

Field guide to trees of Southern Africa

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The mainland region of Africa is Southern Africa because it is considered to be robust with an estimate of around 1700 tree species that are native and a couple 100 more that are alien, but have become accustomed to the natural environment; invading, penetrating and replacing vegetation. One of the main factors which influences and greatly affects forestation and the formation of homogeneous biomes of plant species is acclimatization. This has made it challenging for biological scientists to classify tree and plant species with complete phylogenetic certainty since the eco-

logical habitat is of utmost pertinence when it comes to cataloging forestry.

Field Guide to Trees of Southern Africa is a practical book that can be enjoyed by any person interested in forestry and the plant sciences in general. Of the 1700 native tree species it illustratively and descriptively highlights a mixture of alien and natural vegetation types of South Africa. Since the book is designed for a non-specialist reader, it provides an easy to use scheme by which vegetative species are grouply identified by specific key characteristics. Each vegetative species is accompanied by a comprehensive colour photograph of itself (including the presence of fruit and/or flower) as well as its genus name (for scientists). Consequently, this allows non-botanists to identify family recognition. The disadvantage of this book though, is that it does not contain a dichotomous key to divide vegetation types into two as in most other field guides because of the incomplete variety of tree species covered - due to the dense forestation habitat of Africa.

The 536 page book also includes plant usage (medicinal and industrial applications) and an exciting and fairly detailed family description to

which each tree species belongs, as well as maps, indicating the centres of plant diversity and endemism in principally regional and local area, and biomes and vegetation regions in South Africa such as, the Forest Biome, Savanna (Bushveld) Biome, Grassland Biome, Nama Karoo Biome, Succulent Karoo Biome, Desert Biome, Fynbos Biome and specialized vegetation. The back cover contains a summarized guide to identify tree groups based on leaf venation and arrangement. A more detailed diagrammatic representation of this diagram is depicted as A, B and C diagrams within the book.

Vegetation types forms a beautiful part of our heritage and proper human and environmental influence is important for their durability and hardihood. To explore, identify and learn about forestry species is an exciting venture which *Field Guide to Trees of Southern Africa* provides to readers interested in learning about South African landscapes, heritage and culture.

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