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Production and hosting by Elsevier B.V. on behalf of King Saud University. This historical and noble Tree is widely distributed throughout Africa. It has a wide trunk - up to 12m high in SA. Non-toxic milky latex is present. The simple, alternate & entire Leaves are 3-veined from the base on this usually evergreen tree. Stipules are caducous. Flowers are in a syconium.



A specific female wasp does the pollination in a mutualistic relationship. Fruit is a hairy fig - on leafless branches or the trunk. Ficus sycomorus. Previous names: Ficus chanas, Ficus cocculifolia, Ficus gnaphalocarpa, Ficus damarensis, Ficus integrifolia, Ficus scabra, Sycomoros antiquorum. SA Tree No. 66. Common names: (Afr) Geel-rivierwy, Geelstam-vy, Gewone Trosvy, Sycomoros-vy, Trosvy, Wildevy, Wildeveyeboom. (Eng) Common Cluster Fig, Sycamore, Sycamore Fig Tree, Sycamore Fig, Tree Killer, Wild fig. (IsiNdebele) Umkhiwa. (Northern Sotho) Mogo, Mogoboya, Mohlole. (siSwati) Umkhiwubovana. (Xitsonga) Nkuwa. (Setswana) Mochaba, Motshaba. (Tshivenda) Muhuhoya, Muhuyu, Muhuyu-lukuse, Mukuyu-vhukuse, Mutole, Muvhuyu-vhutwa.



(isiZulu) Isikhukhuboya, Umkhiwane, Umnconjwa, Umncongo. Family: Moraceae (fig or mulberry family). Trees are evergreen and have milky or watery latex present. The simple Leaves are alternate or opposite and usually distinctly 3-veined from near the base. They are usually entire and all leaves have stipules. Plants are monoecious or dioecious and flowers are unisexual. The Perianth of indigenous species contain sepals but no petals. Male flowers have up to 6 stamens. Female flowers are inconspicuous and lack staminodes. The superior or inferior Ovary has 1 locule with 1 ovule and 2 styles are often present.



The compound Fruit contains various Seeds. The family has 37+ genera and 1 100+ species. There are 4 genera and 29 species in southern Africa. Name derivation: Ficus - Latin for fig, sycomorus - Greek; syka means fig and morus refers to the mulberry - in the same family. The genus Ficus has 24+ species in southern Africa. A different tree, known as the sycamore tree (*Acer pseudoplatanus* in the family Sapindaceae) grows in Europe, Western Asia and in the USA it is known as the sycamore maple. Tree Aerial roots are lacking in this large, non-strangler Tree. It is one of the most striking and colourful of our trees. The tree is usually up to 12m high in the South Africa and up to 25m in the forests further north.

Its huge, rounded, spreading crown may reach 30m wide - especially in the open (photo 515). The Trunk (photos 514 & 538) can reach a circumference close to 4m and is relatively short. The base is often buttressed (photo 515). Red or orange mottling is present on the trunk, which is initially smooth and ages to a slightly rougher surface. The outer Bark is powdery, usually yellowish, occasionally whitish and often peels off in small papery flakes (photo 538). The inner bark is yellow. The tree is often fluted (grooved, funnelled, channelled) in forest specimens. Twigs (1-year-old current branch segments) are initially finely hairy. Non-toxic Milky Sap is present and leaks when parts are damaged. 515. 2014/09/08.

Lower Sabi KNP. Photo: David Becking, 799, 2014/09/15.

Lowveld NBG. Photo: David Becking, 514, 2014/09/08.

Lower Sabi KNP. Photo: David Becking, 538, 2014/09/08. Lower Sabi KNP. Photo: David Becking. Leaves The tough trees are usually evergreen but may be briefly deciduous. The attractive, shiny, roughish and oval, ovate (egg-shaped), obovate (upside down egg shaped) to almost circular Leaves are simple (have a single blade which may have incisions that are not deep enough to divide the blade into leaflets). The leaves are alternate and roughish above - more so than in *Ficus sur*. This tree has leaves that may reach 15 x 11cm but are usually smaller. The Apex is bluntly pointed or roundish. The Base is rounded notched or cordate (heart shaped - photo 734). The Margins are usually untoothed. They may be wavy and entire (with a continuous margin, not in any way indented). The upper surface of the Blade is dark green and is usually rough. The lower surface is lighter and has a little more hair. Leaves are yellowish and distinctly 3-veined from the base (photo 734). There are usually up to 6 additional of lateral veins present on either side of the midrib. On the lower surface, waxy spots are located in axils of the basal secondary veins or at base of the midrib. The initially red and hairy Petiole (leaf stalk - photo 734) are initially hairy and becomes smooth and up to 5cm long (photo 734). Stipules (basal appendages of the petiole) are oblong, envelope the terminal bud and are caducous (an organ or part of which is easily detached and shed early). 800. 2014/09/15.

Lowveld NBG. Photo: David Becking, 734, 2014/09/14. Lowveld NBG. Photo: David Becking. Flowers This Tree is monoecious (having both male and female reproductive organs on the same plant). Figs possess a remarkably arranged flower head called a Syconium. Essentially this consists of a Receptacle (is that expanded tip of the flower stalk from which the floral parts develop). This receptacle is greatly expanded in both the Asteraceae and in *Ficus*. In *Ficus*, the receptacle perimeter considerably increases in size and folds over forming the fig shape. Figs occur in dense clusters on the main branches or singly in leaf axils and 2 or more crops ripen annually. The hollow fig ends with a tiny opening called an Ostiole (photo 729), which is covered with scales making exit impossible and entrance difficult for wasps. Only the Female pollinating wasp (specific for each species - in this case *Ceratostolen arabicus*) attempts to do so. She usually injures herself in the process. Around the inner boundary of the hollow receptacle, a large collection of extremely small flowers develop. These flowers are either male or female. In the Male flowers, up to 6 overlapping perianth (the 2 floral envelopes considered together; a collective term for the calyx and corolla) lobes and one or 2 stamens are present. The ovary is absent or vestigial. In the Female flowers, there are no stamens and usually fewer perianth lobes. The Ovary is free and usually has 2 Styles. The Female wasp enters the fig with her pollen sacks laden with unintentionally collected pollen and pollinates those female fig flowers with longish styles.

These long styles prevent the wasp from reaching the figs Ovary and thus from laying eggs in it. The wasp targets the flowers with short styles and lays a single egg in each one. These female flowers react to this egg, producing a gall, which nourishes the developing larvae. They eventually pupate and becomes adult wasps. The robust Male wasps develop first, fertilize the young Female wasps and then burrow through the wall of the fig, allowing oxygen in. The female wasps, now accidentally load pollen from the male fig flowers, escape from the fig through the hole made by the male wasps. She then makes her way to another fig of the same species, to continue the life cycle. This is an excellent example of a mutualistic relationship between the fig tree and the wasp, where both benefit. 729, 2014/09/14. Lowveld NBG. Photo: David Becking. Fruit A stalk (photo 729 under Flower) supports the usually finely hairy Fruit that develops on leafless major branchlets or from on the trunk and may reach 3cm wide. Nearly a week after the young wasps have left, the figs with their fertilized seeds, ripen and develop into a multiple fruit, which is an orange / red-brown when mature. The Ostiole is slightly raised (photo 516) and star-shaped.

The colour change is due to the oxygen induced ethylene production. This oxygen enters where the male wasps have burrowed through the fig. Ethylene is a small hydrocarbon gas that is odourless and tasteless. This gas is involved in the ripening of the fruit including causing the fig to change colour, texture and soften. It is used commercially to ripen fruits like tomatoes, bananas and pears. Seed dispersal agents include birds and bats. Fruit develops mainly from the inflorescence wall and may be present most of the year but usually evident from July to December. Often more than one crop is produced annually. 516. 2014/09/08. Lower Sabi KNP. Photo: David Becking, 731. 2014/09/14. Lowveld NBG. Photo: David Becking. Distribution & Ecology The Trees are often found along rivers and in swamps, in open woodland and on termite mounds - usually below 1 200m. It may also be a wide-spreading tree in savanna. Trees are associated with high water tables. They are found for example along the narrow Lebombo Mountains (about 800km long from Hluhluwe in KwaZulu-Natal to Punda Maria in Limpopo). This tree is also specifically located in KwaZulu-Natal e.g. Mkuze Game reserve, Swaziland, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia in the Brandberg (NW of Windhoek) and north to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and West Africa. It is also found in the Comoro's and Madagascar. Black rhino eat the leaves. White rhino consume both the bark and leaves. The Fruit on the tree and fallen fruit is eaten by monkeys, bushpigs, warthogs, rhino and buck.

The African Harrier Hawk or Banded Gymnogene, search for insects in the Bark which becomes cracked and somewhat hollow as it ages. White-eared Barbets nest in the dead Wood. Ethnobotany This is the Biblical Sycamore tree - (Luke 19). The Fruit is edible when stewed, eaten raw or dried. It can be stored. The dried fruit tastes like sultanas. Figs have a good flavour and more than one crop can be harvested each year. For human consumption it is best collected prior to ripening - to prevent an insect invasion. The Wood is thought to have been used to make sarcophagi in ancient Egypt. Wood is also used for fuel and for making charcoal. Together with the fever tree *Acacia xanthophloea* now *Vachellia xanthophloea*, their branches are used to make fishing fences. In central Africa, the Tree is grown as a shade protector for coffee plantations. Parts of the tree including the milky sap are used in local medicine. In a suitable large environment, this would make a good shade tree. In times of need the Leaves may be eaten.

All parts of the tree, including the milky sap are used in local medicine. This tree is frost sensitive and produces a lot of shade in very large gardens (the crown may reach 30m wide). References Boon, R. 2010. Pooley's Trees of eastern South Africa. Flora and Fauna Publications Trust, Durban. Burrows, J.E., Burrows, S.M., Lotter, M.C. & Schmidt, E. 2018. Trees and Shrubs Mozambique. Publishing Print Matters (Pty) Ltd. Noordhoek, Cape Town. Burrows, J.E. & Victor, J.E. 2005. *Ficus sycomorus* L. subsp. *sycomorus*. National Assessment: Red List of South African Plants version 2020.1. Accessed on 2022/02/13. Coates Palgrave, M. 2002. Keith Coates Palgrave Trees of Southern Africa, edn 3. Struik, Cape Town. Ginn, P. J. McIlleron, W.G. & Mimmstein, P. le S. 1991. The Complete Book of South African Birds. Struik, Cape Town/Singapore. Lawrence, G. H. M., 1951. Taxonomy of Vascular Plants, The Macmillan Company, New York. Tenth Printing 1965.

Schmidt, S. Lotter, M. & McClelland, W. 2002. Trees and Shrubs of Mpumalanga and the Kruger National Park. van Wyk, B. & van Wyk, P. 1997 Field guide to Trees of Southern Africa. Struik, Cape Town. a large tree with spreading crown; young branchlets with a circle of long slender hairs just below the node, otherwise glabrous or nearly so; leaves suborbicular or ovate-orbicular, rounded or obtuse at the apex, cordate or rounded at the base, 2-5 in. long, 1 3/4-3 1/2 in. broad, subentire or slightly undulately toothed, dull and glabrous on both surfaces or minutely puberulous below, sometimes slightly scabrous, palmately nerved at the base; midrib prominent below, continued to the apex of the blade; principal pair of basal nerves ascending to above the middle of the leaf-blade, with 8-10 lateral nerves on their lower sides; remaining lateral nerves about 3 on each side of the midrib, diverging from it at an angle of about 40°, distinct on both surfaces, prominent below, bifurcate near the margin; tertiary nerves very slender, wavy between the lateral ones; veins very delicate and close; petiole relatively short, 3/4-1 3/4 in. long, at first finely papillose and pilose, at length glabrous; stipules deciduous, those surrounding the terminal bud lanceolate, villous; receptacles in leafless panicles produced on the main branches or on the stem, obovoid-globose, sometimes stipitate at the base, about 1 in. in diam., with a conspicuous ostiole, softly tomentose; basal bracts 2, opposite, ovate, subcoriaceous, pubescent outside; ostiole with numerous exserted suberect bracts; outer bracts ovate-triangular, subacute, coriaceous, finely puberulous or glabrescent outside, inner ones spreading horizontally across the ostiole, the innermost longer and descending into the receptacle, glabrous; male flowers sessile near the ostiole; perianth membranous, covering the 1-3 stamens; anther-cells free at the base; female flowers shortly pedicellate; style quite lateral, reddish, with an oblong yellow stigma. null