



TREE OF THE MONTH: March 2018

African weeping wattle

SA TREE NUMBER

215

Peltophorum africanum: African weeping wattle (eng.), Huilboom (afr.), umThobo (zulu), Mosehla (siswati).

Value and Uses:

A valuable tree to have in the bush, particularly for the leaves and twigs that are eaten by elephant, black rhino, kudu, giraffe, grey duiker, impala. It is also a valuable tree for bee-keepers for it is a good source of nectar and pollen.

The tree produces a good quality timber for furniture and tool handles. At the turn of the last century, the wood of the African wattle was commonly used for 'riempie' benches and chairs.

The African weeping wattle can be successfully planted to give protection and shade to game in the hot summer months with the added pleasure of a mass of yellow flowers attracting insects, and they in turn, attract many insect eating birds. This tree is popular as a bonsai subject. An adult shape and thick corky bark forms in 2—4 years.

Tolerant of drought conditions.



Flowering: From September to April

Fruiting: From December to May

Description:

The African wattle is classed as a small to medium sized tree, its height reaching up to 10 metres. It is not uncommon to find specimens that are multi stemmed.

It is deciduous, losing its leaves during winter. The leaf shape is similar to an Acacia, but the absence of thorns on the wattle should therefore avoid any misidentification.

Flat pods that characteristically hang in clusters are its fruit base.

Interesting facts:

The dominance of this species in the vegetation is taken as an indication of a high level of arsenic in the soil; indirectly this may indicate the presence of gold.

The plant's tolerance to adverse soil conditions makes it a candidate for reclaiming denuded sites.

Habitat:

Occurs in wooded grassland, woodland and along margins of vleis. Grows mainly on well drained soils.

