

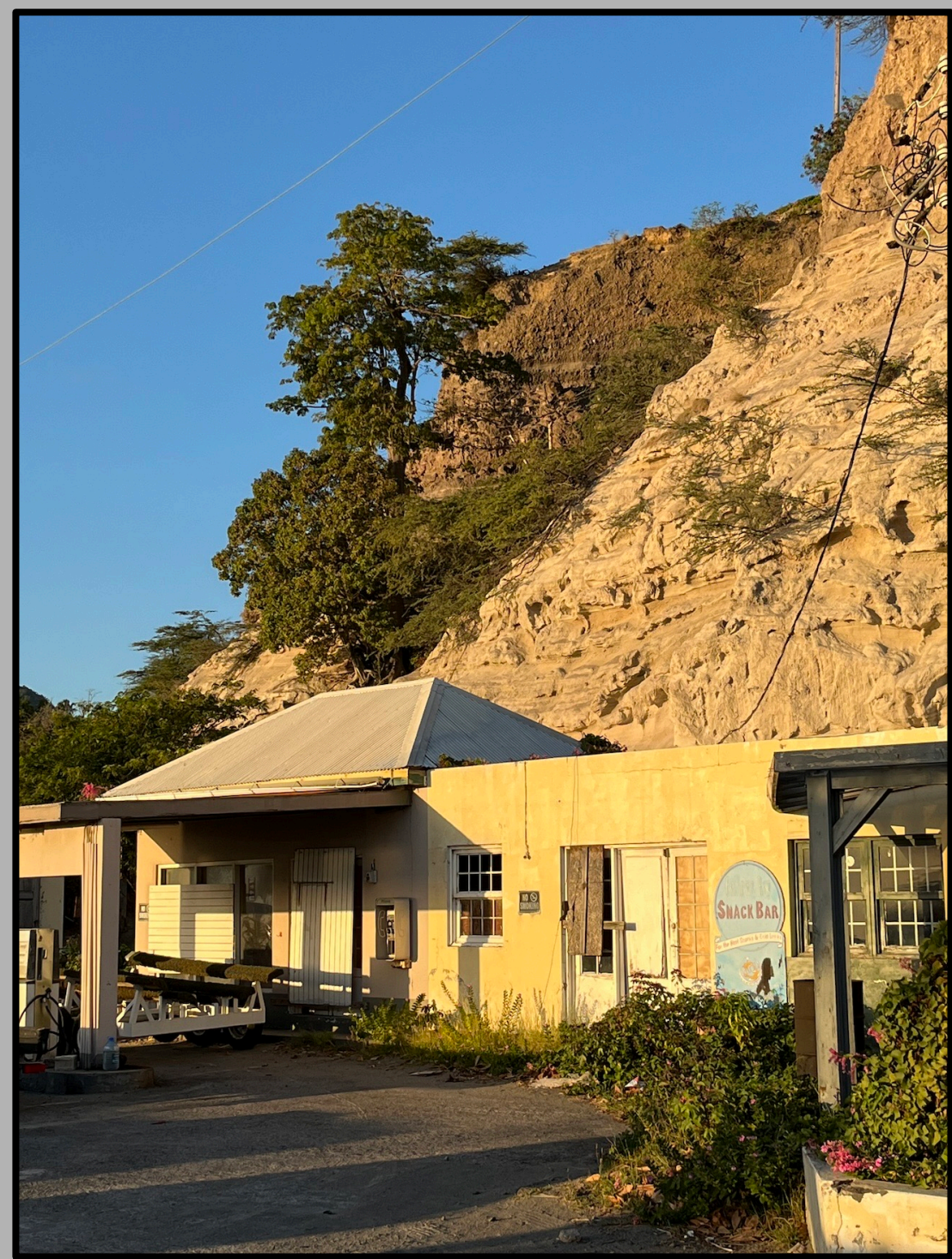
# Searching for Ceibas in the Lesser Antilles

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Largest ceiba along waterfront, at the base of the old Slave Path (or Bay Path).



Possible naturally seeded ceiba above abandoned restaurant on port road.



Storm-damaged ceiba northwest of Slave Path (or Bay Path); three additional ceibas in background (including largest observed at base of path) along road.



(www.statiagovernment.com)



Early St. Eustatius waterfront (above) and water view in 2022 (left). Minimal tree cover suggests direct planting of ceibas found in contemporary landscape.



Preliminary observations on Sint Eustatius identified three general categories of ceibas. The first, and most prominent, is Lower Town ceibas, at the base of the cliff that separates upper and lower Oranjestad. Lower Town was the center of the island's economy at its peak, with hundred of warehouses, merchant houses, shops, taverns, and more. Ceibas in Lower Town appear to be young, with the oldest along the road itself; three ceibas on the cliff face may be naturally occurring offspring of the others. The second category is Upper Town domestic ceibas. Few in number, ceibas are found in private yards and with one exception seem to be for landscaping. The third category are ceibas in The Quill, the most heavily vegetated part of the island. Ceibas were noted from the rim of the volcano, and ceibas are mentioned in tourism literature; additional field visits are required to document this category further.



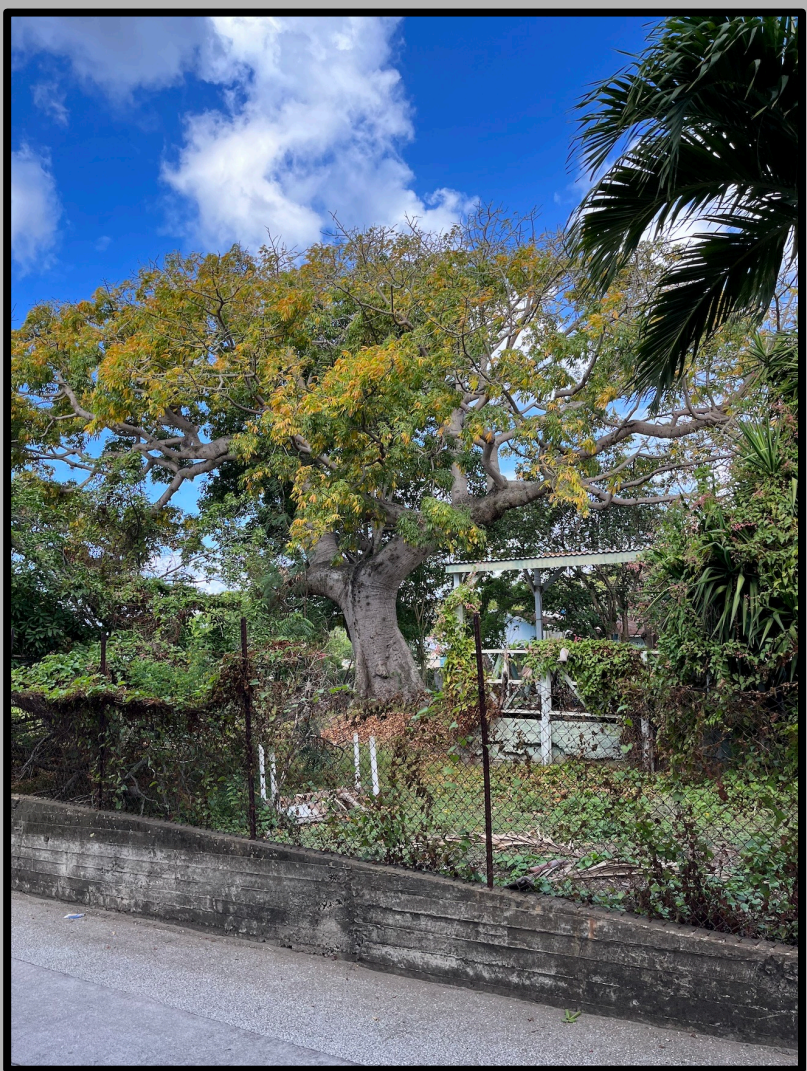
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Sint Eustatius (Statia), is a special municipality of the Netherlands located in the Leeward Islands. Only 8.1 square miles, Statia was a Dutch sugar island and is famous for the "First Salute" and the American Revolution.



(www.cartahistorica.com)

Upon arriving in the Caribbean, early Spanish explorers including Columbus, Oviedo, and Las Casas were impressed by the immense size and distinctive seedpod fibers of *Ceiba pentandra*. A valuable tree to the indigenous cultures of the Caribbean, the "sayba" (from the original Taino) was used for dugout canoes and its fiber for clothing. Ceibas also had spiritual significance for the Taino as guardians of the forest, and holds cultural meaning throughout the Greater Caribbean. Recent cultural-historical field studies in Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, south Florida, and Grand Cayman, as well as the mainland of Middle America, have documented the prominent place of ceibas in the cultural landscape, with nearly all trees intentionally planted, though some may exist in natural contexts, as in Sint Eustatius.



Domestic ceibas observed in Oranjestad Upper Town, including dead ceiba left standing (bottom left) and ceiba as part of fence structure (below right).



Mixed native and exotic vegetation inside The Quill (Mount Mazinga); ceibas can be found throughout the crater (above).



Ceibas along the waterfront in Lower Town, where a road stretches from the port past the Slave Path to a new access to the northwest. Age and location suggests these five trees were intentionally planted. Parking on ceiba roots (far right) is damaging to the tree, suggesting inattention or unawareness of cultural significance.