

# Adansonia digitata (SA tree number 467)

**Common Names:** Baobab, Kremetart, Mowana, Seboi, Ximuwu, Muvhuyu, isiMuku.

**Description:** A massive deciduous tree about 10 to 20m tall with a round or spreading crown, and a stout cylindrical trunk.

**Distribution:** This drought-resistant tree occurs in hot dry woodland at low altitude. In South Africa its natural range is limited to parts of the Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces, with a few scattered trees also occurring in the Northwest Province.

**Background:** The baobab is one of the best known and longest living trees of Africa. Some trees are estimated to be about 3000 years old. Large trees often serve as communal meeting places. The trees are fire and termite resistant and much liked by elephants that eat the spongy tissues of the bole and can damage or destroy trees. The seeds are eaten by baboons and monkeys and used by humans. The bare branches resembling roots gave rise to an African folk tale about the tree being planted upside down by God. The tree is protected in South Africa. The largest tree in the country is a baobab at Sagole in the Limpopo Province of 22m high, a massive trunk diameter of 10.4m and a crown diameter of 38.2m.

**Bark:** Smooth, greyish to reddish-brown bark up to 10cm thick.

**Leaves:** Alternate and arranged like the fingers of a hand with 3 to 9 sessile or branches and leaf stalks up to 160mm long. Leaflets oblong to ovate, up to 12cm long.

**Flowers:** Large and waxy white flowers up to 20cm in diameter, opening at night and attracting pollinating fruit bats with its unpleasant smelling nectar.

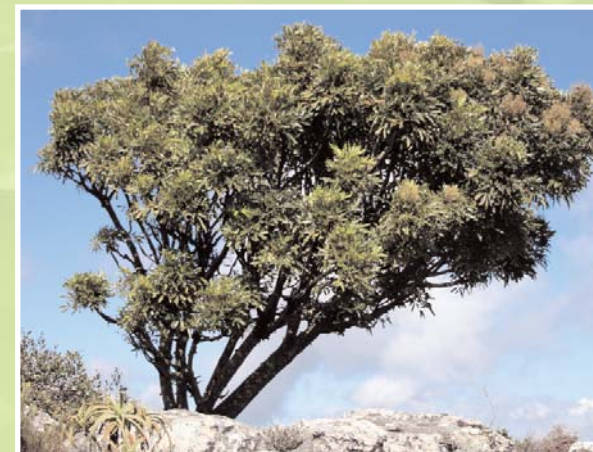
**Fruit:** Very big 15 to 22 cm, hairy, yellow-brown woody capsules, hanging on long stalks on the bare tree. About 100 seeds lie within white-pink, dry, edible pulp that contains tartaric acid.

**Wood:** Whitish, spongy and light fibrous wood.

**Uses:** Traditionally the tree has provided food, shelter, clothing and medicine as well as material for hunting and fishing. A powdery "cream-of-tartar" is derived from the fruit as a food ingredient. The nutritious fruit and leaves are edible and a refreshing drink is made from the pulp of the fruit. The leaves, fruit pulp and bark also have medicinal uses.



# Trees of the Year 2005



**Schefflera umbellifera**



**Adansonia digitata**



water & forestry  
Department:  
Water Affairs and Forestry  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



# Schefflera umbellifera (SA tree number 566)

**Common Names:** False cabbage tree, Basterkiepersol, umSengane, umSengembuzi, Motshetshepudi, umGezisa, umRongo

**Description:** A medium-tall evergreen tree of 10 to 15m high, with a straight and cylindrical stem. Dense and rounded crown.

**Distribution:** Occurs in the margins of forests and in bush clumps from the coast to high altitudes. The natural distribution range in South Africa is limited to the eastern parts of the country from northern Limpopo Province to the dry coastal parts of the Tsitsikamma forests in the south.

**Background:** This tree belongs to the Araliaceae or Cabbage tree family. The clusters of large leaves have been compared to cabbages in the descriptions of early botanists, hence the name "cabbage tree". The scientific name honors the German botanist GC Scheffler of the 18th century.

The fruits are much favoured by birds, and the leaves are used to treat ailments such as rheumatism and malaria. Seedlings only grow from seeds that passed through the digestive tracts of birds or other animals. Often propagated by nurseries, these trees make attractive garden plants but cannot tolerate severe frost.

**Bark:** Dark grey, longitudinally fissured, smooth and resinous.

**Leaves:** Compound digitate leaves with 3 to 5 oblong leaflets (9 to 18 cm long). The leaflets are leathery glossy and dark green above, paler beneath, with wavy or serrated margins, and clustered on long leaf stalks.

**Flowers:** Small, greenish-cream to yellowish, in umbels which are forming large bunches at the end of the branches.

**Fruit:** Dark red, small and round fruits borne in loose clusters.

**Wood:** White or yellow, moderately soft, straight-grained and free of knots.

**Uses:** Decorative shade tree or container plant. The bark and leaves are used for medicinal purposes. The wood is very light and therefore suitable for fruit boxes or matches, but it is seldom used.

