

African Tulip Tree

Common names: The African Tulip Tree, Scarlet Bell Flower Tree, Squirt Tree

Scientific name: *Spathodea campanulata*



The African Tulip Tree originates from equatorial Africa. As the flowers look similar to tulips, the tree is often called the African Tulip Tree. It has vibrant orange red flowers that are bell shaped, and compound leaves. The tree has woody, pointy fruit, winged seeds, and is made up of soft wood. Birds and bats carry out pollination. The buds squirt water when squeezed, leading to the name “Squirt Tree.” The tree is susceptible to damage by strong winds.

The tree is an evergreen tree, and it is used as an avenue tree. Tribes in Africa utilize the wood for drum-making. The bark and leaves can be used medicinally– for ulcers, dysentery, gonorrhea, diarrhea, and as an antidote for poison. In traditional medicine, the plant is used for malaria, and research

shows that the tree possesses antimalarial properties. It is also seen to have antioxidant and hypoglycemic properties.

A very invasive species, according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature the African Tulip Tree is one of the 100 worst invasive alien species. The shade supplied by the tree makes it harder for some native species to survive under the canopy, leading to lower biodiversity, and by its windblown seed and easy vegetative propagation, the tree spreads rapidly.