13. Hippo Fig
Ficus trichopoda
This tree is found throughout central Africa and Madagascar. The specific epithet *trichopoda* means "hairy foot," referring to its massive aerial roots. Figs are actually inside-out inflorescences—the flower blooms inside the syconium (fruit-like structure). It is pollinated by a minute wasp.

The common name comes from the fact that hippos live in the same region as this tree in KwaZulu-Natal.

15. Common Wild Fig
Ficus thonningii
Despite being native to the tropics of West Africa, this fig can grow in relatively dry conditions throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Common wild fig is valuable as dry season livestock fodder because of the nutritious foliage it produces year round.

14. Small-leaved Rock Fig
Ficus tettensis
This small, deciduous fig grows in Botswana, Mozambique, and northern South Africa. Its ability to grow on cliffsides limits its exposure to herbivores and other animal threats.

This fig belongs to a group of plants known as "rock splitters." As their roots find purchase in small crevices, they grow and widen, exerting pressure and ultimately breaking the rock.

Ficus is a core genus in our browse program. We harvest and deliver about 150 tons of Ficus each year, primarily for our elephants and primates at the San Diego Zoo and Safari Park.

10. Red-leaved Fig
Ficus ingens
A sprawling rock fig from Africa, this tree grows on rocks or cliff faces in drier regions, becoming a forest tree in higher-rainfall areas. It goes through a brief deciduous period, followed by a flush of bright-red foliage.

Many species of Ficus are good for bonsai—including Ficus ingens, due to its attractive form and ease of growing.

12. Lowveld Fig
Ficus stuhlmannii
Being a strangler fig, it starts its life growing on the branches of a host tree. As it matures, it sends aerial roots down to the ground. They mature into stems that suffocate their host until the strangler fig eventually stands on its own.

11. Fig Tree
Ficus umbellata
The native range of this fig spans Angola, Nigeria, Senegal, and other west African nations. The striking heart-shaped leaves are very distinctive and can grow quite large.

This species is commonly cultivated around the world as a popular houseplant, similar to fiddle-leaf fig.

This species grows among termite mounds and rocky outcrops called *kopjes* (pronounced "koppie").

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horticulture@sdzwa.org
Botanical Tours

Figs (*Ficus*)
The tour begins at Galápagos tortoises, continuing along Front Street through Australian Outback, and ending in Africa Rocks at the Cape Fynbos penguin habitat.

1. Socotran Fig
   *Ficus vasta*

   Once thought to only be found on the islands of Socotra, this spectacular tree is native to many parts of the Horn of Africa as well. It requires very little care and minimal water, making it a perfect tree for San Diego!

   Socotra, off the coast of Yemen, is often called the “Galápagos of the Indian Ocean” because of the incredible biodiversity found there.

2. Malagasy Rock Fig
   *Ficus menabeensis*

   This fig from Madagascar can be a shrub, tree, or small rock fig, depending on its habitat. This is one of many *Ficus* that are lithophytic.

   A lithophyte is a type of plant that grows on rocks. *Ficus* species that grow on rocks are commonly called rock figs.

3. Lava Fig
   *Ficus petiolaris*

   This species from Mexico is one of the most spectacular-looking fig trees on Earth. When growing in rocky habitats, the roots look like flowing lava as they hug the rocks.

   The genus *Ficus* represents over 850 species of trees, shrubs, vines, epiphytes, and lithophytes around the world, mostly in tropical and subtropical regions.
4. Highland Breadfruit Tree
*Ficus dammaropsis*
From the highlands of New Guinea, this spectacular tree produces giant leaves and softball-sized figs reminiscent of breadfruit. The tree is hard to propagate, so it is uncommon in cultivation.

Fun Fact
In Papua New Guinea, people cook the young leaves of this tree as a vegetable and serve the dish with meat.

5. Sweet Sandpaper Fig
*Ficus opposita*
Found throughout Malesia and in eastern Australia, this small, resilient plant grows in many environments and even survives occasional wildfires. Its common name comes from the sweet figs it produces and the sandpaper-like texture of its leaves.

Fun Fact
Malesia, a region encompassing islands from Indonesia to Papua New Guinea, is an area of incredible biodiversity.

6. Riverine Fig
*Ficus adenosperma*
This unusual rheophyte is found growing along creeks and riverbanks from New Guinea to Australia. These trees look delicate, but they are very strong and are able to survive yearly floods and strong currents.

Fun Fact
A rheophyte is a type of plant that grows in fast-moving water. Its widespread, strong roots keep it anchored.
7. Red-leaf Fig  
*Ficus congesta*

The figs of this small tree dangle from the trunk, not the branches. Native to forest edges and clearings throughout New Guinea and tropical Australia, this small tree’s new leaf growth is an eye-catching red.

Fun Fact

In Australia, fig trees provide many animals with a food source. Cassowaries, in particular, favor red-leaf fig fruit.

8. Figwood  
*Ficus virgata*

Spanning Asia, Malesia, and tropical northern Australia, this medium-sized tree is useful to humans and animals alike. The bright-orange figs are eaten by metallic starlings, a bird from New Guinea and Australia.

Fun Fact

The sap has been used to protect against insect bites.

9. Bee Fig  
*Ficus albipila*

*Albipila*, which translates to “white hair,” refers to the small white hairs that grow on the fig. The common name bee fig comes from the fact that that migrant giant honeybees, *Apis dorsata*, often hung their nests from this tree’s branches in Thailand.

Fun Fact

Historically, the large buttress roots of this fig were used to make war shields.
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