



## **TREES AND PLANTS**

### **MONKEY PUZZLE**

#### **ABOUT**

The Monkey Puzzle (*Araucaria araucana*) is the national tree of Chile. Many people are familiar with the Monkey Puzzle tree as they are seen throughout Europe in botanical gardens. This evergreen conifer grows naturally in temperate rainforests of south central Chile and adjacent (nearby) areas in Argentina. The tree grows to 6ft 6 inches (2 meters) in diameter (trunk width) and 62 feet (50 meters) tall, and may live over 1,000 years. Native Monkey Puzzle populations are found in the Andean Range, the Cordillera de Nahuelbuta Coastal Range of Chile, and on the eastern slopes of the Argentinean Andes. They grow in mixed forests with deciduous or evergreen species (depending on the location), or in a stand on their own. Between November and December, female flowers start growing as spherical green cones, and each cone releases between 120-200 seeds.

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The Monkey Puzzle is valued for its uniqueness and natural beauty, providing important tourism and recreational opportunities. For that reason, it is often used as an emblem by the national parks and provinces of both Chile and Argentina. As an ornamental tree, it is very popular in gardens of Europe and America. The Monkey Puzzle is of great historic and social importance as the seeds form an important part of the diet of South American indigenous people called the Pehuenche. The tree is frequently used to reconstruct climatic conditions from the past by measuring the growth rings of the trunk, which in many cases may go back hundreds of years. The wood from the Monkey Puzzle is a very hard wood with a moderate natural resistance to fungal decay. This makes it popular for use in building construction, boat structures, piers, and roofs. Monkey Puzzle forests have been rapidly destroyed and diminished by logging, fire, and clear cutting for grazing. It is considered vulnerable as a species, and as a natural monument in Chile, logging of this tree is now forbidden.

For more detailed information visit: [www.globaltrees.org](http://www.globaltrees.org).

#### **TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE**

How many seeds does each cone release?

- a. 50-150
- b. 120-200
- c. 250-300
- d. Up to 1,000

Answer is B.

