2016 TREES OF THE YEAR




Medium to large tree, up to 18 m high, with leafy, rounded to spreading crown. Exudes milky latex when cut. Main stem thick, often with grooves; growing in soil or on other trees and strangling them. Bark grey, smooth, sometimes with aerial roots. Branchlets smooth or hairy. Leaves spirally arranged or in groups at the same level on branches, held erect, leathery; elliptic to narrowly upside down egg-shaped and slightly wider above the middle (45–120 × 17–60 mm); mid- to dark green and sub-glossy above, paler below, usually without hairs throughout, rarely finely hairy; leaf tip rounded to pointed; leaf base rounded or narrowing towards leaf stalk which is 7–48 mm long. Fruits round, 10–20 mm broad, usually hairy, green; ripening pink or yellowish; sitting on a thick saucer-shaped plate; borne singly or in pairs in angle between leaf and stem or just below the leaves, with or without a short stalk (up to 7 mm long). Edible fruits (figs).

National tree number: 48
Family: Moraceae
Common names: common wild fig, strangler fig

Ficus burkei (Miq.) Miq.



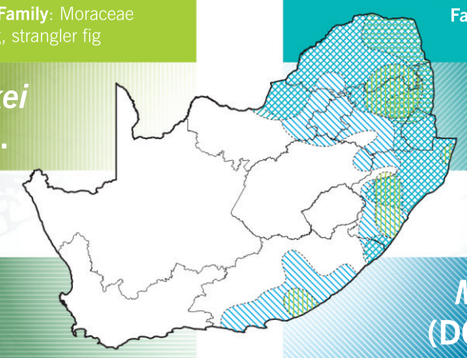




Ficus petersii Warb.

National tree number: 48.1
Family: Moraceae
Common names: Peter's fig

Medium to large tree, up to 20 m high, and ± 15 m wide with rounded crown. Exudes milky latex when cut. Main stem straight; growing on other plants at first (rarely a rock-splitter) or free-standing. Bark pale grey, smooth, becoming darker and rougher with age; young branches often with an orange tinge. Branchlets and twigs greyish and finely hairy. Leaves spirally arranged, in groups towards the ends of the branches; elongated and wider above the middle to upside down egg-shaped (40–80 × 15–28 mm); green to greyish green, hairless when fully grown; leaf tip rounded to shortly pointed; leaf base narrowing towards leaf stalk; leaf stalk long and slender, 30–50 mm long, without hairs, grooved above. Fruits round, slightly hairy to hairless, yellow-green to pinkish when ripe; without a stalk or shortly stalked, borne typically on bare twigs in dense groups.



Small to medium-sized, rounded tree; up to 10 m high. Stem grey. Branches hairless, covered with many small white spots. Leaves spirally arranged, broadly elliptic to upside down egg-shaped, but wider below the middle (20–70 × 13–42 mm); hairless, soft, drooping; margin smooth; leaf tip rounded, occasionally with v-shaped indentation, ending in small hair-like tip; leaf base broadly tapering to rounded; leaf stalk long, slender, 5–30 mm, swollen and channelled just below leaf. Flowers very attractive, sweetly scented, creamy white fading to yellow, petals absent, stamens long, prominent; flowering time July to December. Fruits long drooping pods, 160 mm long, narrowed between seeds; appear from September to April; thought to be poisonous.

National tree number: 132
Family: Capparaceae
Common names: beadbean

Maerua angolensis DC. subsp. *angolensis*







Maerua cafra (DC.) Pax

National tree number: 133
Family: Capparaceae
Common names: bushcherry, spiderbush

Shrub or small tree; up to 10 m high. Main stem ± 250 mm in diameter, bark white and mottled, freshly cut wood smells unpleasant; roots thick and tuberous. Young branches covered with small white spots. Leaves spirally arranged, stalk long (15–60 mm), leaf blade compound, usually with 3 leaflets, occasionally 5 leaflets; leaflets elliptic to upside down egg-shaped but wider below middle (20–75 × 6–35 mm long), terminal leaflet longer than others; leathery, hairless; margins smooth, tip of each leaflet narrowed to rounded with fine hair-like tip, base of each leaflet narrowed; leaflets with short stalks, 1–5 mm long. Flowers attractive, scented, borne in groups, petals absent, with tufts of spreading stamens; flowering time August to October. Fruits round, smooth or covered with very small bumps; green with dark green vertical lines; hanging on stout stalks; appear from October to December.







Attracts birds
Attracts insects
Beautiful flowers
Moderate water
Drought resistant
Frost tender
Half frost hardy
Frost-resistant
Requires full sun
Semi shade
Requires shade
Evergreen
Deciduous
Useful wood
Medicinal use
Edible
Poisonous

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BRIZA

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tree identification tags






2016 TREES OF THE YEAR

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The National Herbarium is one of three SANBI herbaria. It houses the largest collection of plant specimens in southern Africa and is the fourth largest herbarium in the southern hemisphere with well over a million specimens. We provide foundational science information for plant taxonomic studies and other related research. The foundational science information that we generate and maintain at the National Herbarium is made available to other divisions within SANBI, and also to conservation authorities, decision-makers, academic and research institutions, the general public, and other stakeholders.

We provide a plant identification service, botanical information and herbarium educational tours. For further information, please contact us:
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According to the official list for trees of the year, which was developed several years ago by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, the 2016 common tree of the year is *Ficus thonningii*. However, recent phylogenetic evidence suggests that several distinct *Ficus* species are classified as *F. thonningii*. True *F. thonningii* was described from Ghana and is restricted to West Africa. Two southern African species, *F. burkei* and *F. petersii*, previously synonymised under *F. thonningii*, are regarded as good species and are therefore listed as the 2016 trees of the year.

Ficus burkei (Miq.) Miq.



National tree number: 48. **Family**: Moraceae.
Common names: common wild fig, strangler fig (English); gewone wildevy (Afrikaans); Gemeine Wilde Feige (Deutsch); moumo (Sepedi); inkho-khokho (siSwati); moumo (Setswana); muumo (Tshivenda); umthombe (isiXhosa); umthombe (isiZulu).

General appearance: A medium-sized, spreading tree, usually with some aerial roots; found in woodland, wooded grassland, hill slopes and edge of damp areas.

Distribution and habitat: Occurs in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and through northern South Africa to Kenya. It is found on rocky hillsides, woodland or semi-deciduous forest.

Meaning of name: *Ficus* – Latin name for figs; *burkei* – in honour of Joseph Burke (1812–1873), an English plant collector who collected mostly in the four northern provinces of South Africa.

Ecology and uses: Bark fibres are used in mat making. Figs are eaten by humans, birds, bats and antelope. Inside the figs a remarkable symbiosis exists whereby certain fig wasp species pollinate the flowers; many are species-specific and both pollinators and non-pollinators can be found. Larval food plant for the Lesser Fig-tree Blue butterfly (*Myrina dermaptera dermaptera*). Abnormally large figs develop as a result of heavy infestation of the fruit by gall-forming wasps.

As a garden tree: The common wild fig can easily be propagated from cuttings and truncheons. Prepare cuttings of ±200 mm long, remove the bottom leaves, plant in river sand and keep moist. Place the truncheons in the shade for a few days and place river sand in the bottom of the hole before planting, to prevent rotting. It is a fast grower and becomes a fair-sized tree very quickly. Young plants must be protected from cold winters for the first two to three years. Mature plants are moderately frost and drought resistant. It is frequently cultivated for shade and attracts birds to the garden.





Ficus petersii Warb.



National tree number: 48.1. **Family**: Moraceae.
Common names: Peter's fig (English); petersvy (Afrikaans); Peters-Feige (Deutsch); inkhokhokho (siSwati); nkuwa (Xitsonga); moumô (Setswana); muumo (Tshi-venda); umthombe (isiXhosa).

General appearance: A wide, spreading tree with a rounded crown, found in dry to semi-deciduous, low-altitude woodland.

Distribution and habitat: Occurs in Swaziland, Mpumalanga, Limpopo Province, Mozambique and northwards to Kenya and Zambia. It is found in deciduous woodland along the base of the escarpment, often in areas of rocky granite hills. It generally occurs at lower altitudes compared to the superficially similar *F. burkei*.

Meaning of name: *Ficus* – Latin name for figs; *petersii* – named for Dr W.C.H. Peters (1815–1883), German naturalist and explorer who visited Mozambique from 1843–1847.

Ecology and uses: Fruits are eaten by a wide range of birds and bats.

As a garden tree: Peter's fig, like its close relatives (e.g. *F. burkei*), can easily be propagated from cuttings and truncheons. Prepare cuttings of ±200 mm long, remove the bottom leaves, plant in river sand and keep moist. Place the truncheons in the shade for a few days and place river sand in the bottom of the hole before planting to prevent rotting. It is a fast grower and becomes a fair-sized tree very quickly. Young plants must be protected from cold winters for the first two to three years. Mature plants are moderately frost and drought resistant. It is frequently cultivated for shade and attracts birds to the garden.





Maerua angolensis DC. subsp. *angolensis*



National tree number: 132. **Family**: Capparaceae.
Common names: beadbean (English); knoppiesboontjie (Afrikaans); Knopfschotenbaum (Deutsch); tchidzyambuzi (Chisena); umenwayo (siSwati); siachiseni (Tonga/Chitonga); papule (Xitsonga); moomane (Setswana); mutamba-na-mme (Tshivenda); umenwayo (isiZulu).

General appearance: A tree in low-altitude wooded grassland, woodland and thickets.

Distribution and habitat: Occurs widely throughout the northern regions of South Africa from KwaZulu-Natal in the south, Mpumalanga, Limpopo Province and North West Province. It also occurs in Swaziland, Mozambique and northwards to central Africa. It is found in arid bushveld and thickets where it generally prefers sandy, loamy and rocky soil.

Meaning of name: *Maerua* – origin and meaning uncertain, may be derived from Arabic; *angolensis* – first described from a specimen collected in Angola.

Ecology and uses: Host plant for butterfly larvae of the family Pieridae (whites). Leaves are browsed by game and livestock, and leaf extracts are used medicinally for various ailments.

As a garden tree: It is easily propagated from seeds. The pulp around seeds must be removed, as it contains a growth inhibitor that retards germination. Sow seeds in flat seedling trays filled with river sand and cover with a thin layer of compost or sandy soil. Germination usually takes 12–20 days. Transplant seedling into nursery bags filled with river sand, loam and compost in a ratio of 3:1:1. Young beadbean trees grow very fast at a rate of 800 mm per year. They prefer semi-shaded areas, but can grow in shade or sun. Trees are frost and drought tolerant and usually flower after 3–4 years.





Maerua cafra (DC.) Pax



National tree number: 133. **Family**: Capparaceae.
Common names: bushcherry, spiderbush (English); witbos (Afrikaans); Buschkirsche (Deutsch); umphunzisa (isiXhosa).

General appearance: A shrub or small tree, found in open woodland, various forest types and dune bush.

Distribution and habitat: Confined to southern Africa, from the southern Cape, north along the eastern part of South Africa, Swaziland, southern Mozambique, and the northern provinces of South Africa. It is found in bushveld, wooded grassland and along forests margins. It also occurs in rocky areas.

Meaning of name: *Maerua* – origin and meaning uncertain, may be derived from Arabic; *cafra* – derived from the old word *Caffraria*, a classical name for South Africa. It is derived from the Hebrew *kafri* for 'person living on the land'.

Ecology and uses: Leaves are browsed by game. Roots used medicinally and powdered roots are used as a substitute for chicory.

As a garden tree: Bushcherry trees can be propagated from seeds, which must be sown fresh. The germination percentage is often high, but plants can take 3–7 years to reach a height of 1 m. Trees must be planted in protected spots in cold gardens. They are suitable for semi- to deep shade. Mature shrubs are slow growing and drought resistant.





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