

DEPARTMENT OF WATER AFFAIRS AND FORESTRY

NOMINATION FORM FOR NATIONAL CHAMPION TREES

TYPE OF TREE (If group of trees, list biggest tree here and attach list of other tree names if the species differ)

Common Name:.....

Latin (scientific) Name:.....

PROVINCE (Where tree(s) is (are) found).....

CONDITION OF TREE(S) (mark with a **v**)      Good.....      Fair.....      Poor.....

DESCRIPTION OF ADDRESS WHERE TREE(S) IS (ARE) LOCATED

Street name & number

(or approximate location ).....

Suburb.....

Farm/Town (Name and number).....

Magisterial District.....

GPS READING OR DIRECTIONS TO LOCATION OF THE TREE(S)

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REASON(S) FOR NOMINATION (mark with a **v**)

Size of the tree(s).....      Age of the tree(s).....      Aesthetic/Landscape value.....

Cultural/historical value.....      Tourism value.....

Additional comments.....

.....

.....

.....

THREATS TO SURVIVAL (mark with a **v**)

Immediate threat.....      Potential threat.....      No threat.....

Additional Comments.....

.....

.....

TREE AGE (if known).....

TREE MEASUREMENTS (if a group of trees, then only measurements of the biggest tree)

Height (in metres).....

Stem circumference (or alternatively diameter) at breast height (in cm).....

Crown spread (or alternatively crown diameter) in metres.....

Size index (if available).....

NOMINATOR

Name.....

Mail Address.....

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Telephone/Fax/Cell/Email.....

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OWNER OF THE LAND ON WHICH THE TREE IS SITUATED

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone/Fax/Cell/Email.....

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PLEASE ATTACH FURTHER INFORMATION AND MAPS, PHOTOGRAPHS IF AVAILABLE

DATE NOMINATED.....

*Post, fax or email the form to:* Champion Trees Project, Director Forestry Technical and Information Services, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, Private Bag X93, PRETORIA 0001 (Fax (012) 336 8847; Email:

[vandermerwel@dwaf.gov.za](mailto:vandermerwel@dwaf.gov.za); [vorsterT@dwaf.gov.za](mailto:vorsterT@dwaf.gov.za))

**PLEASE SEE FURTHER DETAILS BELOW**

GUIDELINES FOR NOMINATING A TREE FOR CHAMPION TREE STATUS

1. Determine what type of tree it is (the species). Consult a tree identification guide or enlist the help of an

expert, if you are uncertain. It is not sufficient for example to say it is “some kind of thorn tree”.

2. In the case of a group of trees the species of the biggest tree must be written on the nomination form, and a list of the other species must be attached. The boundary of the group of trees should be defined if possible. In the case of street trees one can state for example “tree lane on western side of Khumalo Street between Grant avenue and Market Street.” In the case of a group of trees occurring on a farm, a boundary description may be more difficult, and GPS readings may be valuable.
3. The description of location or directions to the tree(s) should be as accurate as possible. Global Positioning System (GPS) readings should be given where possible. If a tree makes the short list of the evaluation panel, it will be visited to check on the accuracy of data provided. It is therefore important to state the correct address and contact details of the owner on whose property the tree(s) occur.
4. The nominated tree:
  - Must fit the definition of “tree” as applicable to trees protected under the National Forests Act No 84 of 1998 ( a self-supporting woody plant with a stem diameter of larger than 10mm at breast height, which is higher than 3m if single stemmed and higher than 5m high if multi-stemmed).
  - Must be alive. Only living trees will be considered.
  - Can be indigenous (tree species occurring naturally in the country) or exotic (an imported tree species occurring naturally outside the boundary of the country).
  - May not be of a species declared as category 1 invader plants in terms of the regulations under the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act No 43 of 1999. Trees classified as category 2 and 3 may be considered, but only if they occur in demarcated areas under controlled conditions as specified in the regulations (for example *Eucalyptus saligna* occurring in a commercial plantation or Jacaranda in an urban setting)
    - Category 1 plants are weeds and serve no useful economic purpose and possess characteristics that are harmful to humans, animals or the environment. - NOT CONSIDERED
    - Category 2 plants are plants that are useful for commercial plant production purposes but are proven plant invaders under uncontrolled conditions outside demarcated areas. – CAN BE CONSIDERED
    - Category 3 plants are mainly used for ornamental purposes in demarcated areas but are proven plant invaders under uncontrolled conditions outside demarcated areas – CAN BE CONSIDERED
5. Determine whether the tree (or group of trees) is of exceptional importance, and deserves national protection. Is the tree of importance only to the local community? If the answer is yes, it may not qualify for protection as a Champion tree. What sets some trees apart from others are often called the “Wow Factor” – the ability to attract attention or inspire awe. It may be the exceptional beauty of a tree lane, the sheer size of a big tree or the age, history or cultural significance of a tree that captivates or captures the imagination. You should be able to motivate the nomination on the basis of one or more of the following:
  - Size of the tree
    - Trees of exceptional height, trunk circumference (or diameter) or crown size (or combination of these – see the formula used to determine overall size below ). These will be trees that are the largest of their kind in the country, and usually not of a tree species that tend to be of a mediocre average size.
  - Age of the tree
    - Trees of exceptional old age. The tree must at least be a century old if nominated on the basis of age. Age is, however, very difficult to estimate in the case of natural trees, or if the planting date of a propagated tree is not known. In some cases experts may be able to make estimates based on the known growth rate and characteristics of a particular tree species. The size (and sometimes form) of a tree can be an indicator of age.
  - Aesthetic/Landscape Value
    - Trees that make an exceptional contribution to the landscape, which is not common in occurrence. Beautiful tree avenues are very common in cities and towns (e.g. the oak avenues of

Stellenbosch and Potchefstroom) and so are trees characteristic of certain landscapes such as the poplars of the Eastern Free State. For obvious reasons it would not be possible to list even a fraction of these as champion trees. The landscape value must therefore be really outstanding.

- Cultural/historic value

Trees that are of exceptional interest due to their value to a cultural group, or for cultural/spiritual events or rituals associated with them. Also trees that are of exceptional historic value due to past events or historic figures/persons to which they relate.

- Tourism value

Trees which are significant tourist attractions, usually due to one of the above factors. Trees may also have curiosity value due to unusual shapes (such as the pancake tree near Nelspruit – a paper bark tree with a spreading flat crown on a short stubby trunk).

## 6. Determine or estimate the size of the tree:

### a) Circumference of the trunk (in centimetres)

Measure the circumference of the trunk to the nearest centimetre by using a flexible tape and measuring around the trunk at breast height (about 1.5m above ground). You could measure it at a lower point if the tree branches out lower than breast height. If the tree has multiple stems protruding from the ground, then measure the largest stem and write “multiple stem” next to the measurement.

Diameter of the trunk could be given as an alternative to circumference. In that case a calliper should be used, measuring the thickness at breast height. If you want to determine the overall size index using the formula below (see d) overall size index), then the diameter should be determined and not the circumference. If diameter is measured instead of circumference, write the word “diameter” after the measurement given on the nomination form.

### b) Height (in meters)

Vertical height is measured from the base of the trunk to the highest twig. Instruments such as a hypsometer are the most reliable. If these are not available, use a ruler. Mark the 1cm and 30cm lines on the ruler with tape. Work in pairs. One person stands at the base of the tree and the other holds the ruler up in front of his/her eyes at arm length and moves back, until he or she can see the whole tree from top to bottom between the 0cm and 30cm mark on the ruler. Move the ruler until the base of the tree is sighted at exactly at 0cm and the top of the tree exactly at 30cm. Then sight out from the 1cm mark to a point on the trunk above the base. The partner marks this spot on the trunk with tape. Measure the distance from the base of the tree to the mark on the trunk. Multiply by 30 to get an approximate idea of the height of the tree.

### c) Crown size (in metres)

Place an object (stone or peg) directly under the outer edge of the crown farthest from the trunk and another at the opposite outer edge of the crown on a line passing through the centre of the tree. Then do the same for the shortest distance between the opposite outer edges of the crown passing through the centre of the tree. Measure both distances with a tape measure. Add the two measurements together and divide the sum by two to find the average crown spread.

### d) Overall size index

If trees are nominated on the basis of their overall size (height, crown size and trunk diameter combined) the following formula is used:

$$SI = d \times h \times 2r$$

Where  $SI$  = size index,  $d$  = trunk diameter,  $h$  = height and  $2r$  = crown spread

(It is not necessary to determine overall size, as long as the height, trunk circumference or diameter, and crown size is given).

## BACKGROUND TO THE CHAMPION TREE PROJECT

Remarkable trees occur everywhere in South Africa. Some are well known, such as the historic “post office tree” in Mossel Bay (a milkwood) and the huge baobab at Sagole in the Limpopo Province (the largest tree of Southern Africa). Others are known only to individuals or local communities. Very few of these trees have protected status, usually as declared National Heritage Resources (previously National Monuments). Examples of trees protected under the National Heritage Resources Act of 1999 include the Mossel Bay post office tree and oak trees in Dullstroom that are more than a century old. Such protection can thus be afforded to both indigenous and exotic trees.

Many old and venerable trees are lost every year, and more often than not, their destruction could have been prevented. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) often receive requests from the public to intervene in such cases, but is usually powerless to intervene if the trees have no protected status. In the vast majority of cases the relevant local authorities should be contacted, especially concerning trees on public land such as sidewalks. Intervention on national level would only be considered in the case of trees of exceptional merit on the basis of size, age, aesthetic, cultural, historic or tourism value. It has to be borne in mind that trees are often felled or pruned for valid reasons, such as diseased or leaning trees that have become a danger to life or property.

Pro-active action is needed to identify and protect the most important trees before they come under threat. The National Heritage Resources Act is a legal tool for the protection of the cultural and historical heritage. This Act, however, focuses at the scale of the surrounding environment rather than on the tree itself, and its lengthy process for declaring objects such as trees as protected are often complicated by issues such as property rights. Trees worthy of protection on the basis of their size, age or aesthetics (i.e. Champion trees) that fall beyond the mandate of the National Heritage Resources Act, can also be protected under the National Forests Act of 1998 (Act No 84 of 1998). These two legal tools may therefore be complementary.

In terms of Section 12 of the National Forests Act of 1998 (NFA) the Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry can declare certain tree species and individual trees or groups of trees as protected. Such protected trees may not be cut, disturbed or damaged and their products may not be possessed, sold or transported without a licence. These licences can only be issued by DWAF, upon investigation of the merits of each case (a list of protected tree species exists already). The destruction or damaging of individual trees declared as protected (such as Champion trees) without a licence, is also prohibited. Such a licence would only be issued in the case of trees becoming a danger to life or property (such as diseased or leaning trees).

Through the Champion Trees Project the Department hopes to identify and protect the most important trees that can be regarded as a national heritage asset of the people of South Africa. Nominations for trees will be accumulated and evaluated once a year by an appointed panel of experts. Trees placed on the short list will then be investigated (including site visits) to check the correctness of information provided, and to obtain further information if necessary. A final selection will then be made from the short list. This final list will first be published in the Government Gazette and two national newspapers for public comment, and then be declared as protected in the Government Gazette (with or without adaptations depending on the review of public comments).