This striking slow growing succulent is a poisonous member of the grape family native to South Africa.

Rob: *It’s cyphostemma juttae, and you can see it has this huge swollen trunk just like the Beaucarnia. That’s one of the strategies that plants have adapted in desert conditions – is a larger trunk that they’re able to store water in. This, surprisingly, enough is in the grape family. And when it’s in fruit it actually has clusters of little red fruits that look just like grapes. I’m always worried somebody’s going to try one, but I would advise against it. It’s kind of surprising what plants are in what families and sometimes you see these weird relatives from very tough areas of the world that have adapted to be a totally different life form than what we’re normally used to in a certain family.*

The white papery bark is another adaptation this plant has made to the hot, dry conditions of its native habitat. In summer, the peeling bark helps to reflect the harsh sunlight so that the plant keeps cool. In winter the large, fleshy, serrated leaves that grace this succulent’s branches fall off, giving the tree grape an almost other-worldly appearance.