SANBI
Biodiversity for Life

TREES OF THE YEAR 2012

Syzygium cordatum



Tree no.: 555. **Family**: Myrtaceae
Common names: waterberry, waterwood, watertree

Dense spreading crown. Found along stream banks, fountains or shallow underground water. Leaves leathery, bluish green to dark green above & paler below. Sweetly scented flowers attract insects. Fruit eaten by animals & birds that act as dispersal agents for seeds. Fruit made into alcoholic drink & purple dye. Bark provides reddish brown dye for textiles. Wood used for boat-building, furniture & beams. Tree fairly fire-resistant.

Protorhus longifolia



Tree no.: 364. **Family**: Anacardiaceae
Common names: red-beech, purple-currant, red cape-beech

Medium-sized with rounded crown. Quick growing, easily grown from fresh seed. Found in coastal & montane forest, on rocky outcrops & in riverine vegetation. Leaves simple, dark green above, paler below, with conspicuous parallel veins. Bark exudes sticky gum. Flowers in greenish white panicles, male & female plants separate. Fleshy fruit single-seeded, purple when ripe; eaten by birds & animals. Heartwood dark brown. Poisonous bark causes paralysis.

Bruguiera gymnorrhiza



Tree no.: 527. **Family**: Rhizophoraceae
Common names: black mangrove, cigar mangrove

Slow growing mangrove tree, aerial breathing roots. Leaves opposite, crowded at branch ends. Nectar rich flowers borne near stem ends, calyx yellowish green to reddish; petals creamy white turning brown. Pollen triggered by visiting insects & birds. Fruit single-seeded berry, leathery green & cigar-shaped. Seedling germinates while on tree, drops & floats. Hard red wood. Bark used for tanning & to preserve fishing nets. Used to stabilise dunes. Occurs on seaward side of estuaries.

TREES AND FORESTS:

- Are the lungs of the earth and add O_2 to the atmosphere.
- Cover 31% of the total earth land area.
- Provide shelter to people and habitats to biodiversity.
- Are home to 80% of our terrestrial biodiversity.
- Are home to 300 million people around the world.
- Play a vital role in maintaining a stable global climate and environment.
- Are a source of food, medicine and clean water.
- Are used for production of wood and non-wood products.

Let's conserve, celebrate and become aware of the importance of trees this year!

SYMBOL KEY

- Attracts birds
- Attracts insects
- Half frost-hardy
- Frost-resistant
- Frost-tender
- Useful wood
- Edible
- Evergreen
- Requires full sun
- Requires lots of water
- Moderate water
- Medicinal use
- Poisonous
- Protected

For more information on the trees of the year, visit www.plantzafrica.com

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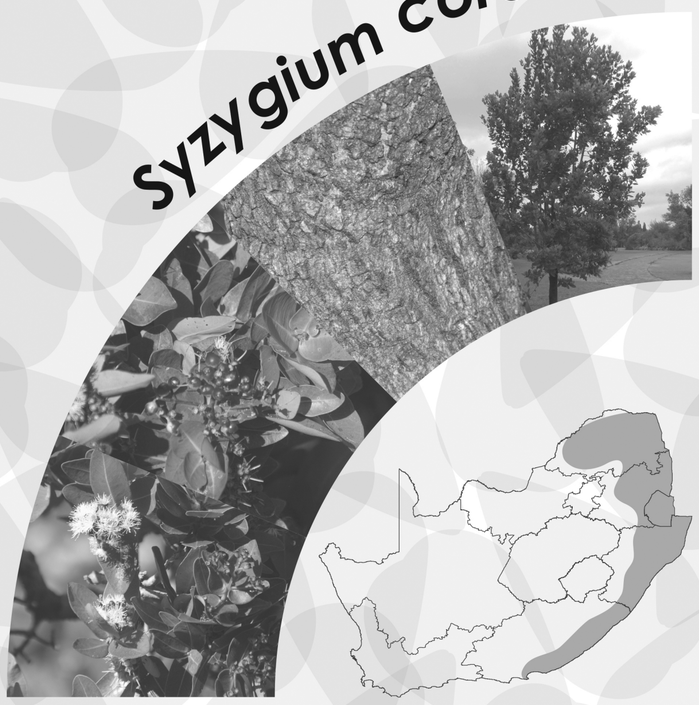
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Syzygium cordatum



National tree number: 555. **Family**: Myrtaceae

Common names: waterberry, waterwood, watertree (English); waterbessie, waterhout (Afrikaans); wasserbeerenbaum (German/Deutsch); ganumkela, mutoya (Lozi/Silozi); imiswi, umdoni (isiNdebele); montlho, monhlo, mutlu (Sepedi); hute (fruit), muisu mukute, mukute-shenje, muwototo, shenje- (fruit) (Shona/ChiShona); umncozi (isiSwati); munonyamansi, mumonyanansi (Tonga/Chitonga); gihlu (Tshwa/Xitshwa); muthwa, curre, muhlu, muhlwa, mungho, nqozi (Xitsonga); kowa, mokowa (Setswana); umswi, umdoni, umjoni (isiXhosa); umdoni (isiZulu).

General appearance
- Evergreen tree, up to 18 m tall with a dense, spreading crown.
- Bark dark brown and rough.
- Young branchlets quadrangular with acute angles or slightly winged. Leaves grow near ends of branches, opposite, smooth, leathery, bluish green to dark green above and paler below; young leaves reddish. Crushed leaves smell like eucalypt oil.
- Flowers are sweetly scented and produce lots of nectar attracting bees and insects.
- Flowers borne in branched inflorescences with numerous fluffy stamens.
- Flowers from August to November.
- Fruits are oval berries, red to dark purple when ripe.

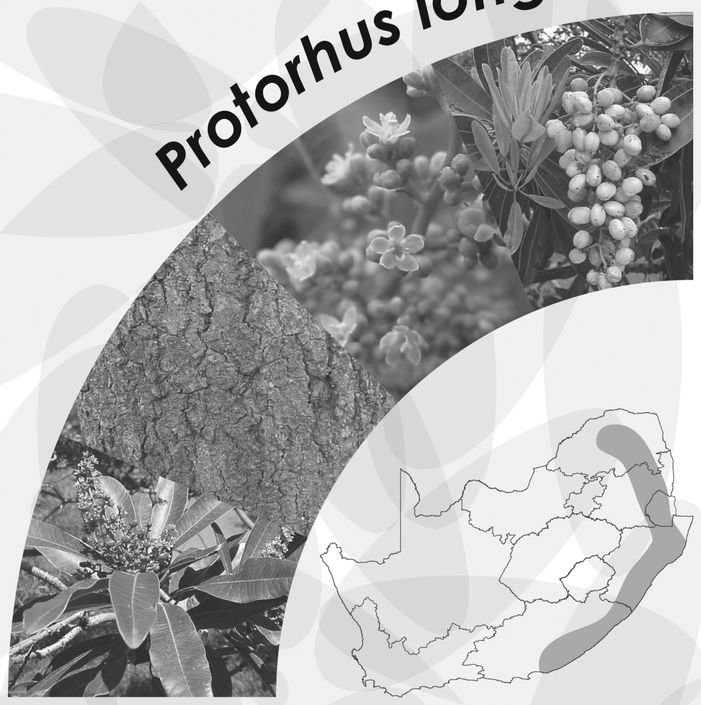
Where it occurs
- Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, northern South Africa and Swaziland, northern Botswana, Zimbabwe and north to tropical Africa.
- Along stream banks, fountains or shallow underground water.

Meaning of the name
Syzygium—Greek word meaning 'coupled' in illusion of the paired leaves and branches.
cordatum—refers to the heart-shaped base of the leaves.

Ecology and uses
- Preferred nesting site of the woolly-necked stork *(Ciconia episcopus)*.
- Foliage is eaten by kudu and birds such as the crowned hornbill feed off the large hairy caterpillars that sometimes infest the tree.
- Fleshy fruits are eaten by various animals, such as monkeys and bushbabies and birds. The berries are used to make an alcoholic drink and a purple dye. Fruits are also used medicinally and magically.
- Bark provides a reddish brown dye for textiles.
- Wood used for boat-building, furniture and beams.
- Powdered bark used as a fish poison.
- In central Africa, bark is used to treat wounds and headaches; leaves are used to treat stomach ailments such as diarrhoea, colds and fever.

As a garden tree
- Excellent evergreen garden tree; with its rounded canopy will provide shade for a garden.
- Grows well in full sun near water or any damp area; it is a water-loving tree.
- Grows in damp, well drained soil or sand; roots are aggressive.
- Seeds germinate in two to three weeks.
- Fairly tolerant of frost and is fire-resistant.

Protorhus longifolia



National tree number: 364. **Family**: Anacardiaceae

Common names: red-beech, purple-currant, red cape-beech (English); rooiboekenhout, harpuisboom, rooimelkhout (Afrikaans); rotes buchenholz (German/Deutsch); imfuce, indiyaza (isiSwati); umhluthi, ikhubalo, isifuce, umkomiso, uzintlwa (isiXhosa); umhlangothi, isifice, umhluthi (isiZulu).

General appearance
- Excellent evergreen medium-sized tree.
- Leaves are simple, dark green above and paler below, with conspicuous parallel veins; nearly always with scattered red, orange or yellow leaves on trees.
- Bark exudes a sticky gum.
- Flowers in greenish white panicles, male and female plants separate.
- Flowers from July to October.
- Fruit single-seeded, fleshy, compressed drupe turning purple when ripe.

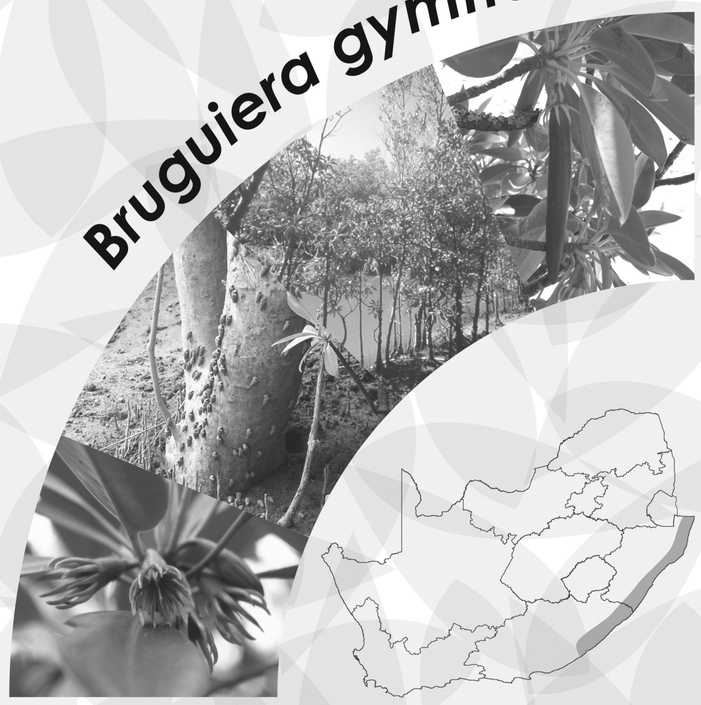
Where it occurs
- Eastern Cape to Limpopo.
- Coastal and montane forest, on rocky outcrops and in riverine vegetation.

Meaning of the name
Protorhus—'protos' means first, 'rhous' means red; there are often red leaves on the tree.
longifolia—refers to the long shape of the leaves.

Ecology and uses
- Leaves browsed by black rhino.
- The bark exudes a sticky gum which was used to stick the blade into the shaft when making assegais.
- The heartwood is dark brown and suitable for furniture.
- Sticky sap is used to remove hair.
- Fruit eaten by birds and animals, especially monkeys.
- Powdered bark is poisonous and causes paralysis.

As a garden tree
- Excellent evergreen garden tree, up to 15 m tall, with a dark, rounded crown.
- Quick growing and easily grown from fresh seed.
- Occasional bright red leaves make this an attractive garden specimen.

Bruguiera gymnorrhiza



National tree number: 527. **Family**: Rhizophoraceae

Common names: black mangrove, cigar mangrove, cigartree (English); swartwortel boom (Afrikaans); chincha, nkandaia, setaca (Ronga/Xironga); isikhangathi, umhluma (isiXhosa); isihlobane, isikhangazi (isiZulu).

General appearance
- Evergreen small to medium-sized tree, with knee-like aerial breathing roots.
- Leaves opposite, crowded at ends of branches, glossy apple green when young.
- Flowers solitary, borne toward ends of stems, petals creamy-white turning brown.
- Flowers contain lots of nectar.
- Pollen is released explosively, triggered by the touch of a visiting insect or bird.
- Fruit a single-seeded berry, leathery green, up to 350 mm long, cigar-shaped.
- Seedling germinates while the fruit is on the tree, drops and floats.
- It is a protected tree.

Where it occurs
- Along the eastern coast of Africa.
- North of East London in the Eastern Cape to Somalia, Madagascar and the Indian Ocean Islands; the south Asian coast from Iran to China.
- Grows along the seaward side of tidal estuaries and lagoons in muddy, water-logged and frost-free areas.

Meaning of the name
Bruguiera—commemorates Jean Gillaume Bruguiere(s) (1750–1798), a botanical artist and plant collector.
gymnorrhiza—naked roots, refers to the knee-roots that project above the mud of the swamp.

Ecology and uses
- Fallen leaves eaten by mangrove crabs (*Sesarma* spp.).
- Wood hard, red; used for building material, constructing fish kraals and for fuel.
- Bark used for tanning and to preserve fishing nets.
- Used to stabilise dunes.

As a garden tree
- Very attractive conical tree, with gnarled and lumpy trunk.
- Grows very slowly, developing a single pair of leaves per year.
- Fruit is cigar-shaped, grows up to 110 mm before falling off the tree. Seedling germinates while the fruit is on the tree.
- Seedlings develop roots within hours of touching the mud, producing the first leaves soon afterwards.
- Will only grow in frost-free, muddy and water-logged areas.

Brief History of Arbour Day in South Africa

In South Africa, Arbour Day was first celebrated in 1983. The event captured the imagination of people who recognised the need for raising awareness of the value of trees in our society. As sources of building material, food, medicine, and simple scenic beauty, trees play a vital role in the health and well-being of our communities. Collective enthusiasm for the importance of this issue in South Africa inspired the national government, in 1999, to extend the celebration of Arbour Day to National Arbour Week. From 1 to 7 September every year, schools, businesses and organisations are encouraged to participate in community 'greening' events to improve the health and beauty of the local environment and propose a green future for South Africa.

For more information, go to www.plantzafrica.com/miscell/arborweek.htm