 7 m deep. The plant can be propagated from both seed and hardwood cuttings. It can tolerate high temperatures but must be protected from frost when young for the first few winter seasons.