



## Harpephyllum caffrum

Anacardiaceae  
(Mango Family)

**Common names:**

Wild plum; Wildepruim (A);  
umGwenya (Z, X);  
Mothekele (NS)

**SA Tree Number:** 361

**What does it look like?**

An attractive large evergreen tree up to 15 m tall, usually found in riverine forests. The main stem is clean and straight, the branches curve upwards, with leaves crowded

towards the ends, forming a beautiful dense crown at the top.

Leaves are compound, shiny dark green, sometimes interspersed with odd red ones. The leaflets are sickle-shaped.

Whitish green flowers are borne near the tips of the branches, with male and female flowers on separate trees.

The green plum-like fruits turn red when they ripen in autumn; they contain a single seed and are enjoyed by humans, mammals and birds.

It may be confused with the Cape ash (*Ekebergia capensis*) but is recognised by the leaves that are crowded towards the ends of the branches and by the sickle-shaped leaflets.

**What does the scientific name mean?**

*Harpephyllum* is of Greek derivation, meaning 'sickle-like leaves', referring to the shape of the leaflets. The specific name *caffrum* is derived from part of its distribution range,

Kaffraria, now part of the Eastern Cape; it also means 'indigenous'.

**Where does it grow?**

Grows throughout the eastern parts of southern Africa in open woodland and bush clumps in summer-rainfall areas with hot summers and warm, frost-free winters.

**What is it used for?**

A useful ornamental, shade tree for attracting birds and butterflies into the garden. Fruit are used for making jams and jellies. With their sour taste, they are also good to make rosé wine. Birds such as Cape parrots, mousebirds, bar-bets, bulbuls, louries and African green pigeons feed on the fruit.

Larvae of the common Hairtail butterfly (*Anthene definita*) and the Eggar moth (*Lasio-campa kollikerii*) feed on leaves of this tree. Many animals including bushbabies, fruit bats, monkeys, baboons and bushbuck love the fruit of the wild plum.

The bark is a popular traditional medicine; used to treat acne and eczema, as well as sprains and bone fractures.

The wood is pale reddish and fairly heavy. It polishes well but is not very durable. It has been used as a general purpose timber, for furniture and beams. It is also used for carving curios.



# 2008 Trees of the Year



**Acknowledgements**

Text was extracted by Beate Sachse from Plants of the Week contributions by Giles Mbambezeli, Mhlonishwa D. Dlamini and Cherise Viljoen.

Photographs: A.L. Notten, M. Jordaan, G. Nichols, D.C.H. Plowes, J. Vahrmeijer and Plants of southern Africa (POSA, an online checklist).

Design and layout by Graphic Design Services, Research Publications Section, SANBI.

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## *Diospyros whyteana*

Ebenaceae (Ebony Family)

**Common names:**

Bladdernut, Black-bark; Swartbas (A); Mohlatsane (NS); Munyavhili (V); um-Tenatane (X); uManzimane, umKahze (Z)

**SA Tree Number:** 611

**What does it look like?**

An evergreen shrub or small multi-stemmed tree with a straight trunk branching low down

to form a dense, round to pyramidal crown. Leaves are shiny, with a fringe of ginger hairs, leathery, dark green above and paler below, with an occasional bright red or orange leaf adding to the overall attractiveness of this plant.

The scented, white to creamy yellow flowers are bell-shaped and hang from hairy stalks. Male and female flowers are borne on different trees.

Fleshy berries are produced throughout summer and turn scarlet when ripe. They are enclosed in inflated, bladder-like capsules that dry to red and remain on the tree for many months after the fruits have fallen and are thus found on the trees at almost any time of the year.

**What does the scientific name mean?**

*Diospyros* (Greek) means 'divine pear' and *whyteana* (Latin) comes from the name of a Scottish plant explorer, Alexander Whyte.

**Where does it grow?**

This tree is found in forest, on mountain slopes and in rocky places. It has a wide distribution in all the provinces in South Africa, extending as far north as Ethiopia.

**What is it used for?**

The leaves are browsed by stock and game. Birds (pigeons, louries, barbets and bulbuls) open the papery fruit covering to get at the ripe, fleshy berries inside. The fruits are edible but are somewhat bitter and not very tasty. The roasted seeds have been used as a substitute for coffee.

The wood is variable in colour, mainly whitish with brown to purple stripes, dense, evenly grained, strong and suitable for furniture, but large logs are often not available. Stems of smaller diameter are used for implement handles.

Bark extracts are administered for treating menstrual pain, impotency and infertility. A leaf and root infusion can be used to treat a rash.



## *Markhamia zanzibarica*

Bignoniaceae (Jacaranda Family)

**Common names:**

Bell bean tree; Klokkes-boontjieboom (A); Mula-kholoma (V)

**SA Tree Number:** 677

**What does it look like?**

A small, upright tree with slender, crooked branches and a soft, green crown. The bark is grey-brown, smooth and glossy when young, but flaky in older trees. Young branches show conspicuous lenticels (raised pores on the surface of the bark).

The leaves are opposite, compound and imparipinnate (odd-pinnate), with 24 pairs of leaflets plus a terminal one, with fine yellowish hairs on both surfaces of the leaflets, the upper surface losing these hairs at maturity.

The leaflet margins are entire or finely toothed.

Flowers are yellow with maroon flecks, 23 mm long and bell-shaped, with spreading lobes. They are borne in racemes on the old wood from spring to summer (September to January).

A slender, bean-like capsule, 300–500 mm long and spirally twisted, is produced in late summer (January to May). Dark brown when mature, it splits open lengthwise to release many flat, winged seeds which are dispersed by wind.

**What does the scientific name mean?**

The genus *Markhamia* was named by Berthold Seeman in honour of his friend Sir Clements Robert Markham (1830–1916), English geographer and traveller, who introduced the famous South American quinine-yielding cinchona to India. The specific epithet *zanzibarica* refers to the island Zanzibar 36 km off the Tanzanian coast in the Indian Ocean.

**Where does it grow?**

A tropical tree occurring from Tanzania and Malawi southwards to Botswana, Namibia, northern SA and the Caprivi Strip. It is found in bushveld, in riverine fringes, and often on rocky ridges and on hill slopes.

**What is it used for?**

The leaves are eaten by elephants.

The wood is fairly hard and durable, pale brown to yellowish, finely grained, and produces a smooth finish. It is used for roof timbers of buildings and to make tool handles. It is well suited for the manufacture of ornaments. Branches are usually too small to be of value.

The roots are used in traditional medicine to treat backache.

