



Oteniqua Yellowwood



Sources:

[en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Afrocarpus falcatus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrocarpus_falcatus)
[Afrocarpus falcatus | PlantZAfrica \(sanbi.org\)](https://plantzfrica.org/sanbi.org/)

Not always a protected tree

The Yellowwood has been vulnerable to logging, a practice which likely claimed many large, ancient specimens. The wood was used extensively for furniture, roof beams, floorboards, door and window frames and boat building. In fact, some of South Africa's famous antiques were made from this distinctively coloured wood.

The straight stems of these trees were also once used for the topmasts of ships and the bark used for tanning leather.



Propagation and cultivation: Ripe fruits are eaten by bats, bush pigs, fruit-eating birds (Cape parrots, purple-crested, Knysna and Ross's louries, Rameron, African green and Delagorgue's pigeons).

Seed dispersal is by those fruit bats, which eat the fleshy covering but discard the hard, woody seed. It is interesting to note that seeds that have gone through an animal guts do not germinate well.

To propagate remove the fleshy part of the fruit to expose the seed. The fresh seed can be sown directly into deep seed trays using a mixture of well-rotted compost and washed sand. The seed may take up to six months to germinate.

Family: *Podocarpaceae*

Genus: *Afrocarpus*

Botanic name: *Afrocarpus falcatus* (syn. *Podocarpus falcatus*)
Afro = of Africa, *karpus* = fruit (Greek); *falcatus* = sickle-shaped (Latin) alludes to the leaves.

Also known as: Common Yellowwood, Bastard Yellowwood, African Pine Tree, and Weeping Yew. In Afrikaans: *outeniekwageelhout*, *kalander*; Sotho: *mogôbagôba*; Xhosa: *umkhobal*; and Zulu: *umsonti*

Origin: Native to the montane forests of southern Africa, where it is distributed in Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, and Eswatini

Habitat: A tree of higher elevations in the tropics, descending to sea level in the subtropics. It grows best in areas where annual daytime temperatures are within the range 13-20°C. It prefers a mean annual rainfall in the range 1,200-1,800mm. Succeeds in sun or light shade, Prefers a well-drained, deep, humus-rich, light-textured soil. It cannot tolerate drought. It may grow as a solitary tree, in small clusters, or in wide monotypic stands.

Description: An evergreen conifer growing up to 60m. The trunk can be 3m wide, and is grey-brown to reddish. It is smooth and ridged on young stems, but increasingly flaky on older trunks.

The leaves are arranged in spirals on the branches. They are small and narrow, up to 4.5cm long by about 6mm wide. They are green to yellowish, hairless, and leathery and somewhat waxy in texture.

It is a dioecious species meaning male and female cones occur on different trees. The male cone is brown with spiralling scales and measures 5 to 15mm long by 3mm wide. It grows from the leaf axils. The female cone has one scale bearing one seed about 1 to 2cm long. The grey-green seed is drupe-like with a woody coat covered in a fleshy, resinous skin.



The large, yellow, fleshy fruits take a year to ripen and hang from the branches in clusters. Female trees bear their fruit irregularly but only every few years. The fleshy epimatium of the cone covers all of the seed, and ripens to a yellow colour, when it acquires a soft, jelly-like consistency.

Indigenous Uses: The bark and seeds have been used in traditional African medicine. The sap is used as a remedy for chest complaints.

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