



*Join us in celebrating the beauty and importance of trees,
particularly our beautiful indigenous tree species.*

South Africa is home to over 1,700 indigenous species of trees and shrubs.

To protect these vital species, more than 70 trees and groups of trees have been designated as national "Champion Trees" by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment. This designation grants them full protection under the National Forests Act of 1998.

Under this protection, no trees of the listed species can be cut, disturbed, or damaged. Additionally, their products cannot be owned, transported, exported, or sold without a license. The protection extends to all trees of the species once one is listed as a Champion.

Champion Tree coordinator Izak van der Merwe explains, "The aim of listing certain species as protected is not to prohibit their use but to ensure their sustainable management through licensing controls."

Notable Champion Trees include two impressive Australian Moreton Bay fig trees (*Ficus macrophylla*). One is situated on the University of Cape Town campus, while the other is located in the Pretoria Zoological Gardens. Both trees have crown diameters exceeding 40 meters and trunk circumferences of over 16 and 9 meters, respectively.

In the Goudveld Forest near Knysna in the Western Cape, a recently designated Champion Tree was renamed the Dalene Matthee Big Tree in honor of the author known for her historical novels about life in the 19th-century forests. Formerly known as Krisjan se Nek Big Tree, this Outeniqua yellowwood (*Podocarpus falcatus*) is nearly 900 years old and stands 40 meters tall.



The Wonderboom Wild Fig tree (*Ficus salicifolia*) in Pretoria, which is 1,000 years old, has the largest crown of any Champion Tree, with a diameter of 61 meters. In Limpopo, the Sagole baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*) is the largest indigenous tree in South Africa, with a trunk circumference exceeding 33 meters.



The Twin Giants of Woodbush State Forest in Magoebaskloof, Limpopo, are the tallest *Saligna* blue gum trees (*Eucalyptus saligna*) and were measured by professional tree climbers in 2008.

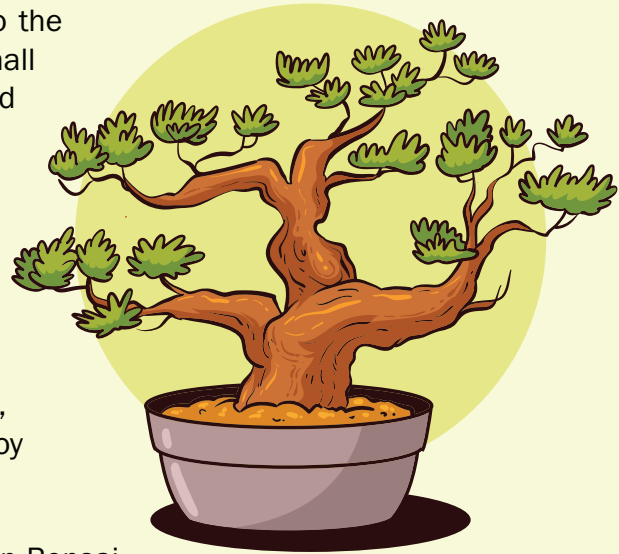


branching out to bonsai a potted plant (such as a tree) dwarfed (as by pruning) and trained to an artistic shape.

Before 1965, bonsai in South Africa was primarily a niche hobby practiced by a few dedicated enthusiasts with limited access to the literature available today. It wasn't until around 1979 that a small group of early pioneers began to establish workshops and societies, sparking a surge of interest and laying the foundation for bonsai to be recognized as a legitimate art form in the country.

In the span of fifty years, South African bonsai has earned its place among the best in the world. Today, many local artists have trees that rival those of international masters. High-quality bonsai exhibitions are now a regular feature in cities across South Africa, offering both fellow artists and the public an opportunity to enjoy and appreciate this exquisite art form.

Want to learn more about the hobby? Then visit the South African Bonsai Association www.saba.org.za



can you believe it?

The baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*), an iconic symbol of Africa, has long held significant traditional importance. Kings and elders would conduct their meetings exclusively beneath its branches, believing that the tree's spirit would offer guidance and wisdom in their decision-making process.



Upside-Down Appearance: The baobab's branches, resembling roots reaching towards the sky, have earned it the moniker "upside-down tree."



Water Storage Champions:

A single baobab tree can store up to 4,500 liters of water in its trunk, a remarkable adaptation for survival in dry environments.



Superfood Fruit: The baobab fruit is packed with nutrients, boasting six times more vitamin C than an orange, twice as much calcium as a glass of milk, and a wealth of antioxidants.



Longevity: Baobabs are among the longest-living trees on Earth, with some estimated to be over 6,000 years old.



some of our favourite South African indigenous trees

Bladdernut or **Swartbas** (*Diospyros whyteana*): This tree has a tidy growth habit, glossy dark green leaves, and small white bell-shaped flowers in spring. Its fruit, enclosed in papery cases, attracts birds. It thrives in semi-shade or full sun, making it a great option for smaller gardens. It can also be cultivated as a shrub or bonsai.



Fever Tree (*Vachellia xanthophloea*): A fast-growing indigenous tree, the Fever Tree can reach 12–15 meters in height with an 8–10 meter spread, making it well-suited for spacious gardens. Its smooth, bright yellow-green bark is complemented by yellow, fluffy blossoms that attract butterflies, while birds often nest in its branches.

Fuchsia (*Halleria lucida*): As an attractive feature tree, the Fuchsia reaches a height and spread of 5 meters. Its orange-red flowers, which bloom on the older wood of the main trunk and larger branches, are a favorite among sunbirds and bees.

Kei Apple (*Dovyalis caffra*): This small, evergreen indigenous tree features glossy green leaves and long, sharp thorns, making it an ideal choice for secure boundary walls. Planting both male and female Kei Apples in your garden will reward you with bright yellow fruit in February. The fruit is not only delicious but also visually appealing.

Tree Wisteria (*Bolusanthus speciosus*): Known for its beauty, the Tree Wisteria is one of the most stunning spring-flowering trees. It thrives in a sunny location with well-draining soil and can reach heights of up to 7 meters. During spring and summer, it produces charming pea-shaped mauve flowers.

on the lighter side...



How did the tree get a new job?

She had the right qua-leaf-ications.



What's a tree's favourite song in autumn?

"Don't Stop Be-Leafin'."



What is it called when a tree takes some time off?

Paid leaf.

*Saving Lives,
Protecting the Environment
and Restoring Dignity*