The Grey Poplar (*Populus canescens*), **Plants in riparian areas are Cat 1b.** a non-seeding sterile hybrid should technically not be a problem at all. Yet the Grey Poplar is problematic in all nine Provinces, typically along most major water courses. It was introduced from Eurasia around 1920 as an anti-erosion agent and for matchwood manufacture. Although it does not produce seed it regenerates vigorously from root suckers. Coppicing and suckering are triggered when the mother plant is damaged in any way e.g. by felling. The plant invades and transforms any damp areas. It is a common sight along river courses in the Oudtshoorn district, is very well established in Wilderness Heights and river courses in and around George. Most species of Poplar have invasive surface roots and are therefore not suitable for small gardens or near flowerbeds. The columnar types have been very popular as windbreaks in many areas of the country and have also been extensively used in avenue planting.

**Identification:** Grey Poplar is a deciduous or semi-evergreen tree between 10 and 20 meters tall, occasionally reaching as much as 35 meters. The bark is white or grey with horizontal dark lines becoming darker with age. Buds and twigs are covered in a light down. Leaves are dark grey and shiny above while the underside is grey or white-woolly to green and smooth. The leaves are large up to 120mm long almost triangular. The flowers are reddish catkins (male only) about 60 mm long in spring.

**Control:** Grey Poplar is spread by means of root suckers. Attempting to remove the species without the use of a registered herbicide is futile. Any felled tree must have the stump treated with an herbicide (Chopper is the only herbicide registered for this purpose). No herbicides are registered as general foliar sprays. Mechanical clearing is exceptionally challenging as the entire root system needs to be removed to prevent suckering from any root/stump material inadvertently left behind.


**Substitutes:** *Leucosidea sericea* (Oldwood), *Combretum ertrophyllum* (River Bushwillow)