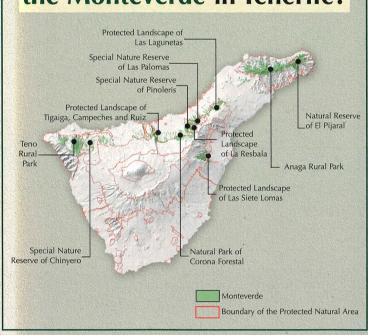
The MONTEVERDE trees of Tenerife



Where is the Monteverde in Tenerife?



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THE MONTEVERDE beckons to us. A thick, mysterious forest, where the trees are always green and where it rains most of the year. Only this rain often falls from the trees instead of the sky, as they are expert in "stealing" the humidity from the North-easterly trade winds (*Alisios*), transforming it into tiny droplets. These 'mist baths' are the reason why life constantly flourishes under the forest's tightly-woven roof.

It might sound impossible, but this type of forest is so old that it already existed before human kind walked the face of the Earth. After the last ice ages, the Monteverde, which at that time covered the whole Mediterranean basin, could only survive on certain Atlantic islands that were not affected by these climatic changes. The Canaries still has some remnants that have survived with difficulty through to the present day.

Today is your opportunity to get inside this 'living relic' and, with the help of this guide, discover some of its best-kept secrets. Without going any further for the moment, how many different trees do you think there are in the Monteverde? They might look all the same to you at first glance and, true, they do share many of the same characteristics. But, actually, the carpet of leaves that covers its paths has been laid by twenty different tree species. To recognise them in the mist will be a real discovery.

KEY

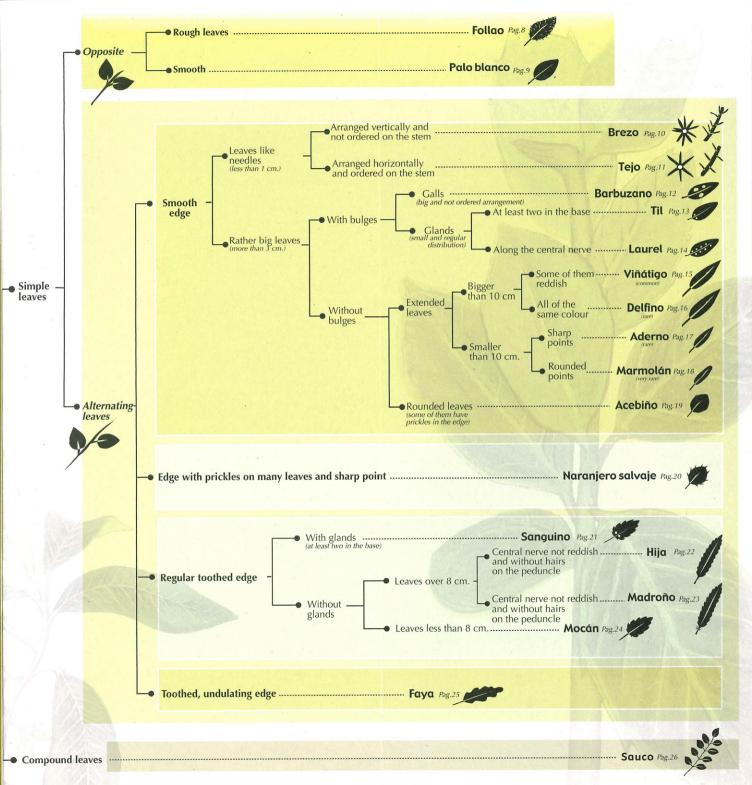
for determining Monteverde trees from leaf characteristics.

This key will enable you to identify the various trees you will find along the path by observing its leaves. You need to choose one of the alternatives in the first alternatives key, then go on to the next one, and so on until finally you are led to the name. So that you don't make a mistake, it's better to observe several leaves on each specimen.

As a final step, you should check on the page indicated beside the tree name that it is, actually the species you think it is. This will also give you interesting information on its appearance, distribution and former uses.

This key is based on the one published by Arnoldo Santos (*Flora de Canarias I. Árboles de Canarias. Enciclopedia Temática Canaria.* Ed. Interinsular Canaria, S.A.)





Glossary of terms

These are the terms used in describing tree characteristics. Some are technical terms normally used by experts, but most are commonly used, everyday words (although with specific meanings). If you are in any doubt, here you have the definitions and illustrations.



Simple leaf This is formed by a single blade, and is the most common type.

Compound leaf This is one that is divided such that it has the appearance of several leaves rather than one. Each of these divisions is called a leaflet. The "false branch" that unites them, being part of the leaf, is of the same colour and texture as the blades.







Alternating leaves Leaves that come out at different points, alternating from one side to the other.

Opposite leaves Leaves that come out at the same point, one in front of the other.

Toothed edge Has projections like the blade of a saw. In some species, these projections are regular, following the same pattern, and in others they are irregular.



Smooth edge Doesn't have any kind of projection.





Edge with some prickles.



Extended leaves
Are much longer than they are wide (at least double).

Rounded leaves
The length is hardly greater than
the width (less than double).



Glands Small, regular bulges some species have on their leaves. They have a secreting function.





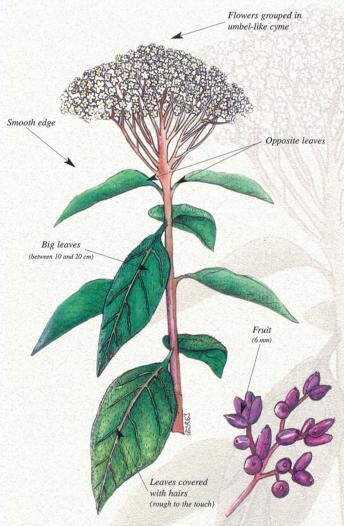
Galls
Large, irregular bulges not present on all the leaves, occasioned by insect stings.



Peduncle
This is the stalk that joins the leaf to the branch.

Follao

Viburnum rigidum



It grows in almost every corner of the forest. It is the only Monteverde species whose leaves are covered with hairs on both sides. Its shoots, straight and flexible, are used in the traditional game "juego del palo", to make baskets and in tomato and banana cultivation to hold up the plants. Its flowers and fruits have antifebrile, antirheumatic and purgative properties.

Palo blanco

Picconia excelsa



Prefers the sunnier and less humid areas of the forest. Its bark is a very light brown colour, peppered with white spots, giving it its common name in Spanish (Palo Blanco). Its strong wood, of a pinkish hue, has been used to make agricultural tools and also cart axles.

Brezo

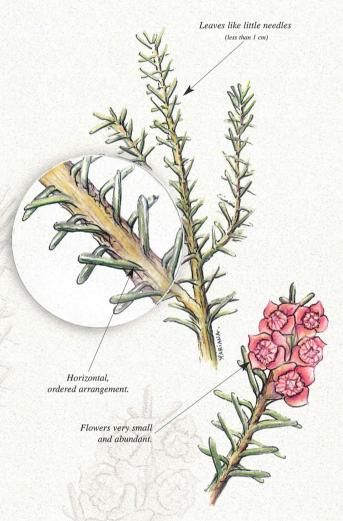
Erica arborea



This is abundant in clearings and on windy hilltops. It has been used to make charcoal, furniture and agricultural tools. Its tender branches are used as bedding for livestock. Its flowers and leaves have been used to control cholesterol levels, improve the kidney function and to reduce swellings from insect bites.

Tejo

Erica platycodon



Lives on hilltops and areas with steep relief that are highly exposed to the North-easterly trade winds, as it needs abundant humidity. It grows on poor soils and is exclusive to the Canaries, living only in certain corners of the forests of Tenerife, La Gomera and El Hierro. It has been used on occasion as firewood, livestock bedding and fodder.

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Barbuzano

Apollonias barbujana



This lives in sunny areas of the Monteverde. Its generic name *Apollonias* is dedicated to Apollo, the Greek god of beauty. Its wood, of a lovely dark colour and extremely strong, is popularly known as "Canarian Ebony". It is traditionally used to make furniture, craft objects and agricultural implements.

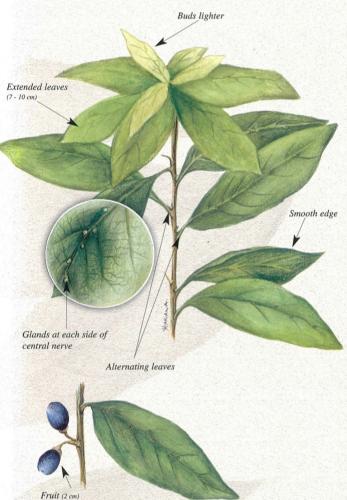
Til Ocotea foetens



Also known as Teil tree, this tree prefers the most shaded areas, its presence here indicating that the forest is very well conserved. Its leaves are used as fodder for cows. Its wood is valued for its hardness and long life, although it does give off quite a pungent rotting smell when first cut, hence its scientific name (*foetens*).

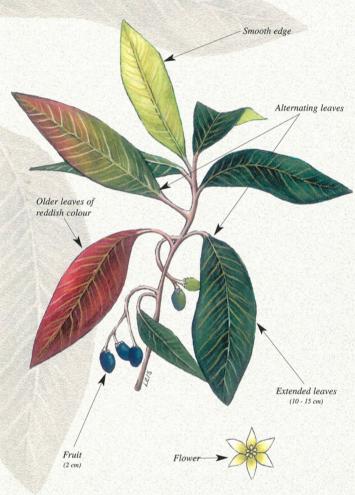
Laurel

Laurus novocanariensis



It is also known as "loro" and is common even in impoverished areas in mid-recovery. Its leaves have been used as a condiment and its wood to make agricultural tools. Its fruit are a treat for a variety of birds. Its trunk often displays a large amorphous mass, caused by a parasitic fungus known as "la madre del loro" ("mother of laurel").

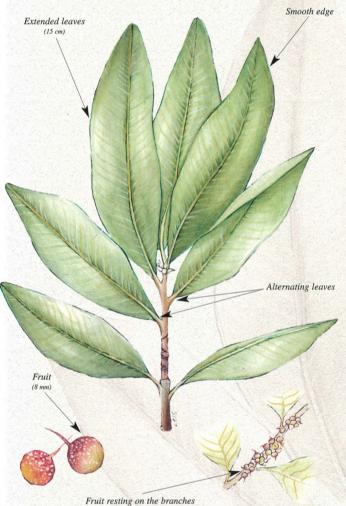
Viñátigo Persea indica



This is a relative of the avocado tree, although, unlike that of the delicious avocado, its own fruit is toxic. Only very few forest animals, like the Bolle's pigeon and the Laurel pigeon eat this without apparently suffering any "side effects". Rats, on the other hand, frequently show symptoms of drunkenness after biting its fruits and leaf buds.

Delfino

Pleiomeris canariensis

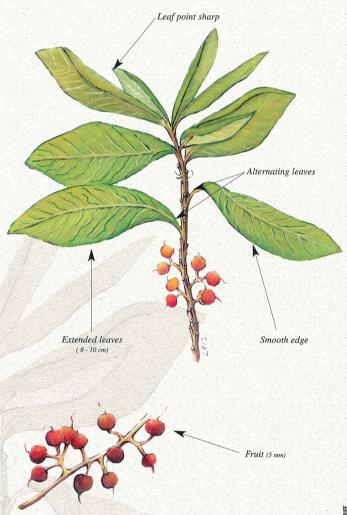


A very rare tree, with few specimens. We can find it in Tenerife, Gran Canaria, La Palma and La Gomera. Its leaves are much larger than those of any other tree in the Monteverde. It is not known what use could be made of this species.

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Aderno

Heberdenia excelsa



This is one of the least common trees of the Canaries Monteverde. They form dense groups in certain areas of the wood, as they have the capacity to form new specimens from the shoots that emerge from the root. Its fruit are used to make jam and its wood was once used in cabinet-making.

Marmolán

Sideroxylon mirmulano

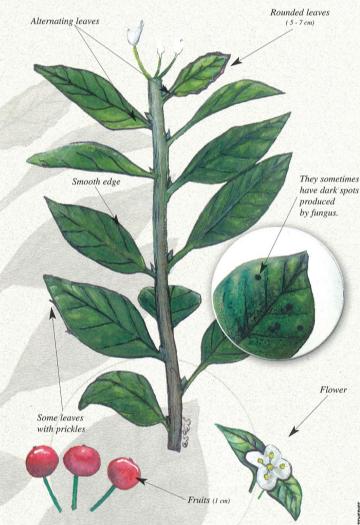


There are very few specimens of this species, present only on some inaccessible crags of the lower areas of the wood. It's common name in Spanish, "marmolán", compares its hard wood with marble. Its scientific name, *Sideroxylon* also alludes to its hardness ("sidero" is iron and "xylon", wood).

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Acebiño

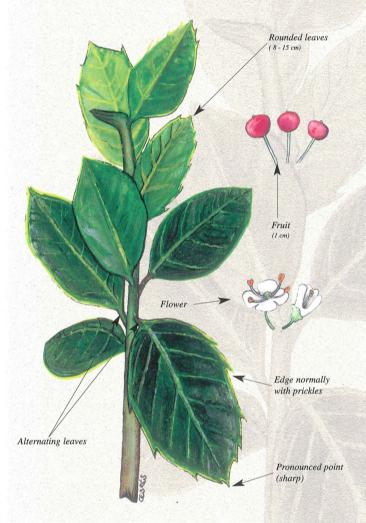
Ilex canariensis



This is one of the most common trees in the Monteverde. It even grows in impoverished areas currently in the process of recovery, next to myrtles and briars. Its wood was used to make shepherds' crooks, sticks for the "palo" game, agricultural tools and as firewood for cooking palm honey in La Gomera.

Naranjero salvaje

Ilex perado ssp. platyphylla



This grows in the most shaded parts of the Monteverde of Tenerife, La Palma and La Gomera. Its wood has been used to make craft items, agricultural tools and to fashion sticks and pitchforks. Its glossy leaves and striking red fruit make this tree an ideal ornamental for gardens.

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Sanguino

Rhamnus glandulosa



This species prefers the more humid zones. It was used as a diarrhoea remedy and to regenerate skin. Its wood is highly valued, especially for making timple guitars. Unlike its "neighbours", it fruits in the summer, providing one of the few food resources for the "vegetarian" birds of the Monteverde at this time of the year.

Hija

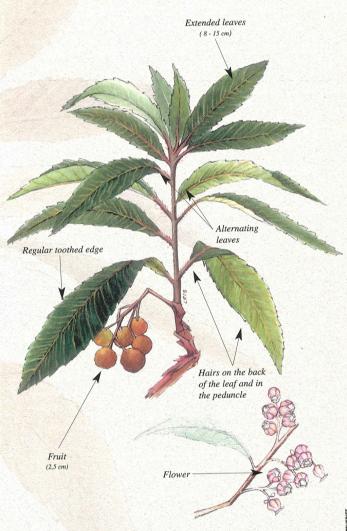
Prunus lusitanica ssp. hixa



This is found in Madeira, the Azores and the Canaries. It belongs to the rose family and has its characteristically beautiful small flowers. Its wood absorbs vibrations from impacts without heating up and hence has been used for the handles of stone hammers.

Madroño

Arbutus canariensis



This lives in the sunniest areas and at the periphery of the forest. It stands out against the greenness of the Monteverde with its striking reddish-orange, smooth trunk. It is believed that its exquisite fruit is the "solid gold apple" mentioned in the Greek legend "The Garden of the Hesperide" coveted for its capacity to make humans immortal.

Mocán

Visnea mocanera



Grows on the lowest slopes of the wood, on sunny crags. Its edible fruit, known locally as "yoyas", were used intensively be the guanches in a fermentation process that produced a molasses called "chacerquén" or "charcequén". Chroniclers tell of the medicinal and stimulating properties of this substance.

Faya Myrica faya



Also known as "haya", this is a quite common species also to be found in impoverished areas and at the sides of roads and tracks. Along with the briar, it forms the so-called "fayal-brezal", a community populating the upper edge of the Monteverde and zones of the forest that were once intensively exploited. In times of famine, the firetree fruit, known as "creces", were used to make a kind of "gofio" (roasted flour) which satiated many stomachs.

Sauco

Sambucus palmensis



This grows in the best-conserved areas of the Monteverde of La Palma, La Gomera, Tenerife and Gran Canaria. Because it is so scarce, a programme has been undertaken to reintroduce it into its natural habitat. Also, for its lovely appearance, it is also grown in gardens. It has been used to cure eczema and to relieve coughs.

To find out

more

There are several publications on the Monteverde, should you wish to find out more, such as:

BAÑARES, A. & E. BARQUÍN (1982). Árboles y arbustos de la laurisilva gomera (Parque Nacional Garajonay). Ed. Goya. Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

FERNÁNDEZ A., & COL. (1998). El Parque Nacional de Garajonay. La Gomera. Ed. O.A. Parques Nacionales. Madrid.

GARCÍA, M. (1989). El bosque de la laurisilva en la economía guanche. Ed. Aula de Cultura de Tenerife. Santa Cruz de Tenerife

KUNKEL, G. (1981). Árboles y arbustos de las Islas Canarias. Guía de Campo. Ed. Edirca. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

PÉREZ DE PAZ, P. & C. HERNÁNDEZ (1999). *Plantas Medicinales o Útiles en la Flora Canaria. Aplicaciones Populares.* Ed. Francisco Lemus. San Cristobal de La Laguna.

SANTOS, A. (1979). Flora de Canarias I. Árboles de Canarias. Enciclopedia Temática Canaria. Ed. Interinsular Canaria, S.A.

VV. AA. (2001). Travesía por Anaga. Un recorrido por el Parque Rural de Anaga para conocer y valorar su Patrimonio Natural y Cultural. Guía del Patrimonio. Ed. Park Management Office. Island Council.

This guidebook would not exist had it not been for the idea and enthusiasm of Carmen and Israel, two professionals at the Centro de Visitantes Cruz del Carmen (Visitors' Centre Cruz del Carmen) who can tell you all about the natural heritage of the Anaga Rural Park. The pictures it contains are the result of the patience and determination of three young illustrators, who undertook to draw a natural subject about which they were almost completely unfamiliar.

Finally, we would like to thank Luis Delgado, Carlos Eudoxio Hernández, Vicente Quilis and José García Casanova, who have managed ably to get across what they feel about the flora of this forest.

Ésta es una guía sobre los árboles. Pensando en ellos y en todos los seres vivos, la hemos impreso en PAPEL RECICLADO. Usted puede ayudar a salvar árboles reutilizando el papel. No tire este folleto, devuélvalo o páselo a otra persona.

If you should decide to go on an excursion into the Monteverde with this guidebook in your hand, you will be able to get to know its trees "personally". But it doesn't only teach you how to tell them apart, it also encourages you to discover the real secrets of this enchanted forest. If you listen hard, you'll be able to hear its "soundtrack" and you might even like to make a guess on where each sound is coming from. You might also discover that behind the green hide a wide range of colours, unmistakable smells and even tastes that the aborigines experimented with. The important thing is to let the essence of the Monteverde enter you as a gift to your senses.

The respect and admiration we cultivate for this unique forest will no doubt help enable future generations to enjoy this explosion of life to the full.









