SANBI
Biodiversity for Life
South African National Biodiversity Institute

2017 TREES OF THE YEAR

Euclea pseudebenus E.Mey. ex A.DC.

National tree number: 598 | Family: Ebenaceae | Common names: ebony guarri (E)

A shrub or small to medium-size tree, up to 10 m high. Single or many-stemmed, with slender, drooping branches. The bark is rough and dark and branchlets are covered in fine hairs. The leaves are very narrow and slender, slightly curved, leathery and bluish-green in colour; the leaf stalk (petiole) is up to 2 mm long. The leaves do not fall off at the end of the growth season (evergreen tree). The inner wood (heartwood) is pitch black, hard and durable. Male and female flowers are borne separately, on different plants. Small, greenish-yellow flowers are borne in groups in the spaces between the leaf stalk and the stem (axillary clusters). Flowers from August to September. The slightly sour (astringent), edible, juicy fruit with many seeds in pulp (a berry) is rounded or ball-shaped (globose), 5–8 mm in diameter, and black when ripe. Fruiting time: February to May.

















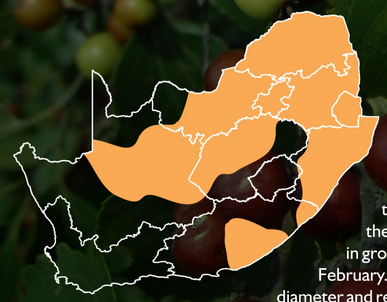






Ziziphus mucronata Willd.

National tree number: 447 | Family: Rhamnaceae | Common names: buffalo-thorn (E)



A shrub or small to medium-sized tree, with rough bark and a wide, spreading crown. The leaves are more-or-less egg-shaped to broadly egg-shaped in outline (ovate to broadly ovate), glossy dark green above, and slightly hairy and paler green below. The leaves fall off at the end of the growth season (deciduous tree). The leaf base is markedly unequal (asymmetric) with three prominent veins spreading from the base; leaf margins are finely toothed and the leaves turn yellow in autumn. Sharp thorns are generally present in pairs on the twigs, one hooked and the other straight, but plants may also be without thorns. Small, yellowish-green flowers are borne in groups in the spaces between the leaf stalk and the stem (axillary clusters). Flowers from October to February. The fruit is fleshy with one seed (a drupe), almost ball-shaped (subglobose), up to 30 mm in diameter and reddish to yellowish brown. Fruits are edible, but not very tasty. Fruiting time: March to August.

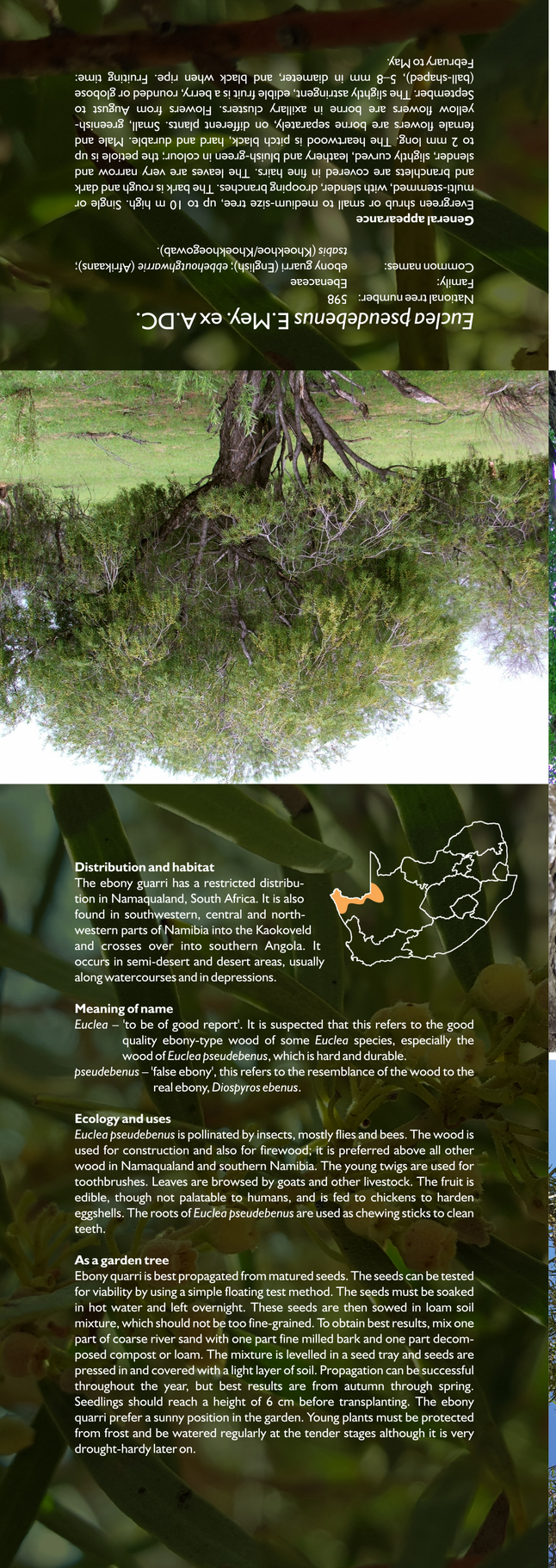
Attracts birds
Attracts insects
Edible
Moderate water
Drought resistant
Useful wood
Frost tender
Half frost hardy
Frost-resistant
Requires full sun
Semi shade
Requires shade
Evergreen
Deciduous
Medicinal use

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Distribution and habitat
The ebony guarri has a restricted distribution in Namaqualand, South Africa. It is also found in southwestern, central and northwestern parts of Namibia into the Kaokoveld and crosses over into southern Angola. It occurs in semi-desert and desert areas, usually along watercourses and in depressions.

Meaning of name
Euclea – 'to be of good report'. It is suspected that this refers to the good quality ebony-type wood of some *Euclea* species, especially the wood of *Euclea pseudebenus*, which is hard and durable.
pseudebenus – 'false ebony', this refers to the resemblance of the wood to the real ebony, *Diospyros ebenus*.

Ecology and uses
Euclea pseudebenus is pollinated by insects, mostly flies and bees. The wood is used for construction and also for firewood; it is preferred above all other wood in Namaqualand and southern Namibia. The young twigs are used for toothbrushes. Leaves are browsed by goats and other livestock. The fruit is edible, though not palatable to humans, and is fed to chickens to harden eggshells. The roots of *Euclea pseudebenus* are used as chewing sticks to clean teeth.

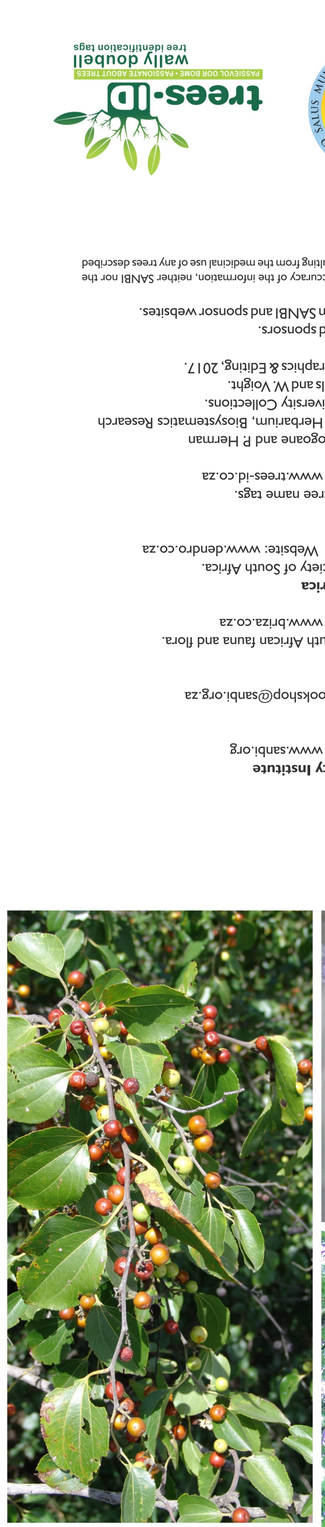
As a garden tree
Ebony quarri is best propagated from matured seeds. The seeds can be tested for viability by using a simple floating test method. The seeds must be soaked in hot water and left overnight. These seeds are then sowed in loam soil mixture, which should not be too fine-grained. To obtain best results, mix one part of coarse river sand with one part fine milled bark and one part decomposed compost or loam. The mixture is levelled in a seed tray and seeds are pressed in and covered with a light layer of soil. Propagation can be successful throughout the year, but best results are from autumn through spring. Seedlings should reach a height of 6 cm before transplanting. The ebony quarri prefer a sunny position in the garden. Young plants must be protected from frost and be watered regularly at the tender stages although it is very drought-hardy later on.



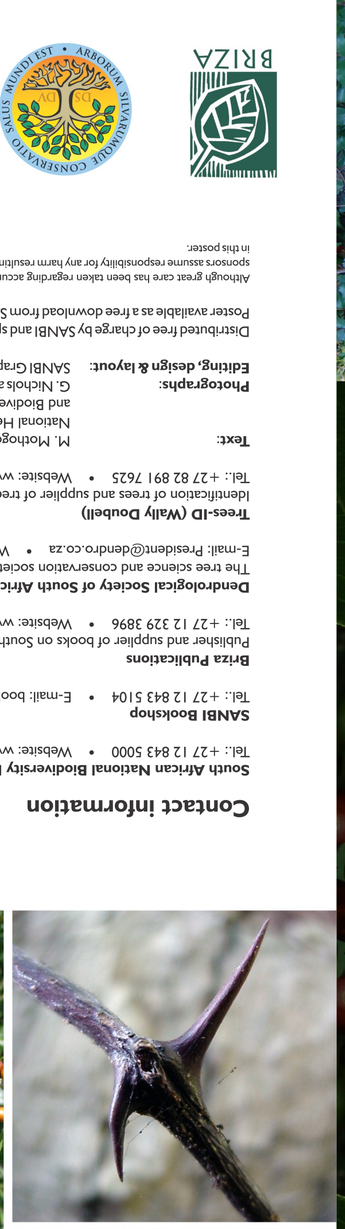


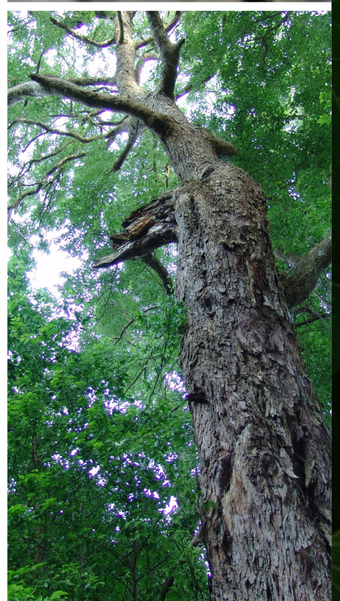














Distribution and habitat
It is widely distributed throughout the summer rainfall areas of sub-Saharan Africa and further north to Ethiopia and Arabia. It occurs in a variety of habitats, particularly in deciduous woodland.

Meaning of name
Ziziphus – The was called *zizyphon* by the ancient Greeks. This was taken from the Arabic *zizouf*, a name for the mythical lotus and later taken into Latin as *zizyphum*, or *zizypha* for the fruits.
mucronata – with a sharp point, possibly referring to its thorns or the apex of the leaves.

Ecology and uses
The buffalo-thorn tree attracts warblers, robins and shrikes. It is the larval food plant for butterflies such as *Tuxentius calice calice* (White Pie), *T. hesperis* (Western Pie), *T. melaena* (Black Pie) and *Tarucus Sybaris* (Dotted Blue). The leaves are browsed by game and livestock. Warm bark infusions are used as expectorants for cough and chest problems, and the roots, bark and leaves are used widely in traditional medicine to treat diarrhoea, dysentery, malaria, eye diseases and other ailments. Decoctions of roots and leaves are often applied externally to wounds, boils, sores and swellings to reduce pain and promote healing. The fruit is edible (fruits are sold in rural markets in Zimbabwe). They are sometimes stamped and mixed with porridge, and are also used as a coffee substitute. The Ovambo people of Namibia use the fruit to brew a beer. The sap from the tree is used by the San as a mixing agent for arrow poison. The wood is hard, heavy and fine-textured, suitable for furniture and home utensils.

As a garden tree
The buffalo-thorn can easily be propagated from seed or cuttings. It grows well in just about any soil type. After cleaning the nut, use a normal nutcracker to release the seed, then cover it with hot water and allow it to cool; soak for two days. The seed should be sown fresh. The seedlings appear within two weeks and need moderate water and full drainage. It prefers any climate except a cool, wet one and is very hardy. It has a moderate to slow growth rate of about 1 m/year.

Euclea pseudebenus E.Mey. ex A.DC.

National tree number: 598
Family: Ebenaceae
Common names: ebony guarri (English); *ebbehoutgwarrie* (Afrikaans); *tsabis* (Khoekhoe/Khoekhoegowab).

General appearance
Evergreen shrub or small to medium-size tree, up to 10 m high. Single or multi-stemmed, with slender, drooping branches. The bark is rough and dark and branchlets are covered in fine hairs. The leaves are very narrow and slender, slightly curved, leathery and bluish-green in colour; the petiole is up to 2 mm long. The heartwood is pitch black, hard and durable. Male and female flowers are borne separately, on different plants. Small, greenish-yellow flowers are borne in axillary clusters. Flowers from August to September. The slightly astringent, edible fruit is a berry, rounded or globose (ball-shaped), 5–8 mm in diameter, and black when ripe. Fruiting time: February to May.

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Editing, design & layout: SANBI Graphics & Editing, 2017.

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Ziziphus mucronata Willd.

National tree number: 447
Family: Rhamnaceae
Common names: buffalo-thorn (English); *blinkblaar-wag-'n-bietjie* (Afrikaans); *mokgaditi* (Sepedi); *umlahlabentfu* (siSwati); *mphasamhala* (Xitsonga); *mokgalo* (Setswana); *mutshetshete* (Tshivenda); *umphafa* (isiXhosa); *umphafo* (isiZulu).

General appearance
A shrub or small to medium-sized deciduous tree, with a rough bark and wide, spreading crown. The leaves are more-or-less oval in shape (ovate to broadly ovate), glossy dark green above, and slightly hairy and paler green below. The leaf base is markedly asymmetric with three prominent veins spreading from the base; leave margins are finely toothed. The leaves turn yellow in autumn. Sharp thorns are generally present on the twigs in pairs, one hooked and the other straight, but plants may also be unarmed. Small, yellowish-green flowers are borne in axillary clusters. Flowering time: October to February. The fruit is a drupe, subglobose (almost ball-shaped), up to 30 mm in diameter, reddish to yellowish brown. Fruiting time: March to August. Fruit are edible, but not very palatable.