

CHAMPION TREE PROJECT OF SOUTH AFRICA



Historic Camphor Trees at Vergelegen Estate, Western Cape

BACKGROUND

South Africa is blessed with a rich heritage of trees. The Champion Tree Project is aimed at identifying and protecting individual trees of national conservation importance under the National Forests Act of 1998. Trees can be nominated on the basis of their size, age, aesthetic value, cultural-historic value or importance for tourism.

Only trees of national importance will be protected. In the long run, however, provincial and local authorities will be encouraged to develop their own local Champion Tree lists.



Large Baobab at Platland, Limpopo Province

NOMINATION FORM AND PROCESS

A nomination form has been developed and is available on the website of the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (www.dwaf.gov.za). Guidelines for the nomination of trees are attached to the forms, and are also available in hard copy. Nominated trees may be indigenous or exotic.

Once a year an expert panel will evaluate all nominations and compile a shortlist of proposed Champion Trees. This list will first be published for comment. After consideration of public comments, a final list will be published by notice in the Government Gazette and newspapers.



Tallest Tree in Africa - a Century-Old *Eucalyptus saligna* at Woodbush, Limpopo Province

PROTECTION

Once listed as protected by notice, Champion trees will have special protected status in terms of the National Forests Act of 1998. No such trees may be cut, disturbed or damaged without a licence. A strict approach will be taken to protection, and the issuing of licences will be issued only under exceptional circumstances, such as a tree posing a danger to life or property.

Additional protective measures may be necessary for some trees, such as the erection of fencing enclosures. This project will also aim at raising awareness about the national tree heritage, and to promote it as an asset for tourism.

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