

Spring in Madagascar: A Celebration of Trees

Dear Friends,

In many parts of Madagascar spring comes in the middle of the dry season. In central, western, and southern Madagascar very little rain falls until usually sometime in December when the rainy season starts. This year the rains did not come until January. Annual plants don't have enough water to grow and launch into their reproductive cycle until the rainy season starts. But trees summon their reserves and explode into flower beginning in September or even late August.

Madagascar has over 3000 native tree species, 93% of which are endemic to the island, meaning that they occur naturally only in Madagascar. In Madagascar, 63 % of endemic trees are threatened with extinction (The Red List of Trees of Madagascar, 2021). Planted trees in Madagascar are usually fast-growing introduced trees like *Eucalyptus* spp. and *Acacia* spp. from Australia, and pines from Asia and America. Planted ornamentals are often introduced species as well, like jacaranda and royal palm. Madagascar's biodiversity-rich native forests are gradually being replaced with introduced species, leaving many landscapes devoid of native trees.

The General Assembly of the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM) voted in 2021 for all FJKM churches to be green. The Fruits, Vegetables, and Environmental Education Program (FVEE) of the FJKM is helping that to happen by encouraging the growing of native trees at churches, schools and other public spaces to promote awareness of the richness of Madagascar's amazing biodiversity and the need to protect the country's endangered plants and animals. The photographs below were taken between September and December 2024 at either the campus of the FJKM seminary at Ivato near Antananarivo or at the FJKM's Mango Palace fruit center, which is about 200 km NW of Antananarivo by road.

Many thanks to all the churches and individuals who support the ministries of the FVEE.

Please see our upcoming newsletter about changes in PC(USA) and our ministries.

To God be the glory.

Peace,

Dan & Elizabeth



Student pastors photographing a *Phylloxylon perrieri*, a rare tree from western Madagascar.



Phylloxylon perrieri at the Mango Palace. This species has flattened photosynthetic stems. Its wood is highly prized for making spade handles.



Phylloxylon xiphoclada, called harahara, from central Madagascar.



Flowers of *Phylloxylon xiphoclada*.



A Dichrostachys sp. at Ivato.



Paracarphalea kirondron at the Mango Palace. The red parts of these flowers stay on the tree for months.



Ochna sp. at Ivato seminary.



Chadsia versicolor at Ivato seminary.



Chadsia versicolor at the Mango Palace.



Chadsia flammea at Ivato seminary.



Uncarina sp. at Ivato seminary.



The flowers of *Uncarina* spp. are beautiful but the fruits have many hooks that attach to one's clothes and skin. People use the fruits to protect seeds from rats.



Craspidospermum verticillatum at Ivato seminary.



Strophanthus boivinii at Ivato seminary.



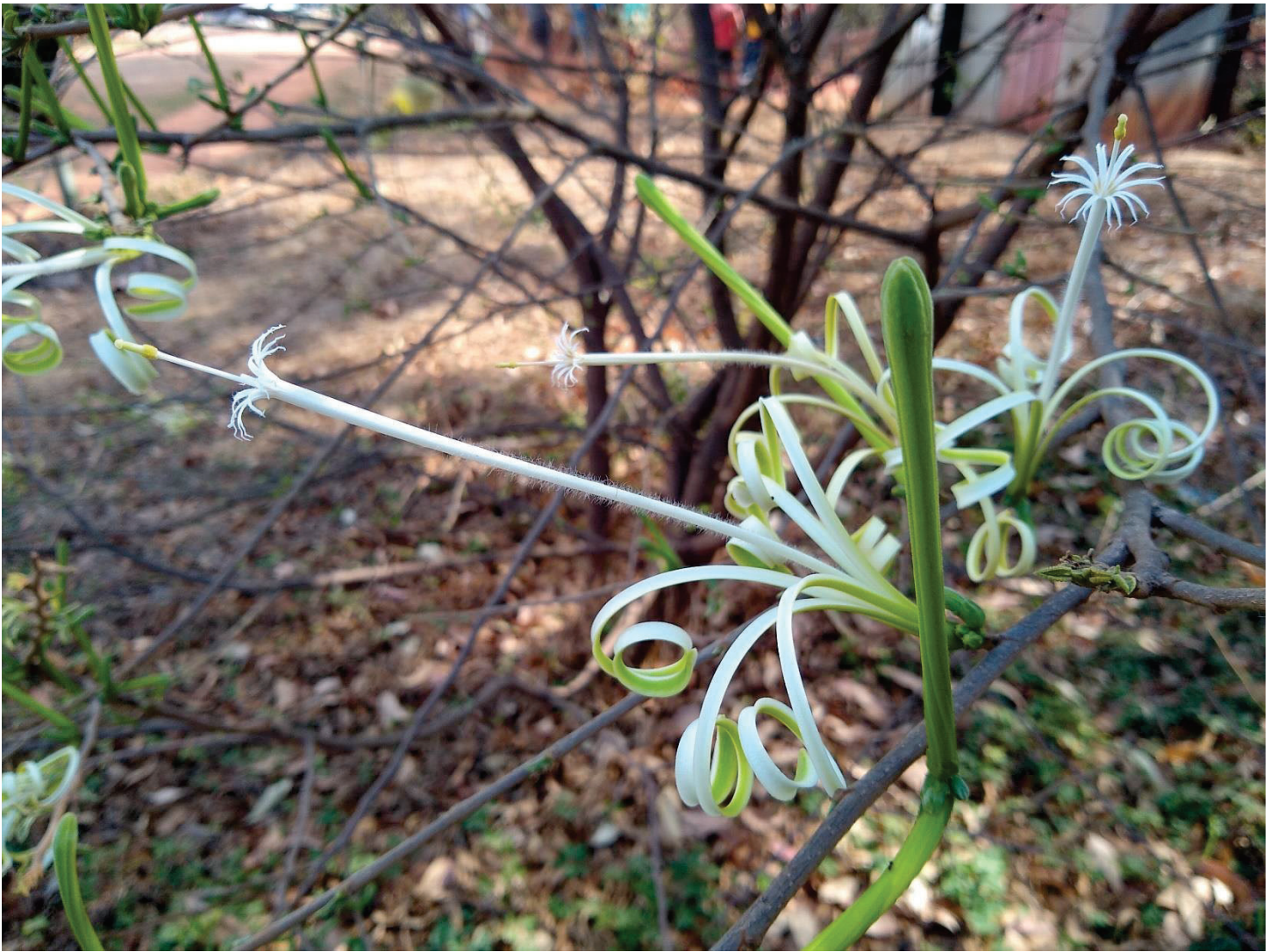
Close-up of flowers of *Strophanthus boivinii*.



Mundulea sp. at Ivato seminary.



Chrysalidocarpus decaryi, starting to flower for the first time at the Mango Palace.



Turraea sericea, a species native to both Madagascar and Africa.



Another *Turraea* sp.



Turraea rhombifolia at the Mango Palace.



Madagascar has many *Hibiscus* spp. some of which can be large trees. This one is from northwestern Madagascar.



Polycardia lateralis produces its flowers on its leaves.



Of course, birds like this Madagascar Hoopoe at our house at Ivato also appreciate the trees.