

# Integral trees of odd diameters

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## Abstract

A graph is called integral if all eigenvalues of its adjacency matrix consist entirely of integers. Recently, Csikvári proved the existence of integral trees of any even diameter. In the odd case, integral trees have been constructed with diameter at most 7. In this paper, we show that for every odd integer  $n > 1$ , there are infinitely many integral trees of diameter  $n$ .

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## 1 Introduction

Let  $G$  be a graph with the vertex set  $\{v_1, \dots, v_n\}$ . The *adjacency matrix* of  $G$  is an  $n \times n$  matrix  $A(G)$  whose  $(i, j)$ -entry is 1 if  $v_i$  is adjacent to  $v_j$  and 0 otherwise. The *characteristic polynomial* of  $G$ , denoted by  $\varphi(G; x)$ , is the characteristic polynomial of  $A(G)$ . We will drop the indeterminate  $x$  for simplicity of notation whenever there is no danger of confusion. The zeros of  $\varphi(G)$  are called the *eigenvalues* of  $G$ . Note that  $A(G)$  is a real symmetric matrix so that all eigenvalues of  $G$  are reals. The graph  $G$  is said to be *integral* if all eigenvalues of  $G$  are integers.

The notion of integral graphs was first introduced in [5]. The general characterization problem of integral graphs seems to be intractable. Therefore, it is natural to deal with the problem within specific classes of graphs such as trees, cubic graphs and so on. Here, we are concerned with finding integral trees. These objects are extremely rare and very difficult to find. For instance, among trees up to 50 vertices there are only 28 integral ones [1] and out of a total number of 2, 262, 366, 343, 746 trees on 35 vertices only one tree is integral. For a long time, it has been an open question whether there exist integral trees of any diameter [13]. Many attempts by various authors led to the constructions of integral trees of diameters 2–8 and 10,

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see [6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12]. Recently, Csikvári found a nice construction of integral trees for any even diameter [3]. In the odd case, all integral trees of diameter 3 have been characterized by a result from number theory given in [4]. Infinitely many integral trees of diameter 5 were first constructed in [9]. The existence of integral trees of diameter 7 was established in [7] where the authors found four such trees. In this paper, we show that for every odd integer  $n > 1$ , there are infinitely many integral trees of diameter  $n$ .

## 2 Csikvári's trees

In this section, we revisit the trees constructed in [3] and compute their eigenvalues using a simple argument. We will make use of them to construct new integral trees of odd diameters.

A *rooted tree* is a tree with a specified vertex called the *root*. For a rooted tree  $T$ , we denote by  $T'$  the forest resulting from removing the root of  $T$ . Let  $n$  be a positive integer and  $T_1, T_2$  be two rooted trees with disjoint vertex sets. Then  $T_1 \sim nT_2$  is the rooted tree obtained from  $T_1$  and  $n$  copies of  $T_2$  by joining the root of  $T_1$  to the roots of the copies of  $T_2$ . The root of  $T_1$  is considered to be the root of the resulting tree. For positive integers  $r_1 < r_2 < \dots < r_n$ , we define the rooted tree  $C(r_1, \dots, r_n)$  constructed in [3] recursively as

$$C(r_1, \dots, r_n) = C(r_1, \dots, r_{n-2}) \sim (r_n - r_{n-1})C(r_1, \dots, r_{n-1}),$$

for  $n \geq 2$ , with initial trees  $C()$  and  $C(r_1)$  being the one-vertex tree and the star tree on  $r_1 + 1$  vertices, respectively.

The following lemma is proved in [2, p. 59] for  $n = 1$ . The general case is straightforward by induction on  $n$ .

**Lemma 1.** *Let  $T_1, T_2$  be two rooted trees and let  $T = T_1 \sim nT_2$ . Then*

$$\varphi(T) = \varphi(T_2)^{n-1} (\varphi(T_1)\varphi(T_2) - n\varphi(T_1')\varphi(T_2')).$$

The following lemma can be used to determine the eigenvalues of Csikvári's trees and their multiplicities.

**Lemma 2.** *Let  $n \geq 2$  and  $r_1, \dots, r_n$  be positive integers. Then*

$$\varphi(C(r_1, \dots, r_n)) = \varphi^{r_n - r_{n-1}}(C(r_1, \dots, r_{n-1}))\varphi(C(r_1, \dots, r_{n-2})) \frac{x^2 - r_n}{x^2 - r_{n-1}}.$$

**Proof.** For convenience, we set  $P_k = \varphi(C(r_1, \dots, r_k))$ ,  $Q_k = \varphi(C'(r_1, \dots, r_k))$  and  $d_k = r_k - r_{k-1}$  for  $k \geq 1$ , with the convention  $r_0 = 0$ . Since  $C'(r_1, \dots, r_k) = C'(r_1, \dots, r_{k-2}) \cup$

$d_k C(r_1, \dots, r_{k-1})$  for  $k \geq 2$ , we have  $Q_k = P_{k-1}^{d_k} Q_{k-2}$ . By Lemma 1,

$$\begin{aligned}
P_k &= P_{k-1}^{d_k-1} (P_{k-1} P_{k-2} - (r_k - r_{k-1}) Q_{k-1} Q_{k-2}) \\
&= P_{k-1}^{d_k-1} \left( P_{k-2}^{d_{k-1}} (P_{k-2} P_{k-3} - (r_{k-1} - r_{k-2}) Q_{k-2} Q_{k-3}) - (r_k - r_{k-1}) P_{k-2}^{d_{k-1}} Q_{k-2} Q_{k-3} \right) \\
&= P_{k-1}^{d_k-1} P_{k-2}^{d_{k-1}} (P_{k-2} P_{k-3} - (r_k - r_{k-2}) Q_{k-2} Q_{k-3}) \\
&\quad \vdots \\
&= P_{k-1}^{d_k-1} P_{k-2}^{d_{k-1}} \dots P_2^{d_3} (P_2 P_1 - (r_k - r_2) Q_2 Q_1) \\
&= P_{k-1}^{d_k-1} P_{k-2}^{d_{k-1}} \dots P_1^{d_2} (P_1 x - (r_k - r_1) Q_1) \\
&= P_{k-1}^{d_k-1} P_{k-2}^{d_{k-1}} \dots P_1^{d_2} x^{d_1} (x^2 - r_k).
\end{aligned}$$

Note that  $P_1 = x^{d_1-1} (x^2 - r_1)$  and so  $P_k = P_{k-1}^{d_k-1} P_{k-2}^{d_{k-1}} \dots P_1^{d_2} x^{d_1} (x^2 - r_k)$  holds for  $k \geq 1$ . To complete the proof, apply this equality for  $k = n-1, n$  and then compute  $P_n/P_{n-1}$ .  $\square$

It is not hard to see that diameter of  $C(r_1, \dots, r_n)$  is  $2n$  provided that  $r_n - r_{n-1} > 1$ . The following theorem readily follows from Lemma 2 which establishes the existence of infinitely many integral trees of any even diameter.

**Theorem 3.** [3] *The set of distinct eigenvalues of the tree  $C(r_1, \dots, r_n)$  is  $\{0, \pm\sqrt{r_1}, \dots, \pm\sqrt{r_n}\}$ .*

Let us introduce an alternative representation of  $\varphi(C(r_1, \dots, r_n))$  and  $\varphi(C'(r_1, \dots, r_n))$  to be used in sequel. For  $C = C(r_1, \dots, r_n)$ , we let

$$f(C) = \prod_{i=1}^{\lfloor \frac{n}{2} \rfloor} \frac{\varphi^{d_{n-2i+2}}(C(r_1, \dots, r_{n-2i+1}))}{x^2 - r_{n-2i+1}},$$

where  $d_i = r_i - r_{i-1}$  with the convention  $r_0 = 0$ . By Lemma 2,  $f(C)$  is a polynomial and clearly we have

$$\varphi(C) = x f(C) \prod_{i=1}^{\lfloor \frac{n}{2} \rfloor} (x^2 - r_{n-2i+2}) \quad (1)$$

and

$$\varphi(C') = f(C) \prod_{i=1}^{\lfloor \frac{n}{2} \rfloor} (x^2 - r_{n-2i+1}). \quad (2)$$

Note that by Lemma 2, if  $r_n - r_{n-1} > 1$ , then the positive zeroes of  $f(C)$  read as  $\sqrt{r_1}, \dots, \sqrt{r_{n-1}}$ .

### 3 A class of trees

In this section, we introduce a class of trees which will be used to obtain integral trees of odd diameters. For positive integers  $n, r, r_0, r_1, \dots, r_n$  such that  $n \geq 2$  and  $\max\{r_0, r_1\} < r_2 < \dots < r_n$ , let  $U = C(r_1, \dots, r_n)$ ,  $V = C(r_0, r_2, \dots, r_{n-1})$ ,  $W = C(r_2, \dots, r_n)$ , and define

$$T(r, r_0, r_1, \dots, r_n) = U \sim (V \sim rW).$$

Note that for  $n = 2$ , we let  $V = C(r_0)$ . It is easily checked that the maximum distance between a vertex of  $C(k_1, \dots, k_n)$  and its root is  $n$ . So  $T = T(r, r_0, r_1, \dots, r_n)$  is a tree of diameter  $2n + 1$ . We proceed to determine  $\varphi(T)$ . Applying Lemma 1, we find that

$$\begin{aligned}\varphi(T) &= \varphi(U)\varphi^{r-1}(W) (\varphi(V)\varphi(W) - r\varphi(V')\varphi(W')) - \varphi(U')\varphi(V')\varphi^r(W) \\ &= \varphi^{r-1}(W) (\varphi(U)\varphi(V)\varphi(W) - r\varphi(U)\varphi(V')\varphi(W') - \varphi(U')\varphi(V')\varphi(W)).\end{aligned}$$

First assume that  $n = 2m + 1$  is odd. By (1) and (2), we have

$$\varphi(U) = xf(U)(x^2 - r_1)(x^2 - r_n) \prod_{i=2}^m (x^2 - r_{2i-1}), \quad (3)$$

$$\varphi(V) = xf(V) \prod_{i=1}^m (x^2 - r_{2i}), \quad (4)$$

$$\varphi(W) = xf(W)(x^2 - r_n) \prod_{i=2}^m (x^2 - r_{2i-1}), \quad (5)$$

and

$$\varphi(U') = x^2 f(U) \prod_{i=1}^m (x^2 - r_{2i}), \quad (6)$$

$$\varphi(V') = f(V)(x^2 - r_0) \prod_{i=2}^m (x^2 - r_{2i-1}), \quad (7)$$

$$\varphi(W') = f(W) \prod_{i=1}^m (x^2 - r_{2i}). \quad (8)$$

Hence, by (3)–(8),

$$\varphi(T) = x(x^2 - r_n)\varphi^{r-1}(W)f(U)f(V)f(W) \prod_{i=2}^m (x^2 - r_{2i}) \prod_{i=2}^m (x^2 - r_{2i-1})^2 \psi_o(x),$$

where

$$\psi_o(T) = x^2(x^2 - r_1)(x^2 - r_n) - r(x^2 - r_0)(x^2 - r_1) - x^2(x^2 - r_0).$$

Next suppose that  $n = 2m$  is even. By (1) and (2), we have

$$\varphi(U) = xf(U)(x^2 - r_n) \prod_{i=1}^{m-1} (x^2 - r_{2i}), \quad (9)$$

$$\varphi(V) = xf(V)(x^2 - r_0) \prod_{i=2}^m (x^2 - r_{2i-1}), \quad (10)$$

$$\varphi(W) = xf(W)(x^2 - r_n) \prod_{i=1}^{m-1} (x^2 - r_{2i}), \quad (11)$$

and

$$\varphi(U') = f(U)(x^2 - r_1) \prod_{i=2}^m (x^2 - r_{2i-1}), \quad (12)$$

$$\varphi(V') = x^2 f(V) \prod_{i=1}^{m-1} (x^2 - r_{2i}), \quad (13)$$

$$\varphi(W') = x^2 f(W) \prod_{i=2}^m (x^2 - r_{2i-1}). \quad (14)$$

Thus, by (9)–(14),

$$\varphi(T) = x^3(x^2 - r_n)\varphi^{r-1}(W)f(U)f(V)f(W) \prod_{i=2}^m (x^2 - r_{2i-1}) \prod_{i=1}^{m-1} (x^2 - r_{2i})^2 \psi_e(x),$$

where

$$\psi_e(T) = (x^2 - r_0)(x^2 - r_n) - rx^2 - (x^2 - r_1).$$

In summary, using the above notation, we have the following theorem.

**Theorem 4.** *Let  $n$  be odd (respectively, even). Then  $T$  is an integral tree of diameter  $2n + 1$  if and only if  $r_0, r_1, \dots, r_n$  are perfect squares and all the zeros of  $\psi_o(T)$  (respectively,  $\psi_e(T)$ ) are integers.*

## 4 Integral trees of diameter $4k + 1$

Let  $n$  be even. It is not difficult to choose the parameters of  $T$  in such a way that the zeros of  $\psi_e(T)$  are all integers. For instance, let  $r_0 = 1$ ,  $r_1 = 4k^2$ ,  $r_n = (k^2 - 1)^2$  and  $r = 4k^2 - 1$ . Then

$$\begin{aligned} \psi_e(T) &= (x^2 - 1)(x^2 - (k^2 - 1)^2) - (4k^2 - 1)x^2 - (x^2 - 4k^2) \\ &= (x^2 - 1)(x^2 - (k^2 + 1)^2). \end{aligned}$$

Clearly, if we choose  $k$  large enough, then we are able to take distinct perfect squares  $r_2, \dots, r_{n-1}$  in the interval  $(4k^2, (k^2 - 1)^2)$ . Hence, we have proved the following theorem.

**Theorem 5.** *For every even positive integer  $n$ , there are infinitely many integral trees of diameter  $2n + 1$ .*

## 5 Integral trees of diameter $4k + 3$

Let  $n$  be odd. Our objective is to choose the parameters of  $T$  in such a way that all the zeros of  $\psi_o(T)$  are integers. This can be done in many ways. For instance, if we set  $r_0 = r_1 = a^2$  and  $r = r_n = 4(a - 1)^2$  for some integer  $a$  with  $|a| \geq 3$ , then

$$\psi_o(T) = (x^2 - a^2) \left( x^4 - (8(a - 1)^2 + 1)x^2 + 4a^2(a - 1)^2 \right).$$

The zeros of  $\psi_o(T)$  are  $\pm a$  and  $\pm(a - \frac{3}{2}) \pm \frac{1}{2}\sqrt{12a^2 - 20a + 9}$ . So the zeros of  $\psi_o(T)$  are integers if and only if  $12a^2 - 20a + 9$  is a perfect square, say  $b^2$ . We have  $(6a - 5)^2 - 3b^2 = -2$ . From number theory, we know that the Pell-like equation  $x^2 - 3y^2 = -2$  has infinitely many integral solutions with  $x \equiv \pm 1 \pmod{6}$ . For example, one may take

$$a = \frac{1}{12} \left( (1 - \sqrt{3})(-2 + \sqrt{3})^k + (1 + \sqrt{3})(-2 - \sqrt{3})^k + 10 \right),$$

for arbitrary integer  $k \geq 2$ . Therefore, we come up with the following theorem.

**Theorem 6.** *For every odd integer  $n \geq 3$ , there are infinitely many integral trees of diameter  $2n + 1$ .*

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