THE WORLD'S MOST VALUABLE TREES

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[*Ed. Note: This is another in our series of reprints of articles from previous editions of the Unit journal. It was originally published in the April-May 1967 edition of* Bio-Philately *(Vol. 16, No. 5, pp. 202–203). This article appeared before we had the capability to include illustrations. So, I have tried to enhance it with appropriate images. I also updated the listing of stamps at the end.*]

[*Edward Norfolk Munns (1889–1972) was Head of the U.S. Forest Service's Division of Silvics. He was the author of several books and reports on forestry and forest management. He was also instrumental in proposing and getting approval for the John Muir commemorative stamp (Sc#1245).*]

What are the most valuable trees in the world? This question was asked at a 4-H Club meeting. I gave my answer. As a forester, I mentioned timber trees of great utility: Pine, Oak, Cedar, Teak, Mahogany. What trees would you have given?

4-H Clubs
US, 1951, Sc#1005

White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)
US, 1978, Sc#1765

White Oak (*Quercus alba*)
US, 1978, Sc#1766

Cedar (*Cedrus libani*)
Lebanon, 1963, Sc#405

Teak (*Tectona grandis*)
Trinidad & Tobago, 1980, Sc#335

Mahogany (*Swietenia mahagoni*)
Bermuda, 1973, Sc#301

The question and answer bothered me. So I asked others—foresters, engineers, teachers, architects, nurserymen. Their answers were much like mine. But when I reviewed my "Tree Album," I knew that all the answers were wrong.

So, later I confessed my error to the boys and presented a new and more thoughtful list. The new ones included, in order: Date, Coconut, Almond, Olive, Fig, Rubber, Cinchona, Citrus, and Mulberry. (I wanted a tenth, but couldn't find it.) All of these have been shown in stamp designs, some many times, others seldom and poorly. (See list at the end of the article.)

Whether these are actualy the world's most important trees can only be a conjecture. Probably it would be difficult to get complete agreement on them, or their tabular position. But certainly some of them have been known to man from antiquity, some have provided him food and shelter, and some have saved thousands from illness and death.

The Date and Coconut are perhaps without a peer. Millions of people have lived off of them for many centuries. What would the people of the arid regions have done without the Date, or the folks of the many islands done without the Coconut?

Date Palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*)
Bahrain, 1995, Sc#443

Coconut Palm (*Cocos nucifera*)
Cocos Islands, 1988, Sc#175

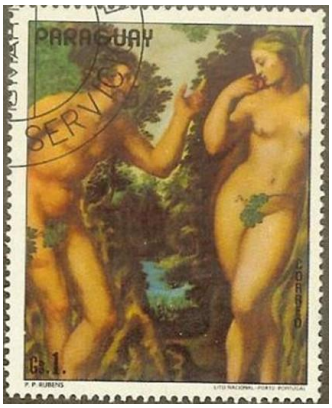
Then there are the "hard" lands, those that are low in fertility, shallow, dry, and often arid, lands that even today support a poor population and a poor growth of vegitation. Here are found the Almond, Olive, and Fig, the trees of poverty-agriculture that help maintain life because they produce where most other crops fail.

Almond (*Prunus dulcis*)
Monaco, 1993, Sc#1852

Olive (*Olea europaea*)
Monaco, 1988, Sc#1645

Fig (*Ficus carica*)
Monaco, 1983, Sc#1376

And the Fig leaf is renowned because it first set the style of the miniskirt.



Adam and Eve by Rubens
Paraguay, 1977, Sc#1710a

One might consider here such trees as the Breadfruit, the Banana (not a tree), or even the Oil Palms.

Breadfruit (*Artocarpus altilis*)
Mayotte, 2005, Sc#213

Banana (*Musa* sp.)
Cameroun, 1981, Sc#682

Oil Palm (*Elaeis guineensis*)
Papua N.G., 2009, Sc#1414-15

Then the Oaks and Chestnut have furnished man with food for himself and his animals for centuries.

Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*)
Ireland, 2006, Sc#1656

American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*)
Canada, 1995, Sc#1370

After going through the commercial realm, we pick up Rubber and Mulberry. Without the rubber tree, perhaps modern transportation and industry would have been impossible. Certainly great wealth to the world has come from the sap of the rubber tree.

The Mulberry is even older, having servied as the foundation of the silk industry on which thousands of people in the Far East have depended for many years. Today, silk is no longer the finest material for dresses or the most expensive cloth, but the Mulberry on which the worms fed deserves its place in the sun.

There might be added other trees whose products have been of major importance. The pines produce a resin that made shipping a possibility several hundred years ago.

White Mulberry (*Morus alba*)
Laos, 2013, Sc#1867

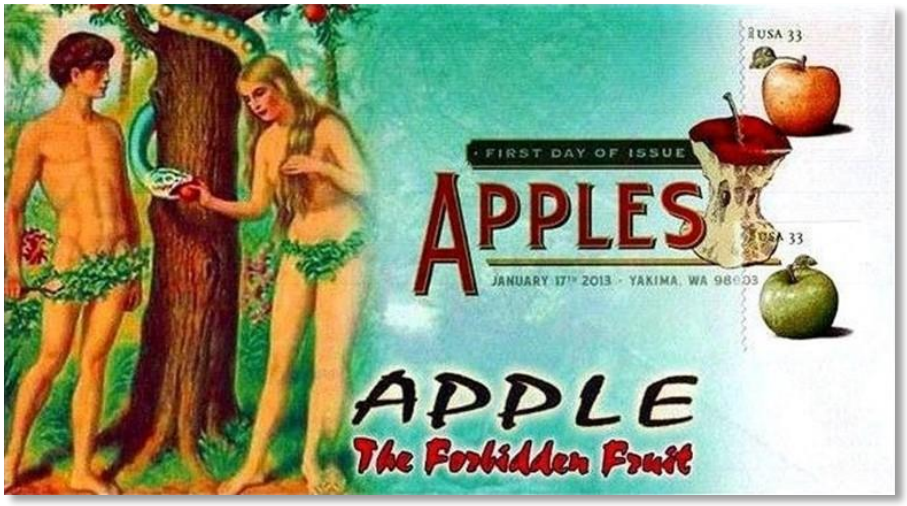
Rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*)
Ceylon, 1935, Sc#264a

In the medicinal field, we would have to include the Orange and Lemon of the citrus family for they are the sources of vitamin C that once cured scurvy and made long voyages possible. And the world must give credit to the Cinchona tree for its bark saved countless millions from a miserable existance and death by malaria. Even today, Peruvian bark is still better than the chemical derivatives that have replaced it in many areas.

Orange (*Citrus* × *sinensis*)
Monaco, 1991, Sc#1775

Cinchona (*Cinchona* sp.)
Rwanda, 1970, Sc#367

Our list is completed with a question mark. Possibly it should end with the Apple, for it is credited with most of man's woes. Had Eve not given Adam a bite of the forbidden fruit, perhaps today we would all be nudists and still living in the Garden of Eden.



Perhaps one should include the trees with religious connotation: the Ailanthus of China, the Baobab of Africa, or the Bodhi Tree of Ceylon. But, what do you suggest?

Ailanthus leaves (*Ailanthus fordii*)
Ailanthus Silkmoth (*Samia cynthia*)
Korea (North), 1965, Sc#640

Baobab (*Adansonia digitata*)
Botswana, 2008, Sc#858

Bodhi Tree (*Ficus religiosa*)
Nepal, 2001, Sc#697

TREE CHECKLIST

[*This is a partial listing of stamps depicting the tree types mentioned in this article.*]

Date Palm: Algeria 80; Bahrain 153, 439–43; Bangladesh 53; Cape Verde 350; Egypt 369; Gabon 337; Iraq 335, 393–95; Israel 44; Kuwait 193; Liberia 1231; Libya 183–85, 234, 420–21, B12; Mauritania 227; Monaco B25; San Marino 968; Sudan 155; Tunisia 357, 753, 1180, UAE 245–46, 538, 540, 1055

Coconut Palm: Anguilla 30; Antigua 714, 2984; Barbados 1172; Brazil 1658, 2636D; Ceylon 270, 292, 313, 329; China 3475; Cocos Islands 155, 173–76; Congo P.R. 658; Cook Islands 1342; Dominica 180, 730; France 3444; French Congo 47–49; French West Africa 44; Gabon 560, 665, J38; Gilbert & Ellice 47, 67, 173; Ifni 141; India 745; Indonesia 499; Jamaica 119; Kenya 758; Kiribati 346, 426; Maldive Islands 555, 948, 1306, 2327; Marshall Islands 668m, 966m, 998, 1031a; Mayotte 242; Montserrat 1228, 1326a; Mozambique 1768; Mozambique Company 132–34, 189; Nauru 45, 62, 176; Netherlands Antilles 233; Netherlands Indies 253; Netherlands New Guinea 47; Nevis 1181b; New Caledonia C97; Niue 38, 841, 870; North Borneo 246; Oman 243; Pakistan 95; Palau 426j, 486f, 1172a; Penrhyn Island 28; Philippines 2252; St. Vincent 2191, 2676; Tonga 59; Trinidad 59; Seychelles-ZES 127; Sierra Leone 922; Solomon Islands 74, 1069D; Sri Lanka 558; Surinam 510; Tanzania 1329, 2283, 2359d, 2427; Togo 216–21; Tokelau 164c, 395; Tonga 1132; Tonga (Niuafo'ou) 257; Trinidad & Tobago 122; Vanuatu 439, 602–03; Vietnam (North) 106; Wallis & Futuna 461, 571, C31; Zanzibar 256

Almond: Algeria 609; Anguilla 247; Dominica 1344; Grenada-Grenadines 1347; Italy 360; Liberia 1231d; Libya 1507h; Monaco 1852; Netherlands 1142h; Palau 416; Romania 2155; Seychelles-ZES 130; Singapore 1433, 1438f; Spain 1879; Virgin Islands 340; Yugoslavia 1845

Olive: Croatia 450; Gambia 2413; Greece 2258; Israel 112, C9; Italy 560, 937; Jordan 1737–38; Liberia 1231; Libya 1507m, B17; Mexico 1042; Monaco 1645; Montenegro 343; Morocco 238; Palestinian Authority 165; Spain 3104; Syria 580; Tunisia 165–84, 361, 1181; Turkey 728–36; Yougslavia 1695

Fig: Australia 2416, 2421; Barbados 429; Bermuda 669; Burkina Faso 469; Dominica 733; Israel 66, 148; Jordan 1899; Lebanon 395; Liberia 1231c; Libya 1507o; Malta 1279e; Monaco 1376; Namibia 974; Peru 382, 416; Salvador 981; South Africa (Transkei) 227–28; South Africa (Venda) 86; Swaziland 657, 766; Syria 686; Turkey 791; Yemen 234, J24; Zambia 157

Rubber: Bolivia 775; Brazil 1934; Cameroun 177–97, C105; Ceylon 264, 323; Colombia 665; Congo P.R. 588–89; Gabon 705; Ghana 333; India 849; Indonesia 500; Ivory Coast 1157; Liberia 310, 753, 2731; Malaya 96, N35; Malaysia 53, 135; Middle Congo J23–J33; Mozambique 159; Mozambique Company 112, 159; Papua New Guinea 132; Singapore 1349; Sri Lanka 1403; Thailand 566

Cinchona: UN-Geneva 187; Colombia 923, 925; Congo D.R. 444, 446, 448; Cuba 759; Ecuador 1320; Poland 1088; Rio Muni 10, 30: Rwanda 304, 367

Citrus: Bermuda 676; British Honduras 200; China 3474; Colombia 589; Dominica 126; Dominican Republic 1289d; Fiji 1244; Gabon J39–J40, J44; Gambia 2785d; Germany B1027; Iraq 231; Israel 120, 1767b; Jamaica 122; Japan 3425e, Z536; Jordan 2137–41; Kenya 755; Libya 1507j; Mayotte 254; Micronesia 248; Monaco 1775; Mozambique 1768; Netherlands Antilles 498; New Caledonia 1044; New Zealand 762; Pakistan 89; Russia 1587; South Africa (Ciskei) 125; Syria 775–79; Thailand 1538; Trinidad & Tobago 150; Tunisia 1179; Vietnam (North) 2384; US Q12

Mulberry: Afghanistan 640–41; Bermuda 674; Italy 640; Laos 1867; Libya 1507c; Maldive Islands 549; Malta 1279d; Palau 421b; St. Vincent 1674h