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## African Monkey Bread Tree

### Adansonia digitata

The African Monkey Bread Tree (*Adansonia digitata*) is the typical tree of tropical South Africa. The local name Baobab originates from the Arabic word bu-hubub. In Senegal the Baobab is very important and characteristic for the country, hence it is even displayed in the coat of arms. In its natural habitat the Monkey Bread Tree can become up to 4.000 years old – a character comparable to the age-old Giant Cypresses in the forests of the west coast of North America. Its relatively short but enormous trunk is even outranking the trunk circumference of the North American Mammoth Tree and can store large amounts of water ahead of the dry season. Additionally, during the dry period, the tree casts its leaves to protect itself from drying out. The treetop of the *Adansonia* is made of strong and rustic branches forming a wide, far-reaching crown. Without its foliage the crown looks like a rootage, contributing to the myth, that the Monkey Bread Tree was planted upside down by the devil. As a plant the Monkey Bread Tree is exceedingly hard to find for sale, but seed propagation can be easily done with a cultivation up to 2 meters high as a potted plant.

**Natural location:** Monkey Bread Trees can widely be found in Africa (*A. Digitata*), as well as in Madagascar and Australia (*A. Gregorii*).

**Cultivation:** Seed propagation indoors is possible throughout the year. Without treatment the seeds will have less than 20% germinability, but with a small trick you can hugely increase the odds: Dash the seeds with hot boiling water and keep them in the water for one day. Then spreadingly plant the seeds about 1 cm deep in potting compost and keep the earth moist but not wet. With a temperature between 23°C and 27°C the seeds should shoot after three to seven weeks. There will be nothing much happening on the surface by then, and it will take another four to six weeks of root formation, until the seedling grows aerial. After three months you can plant your little Monkey Bread Tree, using a mix of two parts of earth, one part of clay and one part of sand.

**Place:** You should offer your Monkey Bread Tree a place in the room or conservatory where it gets much light and warmth. Starting from May, the Baobabs can be kept outdoors in a tub on your balcony or porch. There it will feel comfortable in the bright and warm sunlight and will, because of its African origin, also resist the blazing sun.

**Care:** Younger plants should be watered more regularly and the earth should be kept moist. Older trees can endure longer dry periods – perfect if you like to travel. You may fertilize every four to six weeks, except during the dry season when the tree can cast its leaves.

**During the winter:** The trees should be placed in a bright spot with a temperature not less than 15°C and should be given water every four weeks, to prevent the fine roots from drying out completely.