

TREES OF LISSATABA PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

SEPTEMBER 2022



Tree of the month: Weeping Boerbean

Other names: Huilboerboon (Afr.), Chochelamandleni (Ts.), *Schotia brachyletala* (Latin)

brachypetala – Latin for short petals which are reduced to filaments, the stamens are long and extend beyond them

SA Tree number: 202

Lissataba, and in fact, a large part of the Greater Hoedspruit region is blessed with an abundance of these attractive, ecologically important trees. As evidenced in the above image, Weeping Boerbeans often take up root along rivers and drainage lines. Alternatively, they can also be found in the well-aerated, fertile soil created by termite mounds. These trees can become huge, impressive specimens. Look out for some beauties as you drive the Open Plains Road. They occur along the natural drainage line and there is a particularly large one on the road verge as you descend to pass through the Nile on the same road from the Plains side.

Being semi-deciduous, they appear green whilst the rest of the bush is still holding out for the first rains of the season as they are not inclined to lose all their leaves in one go, thereby always appearing leafed. With the arrival of Spring, in the right conditions (these trees prefer hotter, drier climates), a fresh, soft, coppery flush of new leaf growth appears.



The flowers, for which the tree has earned its name, appear from August to October in dense, red clusters on old wood. Although they are individually small, the sprays in which they grow are very showy and produce so much nectar that, at times, so much drips from the tree that it appears to be weeping.



Apart from the Vervet Monkeys that appear to take up residence in these trees whilst they are in flower, if you spend some time watching the passing show at this time of the year, a large variety of bird species can be enjoyed; both those attracted to the nectar and those coming to feed on insects that are lured by the flowers. Grey Go-Away Birds, Purple-crested Touracos, Barbets, Apalises, Robins, Flycatchers, Cameropteras to name but a few have been busy around these trees whilst I was sourcing my images.

The fruits of the Boerbean grow as long, flat, hard, brown pods which split whilst on the tree to expose the brown seeds.



As can be seen in the adjacent image, the seeds stay attached to the rim of the pod by sticky, yellow 'skins' called arils. These seeds, if roasted after removal of the aril, are edible.

Vervet Monkeys and various bird species also feed on the seeds.

The leaves are evenly compound and young leaves are coppery in colour. The leaf stalk is, at times, winged. The Weeping Boerbean is an important browse tree for game including Nyala, Giraffe, Kudu and Impala (relevant to Lissataba). Whilst travelling elsewhere, be on the look-out for Black Rhino if you happen upon a stand of these trees as they are particularly partial to their bark.

To stop a bleeding nose, the leaves of the Boerbean are burnt and the resultant smoked is inhaled to stop the bleeding. Powdered leaves applied to tropical ulcers hasten the healing process.

The wood of the tree can be used in the making of furniture, particularly benches and chairs. If oiled, the wood darkens with time.

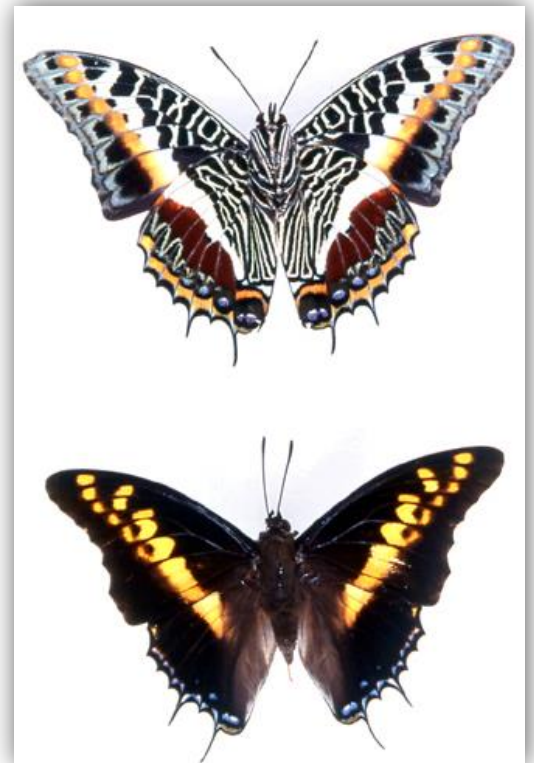




The bark of the Weeping Boerbean is grey, becoming brown cracking as it ages to create a blocky texture. The bark contains tannin which has been used in tanning leather.

In traditional medicine, a decoction of the bark is useful for treating diarrhoea, hang-overs and heartburn, The bark can also be powdered and taken for diarrhoea.

As mentioned previously, many insects are also attracted to the Weeping Boerbean; amongst them are some beautiful butterflies to look out for whilst exploring the area.



Giant Charaxes >
(*Charaxes castor flavifasciatus*)

< Foxy Charaxes
(*Charaxes jasius ssaturus*)



< Large Blue Charaxes
(*Charaxes bohemani*)

Reference sources:

Books

Emmet, M. (2013). *If Trees Could Talk*. Jacana, Auckland Park.

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

Websites

Images

Boerbean seeds and pods:

<https://kumbulanursery.co.za/plants/schotia-brachypetala>

Butterflies:

1) Foxy Charaxes

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charaxes_saturnus

2) Giant Charaxes

<http://www.godofinsects.com/index.php/museum/butterflies-and-moths/butterflies/charaxes-butterfly-charaxes-castor/>

3) Large Blue Charaxes

<https://www.bridgemanimages.com/en/noartistknown/charaxes-bohemani-large-blue-charaxes-mounted-male-butterfly-with-iridescent-blue-patches-and/photograph/asset/5445301>

Remainder of photo's – Robyn-Lynne Reid

