

1. Fado of The Cork Oak – Cliff Fell

An acorn born
In Portugal,
The work of my bark
Antique and subtle.

Don't cry. It is only I.
And this is
My fate: I will bear witness
To the passage of Justice.

To strum on a fishbone harp,
Were there someone
Who still possessed
The subtlety to build it.

Now I am buoyant
With light.
I will sing to you my fado,
The song of my fate.

And yield none of my skin
To the cork-cutter's
Blade, who would undo me
Like an overcoat,

Though near or far,
The shot of a champagne cork
Could raise my spirits,
Turn me like a dervish

My sapwood left blood-red
And raw, flayed alive
Like Marsyas,
The singer who defied

Into skirts of light
Whirling on currents of
Air, ocean, lake,
My branches uplifting

Apollo in a song contest.
His punishment.
What a fate it was.
Help me, help me, he cried,

The vagabond stars
And passing cars.
Oh, the world is only an
Act of imagination.

Why do you strip me
From myself?
Is this justice?
Oh, put a cork in it,

So let us imagine this:
I am the way to the moon
And gateway
To the Sacred City.

The torturers call
To him howling in the hills.
Put a cork in it,
As you might call to me,

My leaves will guide
The shapes of light you make,
Or play host to
Shadows that flee into the sky.

But how can I, or why?
Everyone has to make their song:
Mine is for the wind to play,
As yours might be

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2. The Taller, The Better – Matt Brophy

I still stand tall, I still stand giant.
Age has not encumbered me you see,
As I am no limp strip of bark yet,
Though once I was small!

My roots first grew in the year of 1890,
And as I rose up to the blue I began to hear the wind.
The voice of the wind whispered to others
Creating rumours to title me 'The Murder Tree'.

I heard others like you – you who listen now,
They all said it too. Could I complain?
Well I did try... I heard my own leaves rustle!
Or was that simply the foolish wind playing in my hair again?

I often think on the shed to my side, which once held four like you.
I know their life was stripped, and I feel cold for them.
Or is the cold just one more prank of the wind?
(We do fight, the wind and I... but we never understood why.)

Now I'm taller than most but not all,
And I grasp onto my view of the passing nights and days.
Sometimes... the sky is a ceiling painted grey
With a burnt cake of clouds smashed to its surface.

Most times... I win the fight against the wind
And the thunder and lightning clap in applause,
An audience of nature all praising me!
And sometimes ribbons of sunlight fall

Down to me and the sky stays blue –
Sensitive to birdsong and cathedral bells.
The sound ripples the air,
And the wind cowers behind me.

So there you have it! This is my story –
Of how I became better than the others,
Tall and of course beautiful.
Oh the smug Sequoia Giganteum I am!

3. Sequoia Giganteum – Amber Cawthorne

Come lay your hands upon my flesh
That you may feel the soft warmth
Of uninterrupted growth.
My undeniable vitality
Now grow with me
Through the centuries,
millennia if let be
And I, here among my kind
Fortified by their presence
Until our bodies unite
can truly begin to age
Together, and up.
When our crowns meet
In windswept discussion
We will speak of you and your touch.

4. Dawn Redwood – Howard Gaukrodger

Watch out for my toes! And please don't pull on my branches!
I may not have eyes, but I can feel.

So what do you call me? Do you really want to know?
Glyptostrobooides is my first name, and Metasequoia my family.

But my friends call me Dawn Redwood - most appropriate I find,
as the sun rises and illuminates my crown and rusty tints.

My elders come from China: "shui-shan", I heard them call me
but I'm a local now, rooted in the community.

To save our threatened species, they sent their children to
foster parents around the globe, and several here in New Zealand.

I was born in 1951, planted beside the eel pond in damp, mulched soil,
ideal to avoid ageing skin and threadbare branches.

As some relish a suntan, so I enjoy my autumn coat of copper,
before I shed my finger-like foliage to wallow in winter's sleep.

Fast growth is one of my attributes, and I'm aiming for 23 metres.
My girth keeps me rigid in the cruelest of storms and measures one fifth of my height.

But in these tranquil gardens where all people can find peace,
it's not my size or skin I'm proud of, but my symmetry and grace.

In conjunction with:



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5. I am Tilia – Erika Lind Isaksen

For a hundred years
I have stood here
grown tall, spread my wings
yet some of my siblings are taller -wider
I have time to catch up
like my far distant cousin in England
I may live till I'm 2000 years old

you may know me as the common lime
but you won't get lemons from me, oh no
I am here, serving her majesty
observing the world
I may be common but I have class

my sweet fragrant flowers have
powers to heal
colds,
coughs
fever
infections
inflammation
high blood pressure
and many more . . .

honeybees enjoy my abundant nectar
aphids love me
I am never lonely

my kind are oh so useful
sculptures have been carved
instruments made – for we have good acoustic properties
we are suited for natural and stained finishes
we cover many windows as blinds
our bark hides a secret

a little seed, I came by boat
I have grown
I have observed
watched the ducks
listened to secret sweet nothings
whispered by lovers
hiding from the gaze of others
I have watched you pass me by
I watched your parents, your grandparents
I will watch for generations to come

you may call me Linden tree
under the wings of my canopy
I will inspire
poets
songwriters
playwrights
writers
some of their words oh so romantic
Under the rose is a drying tear
Under my linden tree

I love this peaceful place
I have stories to tell
I may be common but
I am serving the queen

now make like a tree and leave

In conjunction with:



6. The Bunya Bunya Tree – Anonymous

Hi there,
Yes you, it is me!
I can see you all, way down below.
Past my many spindly branches, wooden horizons
And round textured trunk – I am a funky looking tree don't you think?
Oh, I've been around. From extinction up North, leading to my new home.
There is where I learned the Australian way.
Now here I am, standing before you all.
Hundreds of years old and ugly as a beautiful tree can be.
I am a Pine, the Bunya Bunya tree.

I hang out with Redwoods quite often,
We look good together, said the Great Design.
With my big round nuts which grow inconveniently un-often,
But they call me a liar, they say I'm no pine, that I am like a Monkey Puzzle tree,
But that's not me! How could I be?
Giving me the playground nickname of
The False Monkey Puzzle Tree.

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7. The Tibetan Cherry Tree – Dannah Lloyd

I feel you walking past me:
come listen to me speak.
My name is Prunus Serrula.
I am only young.

I like to play and dance
and sway
with my friend the wind
on a summer's day.

Some know me as the Tibetan cherry.
Tibet is where my people lived.
And In autumn, my leaves put on the robes
of the Dalai Lama and his monks.

And in the months of winter time,
my branches go naked, bared for all to see:
then I shine so bright,
my bark a bronze-red gloss;

then I am smooth to the touch.
And if you do,
the skin of my bark will glow the more
with a subtle patina of light.

8. Scented Leaves – Kelvin Tait

Hey you! Please stay a while and listen.
My name is Cinamomum Camphora,
a bit of a mouthful , right?
So Cammy is fine if you wish. Or Ka Mee.

This land is native to me now,
I come from the Orient,
chronicled from the land of China.

19-something or other was when I was planted here,
just as a mere sapling.
Anxious but glad too I was when I saw a familiar face:
good ol' Rodney the Japanese maple down the way.

Over the passing years I've grown fond of this land,
the lush flora and fauna, the fresh air
and well, you know,
'You fullas.'

Though at a stage you were rude I thought,
dangling this ball of staghorn fern from my arm.
I mean, Why? What for?
Though now I understand:
the provision of a friend and companion.

Please, take in my scent before you leave,
And pay a visit to good ol' Rodney down the way.

Palm to Palm – Rachel Bush and Lindsay Pope

Tonight, in this strange light I have cold feet.
For twelve decades I have dug my toes into this ground
daily reached for the sky then sought my nightly rest.
A shiver within me escapes as I rustle at the moon.

Cold feet, and savage, spiky fronds, that's us.
But you're so lovey dovey - you rustle -
I prickle at, I'd spear the moon.

It comforts me that you are by my side.
Your steady leg's my sentry and my guide
in our vigil at this gate. Your headdress
is adorned with small jewels.

Excuse me. Just look at my huge
epiphytes that flourish
in the armpits of my fronds
there under my crown,
above my one long leg.

I marvel at your tendrils too.
If only my fixed and scabrous limb
would permit a hop towards you.

We've left our run, our heavy hop, too late
Now we're one hundred and twenty two years
We must behave ourselves and be sedate.

My sap feels sluggish now
And my tired fronds droop.

You're right, it's cold here.
The Canary Islands,
our dear, our distant home.
That'd be the life,
all Spanish guitars,
blue sea, sunny days,
balmy starry nights.

I just remember before
we migrated here, the home
loam of the Canaries.
On the Isle of Dogs
a Phoenician sailor named me.
Did your name and beauty
come from air or sea?

A Phoenix palm, it has a ring.
Phoenix, it means most beautiful.
Or the Phoenix, the bird reborn
after it's reduced by fire
to ash. Could that be us?

You indeed. No time to dream.
People, noise, brightness, glare.

Not sure how I feel about
all this light.
Not sure I want people watching
us all night.

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