

## Get to know our trees

Over the past year or so, FOSTER has erected about 200 name tags for the 30 most common trees in the reserves. These larger-leaved plants can be found along most of the paths that traverse dune thicket and forest.

Take some time, if you wish, to look at the plant's features. More often than not, the plant is more of a shrub than tree. Don't be deceived; given a favourable habitat (high soil moisture, protection from fire), most can grow as trees. The ability of our trees to adopt different shapes or growth forms is a fascinating feature of our thicket flora.

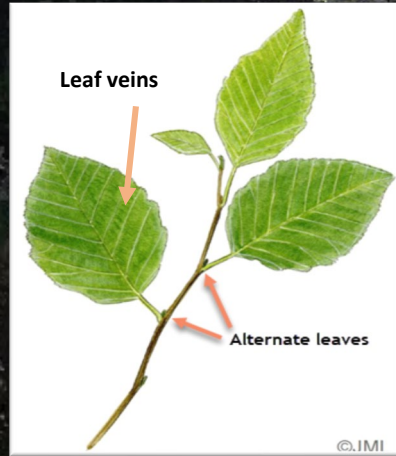
Trees can be readily identified from a leaf-bearing twig. Check if the leaves are simple (a single leaf per leaf stalk) or whether they are compound (two or more leaves per leaf stalk). Are the leaves arranged oppositely on the branch, or are they placed alternately? Are the edges of the leaf toothed or smooth, and do the crushed leaves have a distinctive smell? And so on...there are many more discerning features of the humble leaf.

Take a photo of a leafy twig of one of the tagged trees, and use the species descriptions provided by a tree guide or the internet to discover its distinctive features.

The next three pages provide a taste of how to identify trees in our area.



# Simple leaves: one leaf per leaf stalk



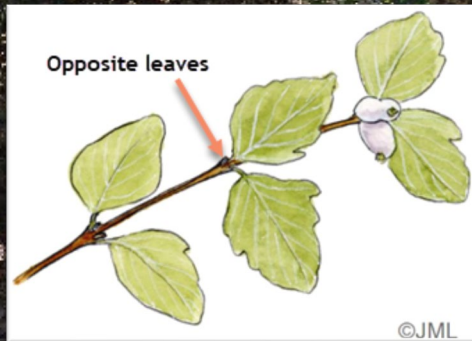
Kershout: leaf stalks pinkish, bent leaf snaps cleanly in half



White Milkwood: if a leaf or stalk is broken, white latex oozes out



Dune koko tree: leaves with shallow spine-tipped teeth



Cape pock-ironwood: hairy pockets where side veins join the main vein



Dune olive: leaves much longer than wide



Small ironwood: leaves roundish, side veins form loops at leaf edge

Compound leaves: two or more leaves per leaf stalk



Blue kuni –bush: three leaves per stalk, uppermost leaf notched



Horsewood: Up to 15 leaves per stalk, crushed leaves smell like horse urine



Knobwood: up to 20 leaves per stalk, crushed leaves smell like citrus, spines on branches and trunks

## Growth forms or shapes of plants

Dune thicket trees show great variation in their appearance, in other words they show high plasticity. The growth form they adopt depends on the where they grow.

For example, White milkwood (left to right, below), depending on soil moisture content and exposure to fire and wind, can grow as a ground-hugging shrub; as part of an impenetrable hedge, intermingled with other species; as a large, multi-stemmed shrub; and as a single-stemmed tree.

Most of our dune tree flora is similarly plastic. When identifying trees in the reserves, observe the plant's growth form and how this varies depending on ecological conditions (dune ridge, slope or swale). An illustrated talk on the FOSTER website ([The amazing behaviour of dune thicket trees](#); see link overleaf) provides some hints as to what produces this diversity of forms.





**FOSTER**  
Friends of the St Francis Nature Areas  
**Who we are**

**FOSTER** comprises of a small group of active volunteers and is funded by memberships, donations and fundraising events. Management involves maintenance of paths, clearing of invasive alien plants, monitoring and providing information, etc.

**BECOME A FRIEND / MEMBER OF St Francis Nature Areas and help to conserve one of the world's richest dune veld types.**

Our vision is to conserve, maintain, protect, and provide access to the biodiversity of the **FOSTER** - managed reserves, whilst promoting active stewardship of the environment.

**FOSTER** manages these priceless nature areas as the state bodies responsible for them are unable / unwilling to do so. These include the Eastern Cape Department of Development, Economic Affairs and Tourism (DETEAT) and/or Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism (ECPT), and Transnet .



**www.foster.org.za**



## More information

### Tree guides

<https://igobooks.co.za/product/product-category/trees-of-eastern-south-africa/>

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.co.za/book/field-guide-trees-southern-africa/9781770079113>

### Illustrated talks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8vdA2AYAKHk>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPZorMVCY\\_M&t=17s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPZorMVCY_M&t=17s)