

## *LISSATABA TREE OF THE MONTH*

*May 2022*



Tree of the month: Tree Wisteria

Other names: Vanwykshout (Afr.), Npfimahongonyi (Xitsonga), *Bolusanthus speciosus* (Lat.)

*Bolus* – named after Harry Bolus, a Cape botanist

*Anthus* – Latin word for flower

*Speciosus* – Latin word for splendid, showy, beautiful

SA Tree number: 222

For the next couple of months, the focus will be on trees which remain leafed during winter, gracing the veld with some greenery and providing valuable browse. The Tree Wisteria, as its Latin name implies, is a particularly beautiful tree. It is described a seasonally deciduous with the leaves dropping for a brief period

during early Spring. As can be seen in the image above, the typical growth form shows drooping branches and a narrow crown. This large specimen is at the Nile crossing below the clubhouse (on the side of the road on the Hippo Trail). We have substantial representation on Lissataba with stands adjacent to Nyala Road, along Giraffe Road and also along the drainage line leading into Koppie Dam. Their presence is indicative of clay soils and ground water and they are found in woodland and wooded grassland habitats.

Young trees have smooth grey bark. Older trees have distinctively blackish-brown bark which is deeply grooved longitudinally.



The leaves are compound and arranged in a spiral on the branches. Each leaflet is asymmetric at the base and is glossy green on the upper surface and duller below. The veins are indistinct. Young leaves are hairy.



Spiral arrangement (left), glossy upper leaf surface (below), dull lower leaf surface (right).



The showy blueish-mauve/violet flowers which give the tree its Latin name are pea-like and appear in large hanging bunches. They are scented and appear from August to January.



The fruit appear from September to March as narrow, non-splitting pods in clusters.

The stems are termite- and borer-resistant and grow straight, making good fence poles. The wood does not burn easily. It is used to make side tables and chairs. The Tree Wisteria is a protected tree in South Africa.



Traditional medicine uses include boiling the roots with beans to make a decoction taken orally for the treatment of abdominal problems.

Game is fond of this plant with Vervet Monkeys partaking of the flowers; Grey Duiker consuming the dropped leaves and fruit; and Giraffe benefiting from the leaves.

After the rains of this past year the Tree Wisterias are looking very healthy on Lissataba and they put on a wonderful floral display in November last year.



Reference sources:

Books

Schmidt, E., Lotter, M. & McClelland, W. (2017). *Trees and Shrubs of Mpumalanga and Kruger National Park*. Jacana Media, Johannesburg.

Van Wyk, B. and van Wyk, P. (1997). *Field Guide to Trees of Southern Africa*. Struik, Cape Town.

Venter, F. & Venter, J.A. (1996). *Making the most of Indigenous Trees*. Briza Publications, Pretoria.

Credit for photo of the Tree Wisteria in full flower (above):

<https://nectasource.co.za/product/tree-wisteria-bolusanthus-speciosus/>

Remainder of photo's – Robyn-Lynne Reid

