TALL, thin trunks with smooth white bark marked with black horizontal scars and prominent black knots, Pando are the most picturesque and graceful trees, distributed widely in North America. Pando, meaning ‘I spread’ in Latin, is the name given to the colony of quaking aspens that look like a forest but is actually a single organism. Yes, that is true!

Scientifically known as *Populus tremuloides*, it is a deciduous poplar tree and is one of the several species commonly referred as aspen. This enormous golden grove is located in the Fishlake National Forest of Utah states of United States. Pando is called a clonal colony which occurs in plants, fungus and bacteria. A clonal colony is a group of organisms that possesses same genetic makeup. Pando is the oldest of all clonal colonies on Earth.

Also known as the trembling giant, the grove spread in approximately 106 acres of land with a number of 47,000 or so trees, really is a single organism. The individual trees are not individuals, but stems of a gigantic single clone. The clone is truly massive, estimated to weigh collectively about 6,000,000 kilograms, making it the heaviest known organism on the planet. All the trees are genetically identical to each other sharing a single colossal underground root system. The root system of Pando is believed to be 80,000 years old. The colour of Pando turns brilliant gold when summer shifts into
provocation, multiplied over the thousands of trees can be disquieting, as human incursions have given them the new reason to tremble. Pando’s trees are in danger due to droughts, beetles and microbial disease. Adding to this is the heavy grazing by animals like elks and deer resulting in terminated growth of new offshoots. Foresters are taking measures to keep the animals out by putting fences and stimulating growth of new stems by cutting some trees.

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fall, the best time to see them.

Unlike many trees, which grow through flowering and sexual reproduction, the mode of reproduction is vegetative in quaking aspens. They reproduce asexually by the process called ‘suckering’, sprouting new stems from the expansive lateral root of the parent in suitable conditions and adequate sunlight, connecting all to one another that they are considered one single organism. The products of photosynthesis, food, and nutrients and are shared through the stems.

The quaking aspen is named aptly after the stirring of its leaves which are easily quivered by even a gentle breeze. The fluttering sound produced with only the slightest