



**San Diego Zoo**

# **Botanical Tours**



**Elephant Odyssey Trees**



The tour starts at Bashor Bridge and continues all the way to the California condor habitat.



### 1. Triangle Palm

*Dypsis decaryi*

Aptly named for the crisp, geometric shape of its crown, this palm is native to Madagascar. It can bloom year round with yellow and green flowers producing round black fruit.

#### Fun Fact

In its native habitat, this palm can reach heights of 49 feet, yet rarely achieves this in cultivation.



### 2. Elephant Foot Tree

*Beaucarnea recurvata*

The eye-catching swollen base that stores moisture gives this drought-tolerant plant its common name. It does well in containers and produces impressive white flower spikes. Another common name of this plant is ponytail palm; however, it is not a palm, but rather in the asparagus family, *Asparagaceae*.

#### Fun Fact

There are specimens in its native range of eastern Mexico that have been documented to be up to 350 years old.



### 3. Nile Tulip Tree

*Markhamia lutea*

In its native east Africa, this tree can grow to heights of 50 feet and blooms most of the year. It is commonly grown for timber, as windbreaks, and to manage soil erosion.

#### Fun Fact

The two-foot-long seed pods hang down and look like twisted ribbons dangling from the tree.



#### 4. Dragon Tree

*Dracaena draco*



Native to the Canary Islands, these trees can reach massive sizes, yet take about 10 to 15 years before flowering for the first time. The oldest living specimen is estimated to be 250 to 365 years old!

#### Fun Fact

The tree produces a thick, reddish resin which was highly prized throughout history as a colorant in woodworking.

#### 5. Winter Thorn Acacia

*Faidherbia albida*



This thorn acacia can grow to a majestic size and is found throughout much of Africa and the Middle East. It has many uses, from fodder to woodworking to erosion control.

#### Fun Fact

The word *albida* in the botanical name means “white,” and was given in recognition of the tree’s pale branches.

#### 6. Elephant Tree

*Operculicarya decaryi*



Southwest Madagascar is home to many unusual plants, including this one. It survives in this arid environment thanks to its specially adapted trunk and leaves. Small leaves and a water-storing trunk allow the elephant tree to go many months without water.

#### Fun Fact

This plant belongs to the large family *Anacardiaceae*. Other members include poison oak and poison ivy—but also cashews, pistachios, and mangoes.



## 7. Kei Apple

*Dovyalis caffra*

Sharp 2.5-inch-long-spines give this tree some protection from fruit-snatchers! The yellow-orange fruits are edible, but can be tart if not fully ripe. This tree's name comes from its native location—along the Kei River on the eastern side of Africa.

### Fun Fact

Humans use the ripe fruit to make jams and jellies. Birds, baboons, and other wildlife eat the ripe fruit and disperse the seeds.



## 8. Broad-leaved Coral Tree

*Erythrina latissima*

A fantastic red-flowering tree from southeast Africa's coast, this tree has large leaves and corky bark. A good tree for urban settings, it is also a favorite of many types of birds.

### Fun Fact

Coral trees are known for their flowers, inspiring artwork and paintings. Often overlooked are the equally colorful seeds.



## 9. Shoestring Acacia

*Acacia stenophylla*

This elegant weeping-habit tree is found along the eastern side of Australia. Look for the small white flowers among the cool blue-green leaves during the blooming season.

### Fun Fact

The common name shoestring acacia comes from this tree's long, wispy leaves.



## 10. Sweet Thorn

*Vachellia karroo*

Native to southern parts of Africa, this tree reaches a mature size ranging from a small shrub to medium tree. Yellow pom-pom like flowers fill the plant in early summer.

### Fun Fact

These trees are survivors! A year-old seedling can re-sprout even after a fire burns it down.



## 11. Sausage Tree

*Kigelia africana*

From tropical Africa, this medium-sized tree produces odd-looking fruits that hang down and bear a striking resemblance to sausages. The “sausages” are very hard and can weigh up to 20 pounds.

### Fun Fact

The flowers of this tree open at night and are pollinated primarily by bats.



## 12. Decary's Poinciana

*Delonix decaryi*

One of the most unusual and prized trees here at the Zoo, it bears a spectacular display of flowers in late spring and summer. This species grows in the spiny forest of Madagascar, and its habitat is threatened by climate change and human impact.

### Fun Fact

The flowers of this tree open at night and are thought to be moth-pollinated. The white petals are a stark contrast to the red, protruding stamens in the center of the flower.



### 13. Natal Mahogany

*Trichilia dregeana*

The native range of this tree extends from the high rainfall areas of Natal, South Africa to the tropical forest of central Africa. Its desirable wood is used in woodworking. There are also many other uses of this tree, from food to medicine to shade.

#### Fun Fact

The creamy-white flowers attract bees, birds, and monkeys and the fruits and seeds are coveted by baboons and antelope.



### 14. Monkey Thorn

*Senegalia galpinii*

This thorn acacia is from drier woodland areas of southeastern Africa. It is a fast-growing, deciduous tree that can reach nearly 100 feet tall. In the spring and summer, kudu, elephants, and giraffes enjoy browsing on its leaves.

#### Fun Fact

Acacia trees are a food source for animals here at the Zoo. We grow and harvest several species of acacia for animals such as giraffes and okapi.



### 15. Mountain Rock Fig

*Ficus glumosa*

Found among woodlands and rocky outcrops across much of Africa, this plant is mostly absent from the tropical rain forests and arid regions within its range. The leaves from this tree have been used to treat many ailments for over 2,000 years.

#### Fun Fact

With over 120 species growing on our grounds, the San Diego Zoo has one of the largest *Ficus* collections in the world.



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