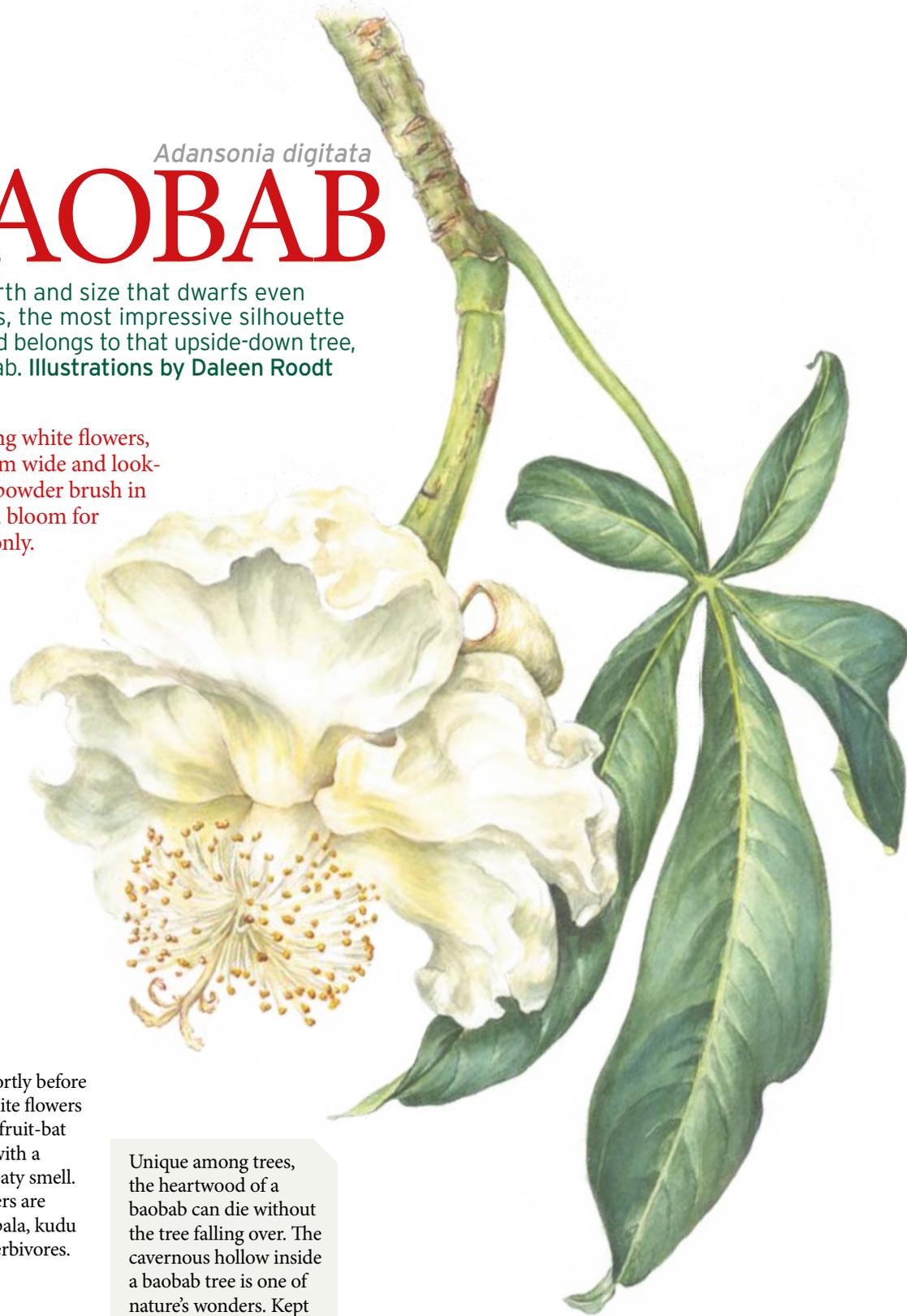


Adansonia digitata
BAOBAB

With a girth and size that dwarfs even elephants, the most impressive silhouette in the veld belongs to that upside-down tree, the baobab. Illustrations by Daleen Roodt

The striking white flowers, about 20 cm wide and looking like a powder brush in the centre, bloom for 24 hours only.



"Kremetart"

Opening shortly before dark, the white flowers attract their fruit-bat pollinators with a pungent, meaty smell. Wilted flowers are eaten by impala, kudu and other herbivores.

Unique among trees, the heartwood of a baobab can die without the tree falling over. The cavernous hollow inside a baobab tree is one of nature's wonders. Kept upright by the outer part of the trunk and the fibrous bark, it plays host to birds, reptiles, rodents and bats.

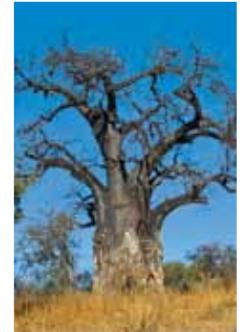
Adansonia digitata



DID YOU KNOW?
Baobab fruit contains more calcium than milk, more iron than red meat, more potassium than a banana and more magnesium than spinach.

From January to May the fruit pods, which resemble a hairy mango, are suspended from long, thick stalks. Rich in vitamin C, these can be eaten fresh. Baboons and monkeys love them. The pulp can even substitute for bread yeast. The large seeds, which contain tartaric acid, can be sucked to quench a thirst. The seeds are also used to make baobab oil, the high vitamin D content of which makes it suitable for moisturising skin and beauty products.

Humans have used hollow baobabs not only for storage, but also as homes, prisons, bars, burial sites and hideaways.



Baobab cavities filled with rainwater attract leopards, genets, bees, humans and many other species.

Elephants, which are partial to the spongy heartwood that consists of 40 per cent moisture, often ring-bark baobabs. Fortunately, the trees have remarkable healing abilities and some have reportedly been growing for more than a thousand years, reaching up to 25 m tall with a bulging waistline of 30 m.

ILLUSTRATION OWNED BY
DAAN SCHOEMAN FINANCIAL
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Daleen Roodt 2013

