

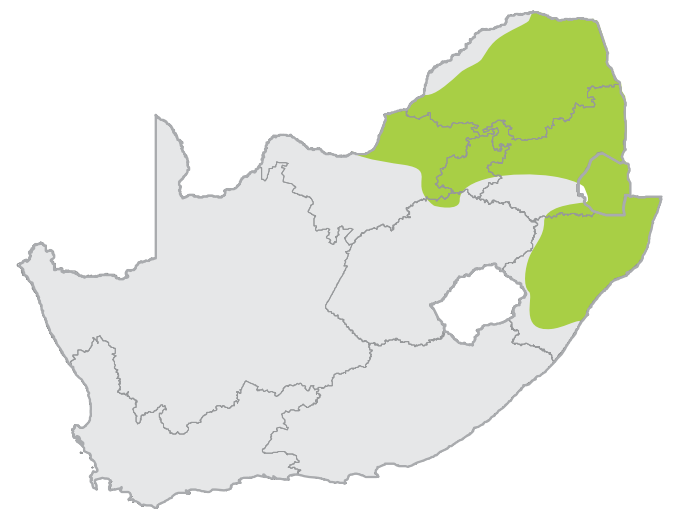
Phyllogeiton zeyheri

Family: Rhamnaceae
Common names: red ivory, purple ivory, pink ivory (English); *rooi-ivoor*, *rooihout* (Afrikaans); *monee* (Sepedi); *moye* (Setswana); *umneyi* (siSwati); *munia-niane*, *muniane* (Tshivenda); *umnini* (isiXhosa); *xininyani* (Xitsonga); *umncaka*, *umnini* (isiZulu).

National
tree number:
450



Red ivory grows up to 12 m high with a spreading crown. Leaves are green, maturing into dark bluish green, turning yellow in autumn in colder areas. The bark is smooth grey to light brown, turning darker and flaking longitudinally with age. Young branches are smooth, red to purple with corky dots. The sapwood is yellowish with a hard and heavy heartwood. Flowers are small, pale, yellow-green and star shaped, growing in axillary clusters between stem and leaves. The flowers are followed by small, sweet, fleshy fruit, which turns yellow to red brown when ripe.



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General appearance

Red ivory is an evergreen to semi-deciduous tree that grows up to 12 m high with a spreading crown. Leaves are green, maturing into dark bluish green, turning yellow in autumn in colder areas. The bark is smooth grey to light brown, turning darker and flaking longitudinally with age. Young branches are smooth, red to purple with corky dots. The sapwood is yellowish with a hard and heavy heartwood. Flowers are small, pale, yellow-green and star shaped, growing in axillary clusters between stem and leaves. The flowers appear between August and January and are followed by small, sweet, fleshy fruit, which turns yellow to red-brown when ripe. Fruit appears from January to May.

Distribution and habitat

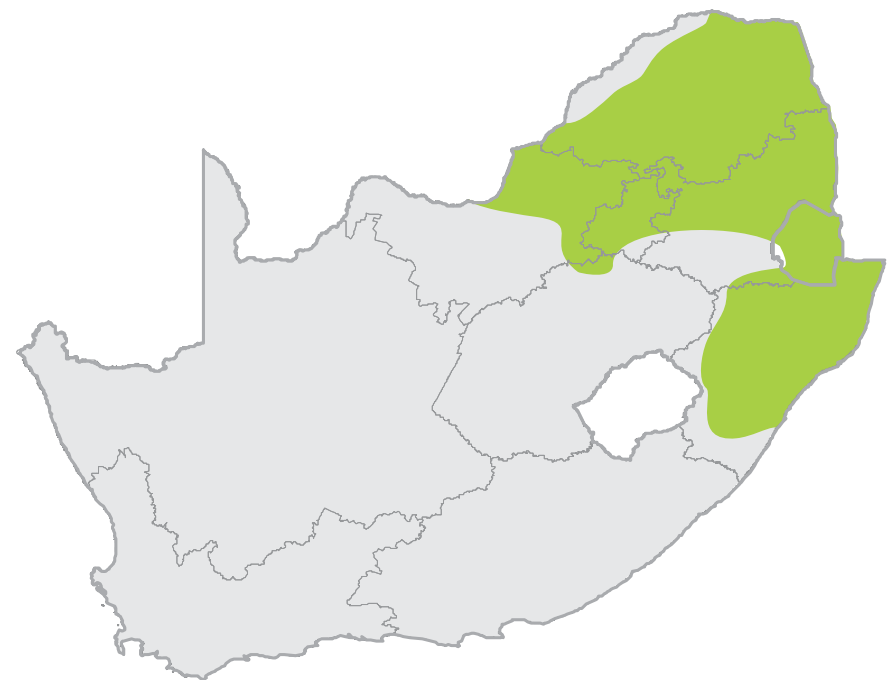
The red ivory naturally occurs in low to medium altitudes. It is found in various habitats including bushveld, rocky hillsides, stony ridges, bushy streambanks, dry forest and near old termite mounds. They form dense groups with other trees on south and east facing slopes. The tree is endemic to southern Africa and is found in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, Northwest and Limpopo.

Meaning of name

The genus name, *Phyllogeiton*, was derived from two Greek words *phyllon* meaning 'leaf' and *geiton* meaning 'neighbour', referring to the leaves of plants in this genus clustering near to each other along the stems. The specific epithet, *zeyheri*, honours German-born botanist Karl (sometimes Carl) L.P. Zeyher (1799–1858) for his fundamental work on *Flora Capensis*. The common names red or pink ivory is derived from the colour of the hard wood.

Ecology and uses

- The tree attracts fruit-eating birds such as Dark-capped bulbul, Crested Barbet and Black-collared Barbet. The birds distribute the seeds.
- The bark is eaten by porcupines.
- Wood is used in furniture manufacturing and for timber, fence poles, making of wooden bows, walking sticks and knife handles.



dles. In KwaZulu-Natal the tree is known as the 'royal tree' as only chiefs were allowed to have knobkieries made from the wood.

- Powdered bark is used to cure headaches when smoked.
- The leaves are browsed by giraffes and antelopes.
- Fruits are eaten by both humans and animals like baboons, monkeys and bush babies (galagos).
- The fruits are sold by locals on the streets in Venda, Limpopo.
- Both leaves and fruits are eaten by impala and nyala.
- Dye is extracted from the bark.
- Sun-dried fruits are used as sugar substitute in porridge.

As a garden tree

Red ivory is an attractive small tree and makes a good garden tree. It also does well in pots and as bonsai subjects. It is easily propagated from seeds. The seeds should first be cleaned by removing the pulp and be planted in seedling trays filled with river sand or a mixture of compost and river sand. Cover it with a thin layer of sand and keep moist. Germination takes 5–9 days. Transplant seedlings into pots or nursery bags after they reach the two-leaf stage. The plant is waterwise and sensitive to frost; when young protect it from frost.