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South African National Biodiversity Institute

2023 trees of the year

Buddleja saligna



Family: Scrophulariaceae
National tree number: 636
Common name: false olive

A small, evergreen tree or shrub up to 7 m high, with light to dark brown bark flaking in long strips. Smaller branches are 4-angled and covered with fine white hair. Leaves are medium to dark green, long and narrow, shiny and smooth above and whitish with raised veins below. Tiny white or cream flowers, smelling of honey, grow in dense clusters at the ends of branches from August to January. Small, hairy, egg-shaped fruit called capsules develop inside the dried-out flowers from September to March.





Bolusanthus speciosus



Family: Fabaceae
National tree number: 222
Common name: tree wisteria

A small to medium-sized, 10 –18 m tall, single- or multi-stemmed, deciduous tree with drooping foliage. Mature bark is brownish-grey and deeply grooved lengthwise. The compound leaves have 3–7 pairs of leaflets (each a narrow, elongated, pointy oval), medium to dark green above, paler below, covered with fine silvery hair. Flowers are bluish-purple and scented, hanging from the branches in bunches from August to January, and appearing before the new leaves. Fruits are narrow, flat, light brown, 3–5 seeded pods, appearing from February to March.





Leucadendron argenteum



Family: Proteaceae
National tree number: 77
Common name: silver tree

Small, evergreen, upright tree, 7–10 m tall, with a stout trunk and thick bark. The large, silver-grey, lance-shaped leaves overlap each other, concealing the thick branches. Leaves are covered on both surfaces with fine silvery hairs and fringed by longer white hairs. Male and female flower heads are borne on separate plants, surrounded by showy silver bracts, and clustered at the branch tips. Flowering time is September to October. Fruits are heavy, woody cones, sparsely covered with long hairs that remain on the tree. Seeds are large, egg-shaped nuts.





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

www.sanbi.org

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Leucadendron argenteum (L.) R.Br.

Family: Proteaceae
National tree number: 77
Common names: silver tree (English); *silwerboom*, *witteboom* (Afrikaans).

General appearance
Small, evergreen, upright tree, 7–10 m tall, with a stout trunk and thick bark. Young trees are conical in shape and develops a slightly more spreading crown as it matures. The grey bark has distinctive, horizontal leaf scars. The large (150 × 20 mm), silver-grey, lance-shaped leaves overlap each other, are covered on both surfaces with fine silvery hairs and finished by longer white hairs. Male and female flower heads (40 × 50 mm in size) are borne on separate plants, surrounded by silver bracts, and clustered at the branch tips. Male trees are more showy and flower more prolifically than the female trees. Female flower heads are covered by the surrounding bracts and their position higher up in the tree conceal them from casual sight. Flowering time is September to October. Fruits are heavy, woody cones, 90 × 60 mm in size, that remain on the tree. Seeds are large, egg-shaped nuts that are not released from the cone for some years unless the parent plant dies.

Distribution and habitat
The silver tree has a restricted distribution and is native to a particular geographic location in the Western Cape. It occurs on Table Mountain from Platteklip to Wynberg and Orangekloof, possibly also Helderberg, Simonsberg and Paarl Mountain. It occurs on moist slopes on granite clays, at 100–150 m altitude and in conspicuous stands, the largest being at Wynberg and Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden.

Meaning of name
The name *Leucadendron* is from the Greek '*leukos*', meaning white, and '*dendron*', meaning tree. This genus name is based on the common name *witteboom*, meaning white tree. The species name *argenteum* is Latin and means silver, silvery or ornamented with silver, referring to its striking silver foliage.

Ecology and uses
- The flower heads have a faint, pleasant scent, which attracts insects such as small beetles.
- Seeds are dispersed by wind, and eaten by rodents and alien grey squirrels.
- Seeds have been known to survive in the soil for 80 years.
- The leaves have also long been collected, pressed and dried for decoration or as a souvenir.
- In the 1600s and 1700s, the tree was extensively used as firewood.
- The wood is dense and hard, making it a valuable source of timber for use in construction and furniture-making.

As a garden tree
The silver tree is fast growing, reaching up to 8 m in ten years, but it is also relatively short-lived, and rarely lives longer than 20 years. It is very susceptible to fungus. Plants grow easily from seeds. Once prepared, which can be done by soaking the seeds in hot water for a few minutes, seeds can be planted directly in the ground or in a container with well-draining soil. Planting is best done during autumn, when the soil temperature is cooler, and the winter rains are starting. Seeds germinate from three to six weeks but can take up to three months. Once the plants are established, don't disturbed the roots. In the first two years, the plants should be watered regularly and protected from strong winds and direct sunlight until they establish. Trees take up to seven years to flower. It prefers well-drained soils and full sun but can also tolerate shade. Ensure that the plant is not exposed to extreme cold or frost. Propagation from cuttings can be more challenging.







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Buddleja saligna Willd.

Family: Scrophulariaceae
National tree number: 636
Common names: false olive (English); *witolien* (Afrikaans); *lelothwane* (Sepedi); *umbatacwepe* (siSwati); *mothlware* (Setswana); *ungqeba* (isiXhosa); *igqeba-elimhlope* (isiZulu).

General appearance
A small, evergreen tree or shrub up to 7 m high, with light to dark brown bark flaking in long strips. Smaller branches are 4-angled and covered with fine white hairs. Leaves are medium to dark green, long and narrow, shiny and smooth above and whitish with raised veins below. Tiny white or cream flowers, smelling of honey, grow in dense clusters at the ends of branches from August to January. Small, hairy, egg-shaped fruit called capsules develop inside the dried-out flowers from September to March.

Distribution and habitat
The false olive occurs in a variety of habitats from dry hillsides, mixed bushveld, wooded valleys, mountainsides, forest margins, along streams and in coastal bush. It is widely distributed in South Africa, growing from the Western Cape up north through to Zimbabwe, extending from the coast to central South Africa and the Kalahari thornveld in the northwest.

Meaning of name
The genus was named in honour of an amateur botanist Reverend Adam Buddle (1660–1715). The specific epithet '*saligna*' refers to the leaves being willow-like in appearance.

Ecology and uses
- A decoction of the leaves has been used to cure coughs and colds.
- Root scrapings have been used as a purgative and to induce vomiting.
- The wood is used to manufacture small pieces of furniture and assegai handles.
- Fence posts are made from straight branches.
- The tree is valuable in the honey industry as it is attractive to bees and produces a high amount of pollen and nectar.
- Insects, particularly moths, are drawn to the flowers.

As a garden tree
The tree can be propagated from seeds and cuttings. Seeds germinate readily, it is fast growing and hardy. Growth rates of up to 1.5 m a year has been recorded. It makes a good hedge when trimmed. The profusion of flowers creates a beautiful spring and summer display. The seeds can be planted in trays filled with either regular potting soil or river sand. Because seeds are so small, sand should be added to ensure an even distribution. After four weeks, seeds begin to germinate. Water moderately. It can grow in poor soils and is frost and drought resistant.

Bolusanthus speciosus (Bolus) Harms

Family: Fabaceae
National tree number: 222
Common names: tree wisteria (English); *vanwykshout* (Afrikaans); *seboi, mohlapu* (Sepedi); *umhohlo* (siSwati); *mpfimbahongonyi, nkaba, nkhamba, nkohlwana* (Xitsonga); *motsokophala, mosôkaphala* (Setswana); *mukambana, muswinga-phala* (TshiVenda); *umhohlo* (isiZulu).

General appearance
A small to medium-sized, 10 –18 m tall, single- or multi-stemmed, deciduous tree with drooping foliage. Young branches are light to dark brown or grey. Mature bark is brownish-grey and deeply grooved lengthwise. Young leaves are yellowish-green in colour. The mature compound leaves have 3–7 pairs of leaflets (each a narrow, elongated, pointy oval), medium to dark green above, paler below, covered with fine silvery hair and are spirally arranged along the branch. The uneven bases of the leaflets cause them curve. Flowers have a pea-flower appearance, are bluish-purple and scented, and hang from the branches in bunches from August to January, appearing before the new leaves. Fruits are narrow, flat, light brown, 3–5 seeded pods, appearing from February to March (or even later).

Distribution and habitat
The tree wisteria is found in low to medium altitude wooded grassland and arid lowveld in a variety of soils, however, it favours clay soil. It occurs in KwaZulu-Natal, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

Meaning of name
Bolusanthus its named after Dr Harry Bolus (1834–1911), who founded the Bolus Herbarium in Cape Town and was a South African botanist. The Latin word '*speciosus*' can be translated as beautiful, spectacular or showy (referring to flowers). *Bolusanthus speciosus* was collected first in Mozambique and it is the only species in the genus.

Ecology and uses
- The bark and roots are used for the treatment of abdominal disorders.
- The use of straight stems for poles is generally favoured since they are insect-resistant and don't burn easily.
- The wood is used to make furniture, hoes, axes and pick handles.
- Pods and leaves are eaten by monkeys, gemsbok, giraffe and grey duiker.
- Flower buds are eaten by vervet monkeys.

As a garden tree
The tree wisteria is easily cultivated from seeds. It is an attractive street and garden tree, and adds colour and interest to a garden setting. Before propagating seeds, they should be soaked in hot water overnight. Seeds can be sown in containers filled with well-drained soil, lightly covered with fine sand, not thicker than the diameter of the seeds. Although seeds germinate easily, seedlings are difficult to transplant. The second leaf should have emerged before transplanting seedlings. Despite being slow-growing and not frost-resistant, this plant can grow up to 800 mm per year in well-drained soil and in a sunny position, free of frost. It also grows well in arid climates and can tolerate a wide range of growing conditions. Young trees should be protected from frost and not be watered excessively. Do not expose them to excessive moisture, as this can cause root rot. The tree can withstand droughts and the roots are non-invasive.