

This means they may not be cut, damaged or sold without a licence. However, all trees occurring in a natural forest are protected, irrespective of whether the forest is on private, communal or state land. The department is also engaged in the Champion Trees project to identify and protect the most important individual trees that can be regarded as a National Heritage asset of the South African people. The public can be involved by identifying and nominating trees that need to be protected.

Exemptions from licensing

Many individuals and communities depend on forests for their livelihood. Many South Africans still rely on wood as their primary source of energy, forest produce for domestic use and saplings as building materials. In order to prevent the depletion of trees, natural woodlands, forests and other natural resources, DWAF has established numerous woodlots of fastgrowing Eucalyptus (gum) trees, and some indigenous trees such as Umzimbeet (*Milletia grandis*) and Red mangrove (*Rhizophora mucronata*) to provide some of the subsistence needs.

However, the Act makes provision to exempt those living close or around state forests from applying for a licence to collect wood or forest produce such as mushrooms, herbs and fruits for domestic use.

How to plant a tree in a way that it ensures efficient water use

- Prepare a hole twice as wide and twice as deep as the container that your tree is in
- Carefully remove the plastic cover from the tree and place it in the hole
- Fill the hole with soil and compost below and around the tree
- Tie the tree to a stick or stake – not too tightly
- Cover the soil surrounding the tree with leaves or grass (mulch), to reduce the evaporation of water.

You can also use a two-litre bottle to irrigate your tree and conserve water:

- Punch a small hole at the bottom of the bottle so that the bottle will water the roots.
- Plant this bottle next to your tree with its top sticking out.
- Fill the bottle once a week and put the lid on to prevent evaporation.

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Plant a Tree Grow our Future



1 - 7 September 2005

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water & forestry
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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Arbor Week is celebrated from the 1-7 September in South Africa annually throughout the country. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF), as the custodian of forestry in South Africa, is responsible for the campaign. The aim of Arbor Week is to promote awareness of the need for planting and preserving indigenous trees throughout South Africa. It highlights the opportunities for sustainable economic development, community participation, poverty alleviation and job creation in forestry in order to create a better life for all.

Why do we need to plant trees?

There are a variety of reasons why it's important to plant trees:

- For shade, to shelter plants and to reduce evaporation of water from soil by the sun
- To create a pleasant and beautiful environment
- To conserve energy
- Trees help to reduce air pollution
- Trees protect the soil and water
- Trees can create wildlife habitats
- Trees are necessary for wind reduction and control
- The roots of trees help bind the soil and reduce soil erosion
- To produce timber for use such as furniture, building material, poles and paper
- Any tree will make its small contribution to remove some carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and produce oxygen, although some contribute more than others.

Why are forests and woodlands important?

Forests and woodlands play a key role in maintaining the environment. Forests and woodlands are crucial to the protection and conservation of the soil, and in water cycling. They also help modulate water flows and reduce sedimentation in streams and reservoirs. South Africa's forests and woodlands contribute to our country's remarkable range of fauna and flora. Many national parks and eco-tourism ventures use forests and woodlands, e.g. the Kruger National Park is a woodland area.

Loss of forests may lead to more soil erosion and loss of plants, animals and small life forms that need to live in a forest environment. Commercial and natural forests also provide valuable products that we depend on, like timber, paper and medicinal plants. Loss of forests will mean less resources to build homes, print books and newspapers,

make furniture or have firewood to keep us warm or cook food.

Trees also help to maintain a favourable climate. Trees consume the carbon dioxide that is responsible for climate change. In return trees produce oxygen. So trees help to clean the atmosphere. The carbon dioxide produced by trees can stay locked up in the wood for many years, depending on how long the tree remains alive and depending on what happens to the wood after the tree dies.

What wood product is used most abundantly worldwide?

60% of all wood harvested from forests and trees are used for fuel. That means that fuel or bio-energy is the most important forest product worldwide. In South Africa more than 9 million people are dependent on firewood for daily domestic use.

Discourage people from destroying living trees

Many people don't seem to realise the importance and value of trees. Often entire areas are cleared of trees before a new development starts. Sometimes precious trees are simply chopped down because we want to use the space for something else. Sometimes people do things that will ultimately cause the death of a tree. For example, excavations of deep trenches in the tree, dumping of debris or chemicals around the stem, or damage of the tree's bark are all actions that compromise the health of a tree. In many cases there are alternatives. We need to value trees and should consider first what other options we have before destroying them.

Do your bit to preserve our environment. Plant a tree – grow our future!

Protect our forests and trees from fire

Veldfires, if not properly managed can result in loss of life, livelihoods, grazing land livestock, timber plantations and damage to the environment. Government introduced the National Veld and Forest Fire Act (No 101 of 1998) and in terms of the Act everyone in South Africa has responsibilities with regards to veld and forest fires. These are:

- You are responsible if a fire starts from your property. You have to control it, inform the authorities and take responsibility if someone is injured or damage caused.

- Every landowner must have equipment and personnel to assist when fires start. Landowners are obliged to burn firebreaks at the start of the fire season (Western Cape – beginning of September and the rest of the country in the beginning of June). They must however contact their local Fire Protection Association to ensure all requirements are adhered to before they burn a firebreak.
- Only make fires in a designated spot. Please watch for signs that say no fires are allowed and adhere to them.
- If you throw or drop a match or other flammable material and a fire starts you will be held responsible.
- Anybody (between 16 and 60 years old) has to assist when requested to during a fire. No one is allowed to hinder or obstruct a person who is fighting a fire or prevent authorities from exercising their powers of arrest, search, seizure or entry with regards to fire matters.

What do we mean by 'forestry'?

A forest as defined by the National Forest Act includes plantations, indigenous (natural) forests, woodlands and forest produce in it. Forestry includes all the activities linked to these forests and woodlands. Forestry refers to the use and management of forests. It includes the processing of wood products into pulp for the paper and packaging industries, sawn timber, furniture, shelving, flooring etc. It also includes the use, management and processing of non-timber forest products, a vast category involving fruits, plants, medicinal herbs and animals found in forest and woodlands. Forestry also means the use of forest woods for fuel and for the manufacture of charcoal, the production of important construction materials, including wooden beams, poles and thatching.

The National Forests Act (No 84 of 1998)

The key aspects of the National Forest Act (NFA) are the focus on sustainable forest management, it explains how individuals and communities can use forests without destroying them, it sets out the rules for the protection of indigenous forests and it explains how the Act is enforced.

Protected and Champion Trees

South Africa has more than 1 700 tree species. Some of these are threatened either because of their rarity or the pressure of commercial and/or subsistence use. In order to ensure sustainable use through licensing control measures, 47 tree species have been listed as protected trees.