

Growing binary trees

Khaydar Nurligareev (with Antoine Genitrini)

LIP6, Sorbonne University

Journées Graphes et Algorithmes 2025

IPGP, Paris

November 18, 2025

Settings

Vertex types

- internal node
- anchor (active leaf)
- leaf (dead leaf)

Settings

Vertex types

- internal node $t = 0$ ○
- anchor (active leaf)
- leaf (dead leaf)

Growing process

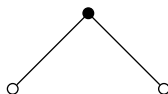
- At the beginning ($t = 0$),
our tree is an anchor ○

Settings

Vertex types

- internal node
- anchor (active leaf)
- leaf (dead leaf)

$t = 1$



Growing process

- At the beginning ($t = 0$), our tree is an anchor ○
- At any moment $t \geq 1$, replace each anchor ○ by
 - a leaf □
 - or a subtree 

Settings

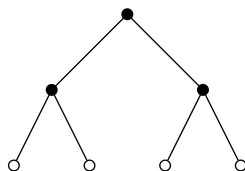
Vertex types

- internal node
- anchor (active leaf)
- leaf (dead leaf)

Growing process

- At the beginning ($t = 0$), our tree is an anchor ○
- At any moment $t \geq 1$, replace each anchor ○ by
 - a leaf □
 - or a subtree 

$t = 2$



Settings

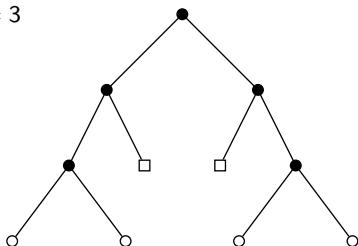
Vertex types

- internal node
- anchor (active leaf)
- leaf (dead leaf)

Growing process

- At the beginning ($t = 0$), our tree is an anchor ○
- At any moment $t \geq 1$, replace each anchor ○ by
 - a leaf □
 - or a subtree 

$t = 3$



Settings

Vertex types

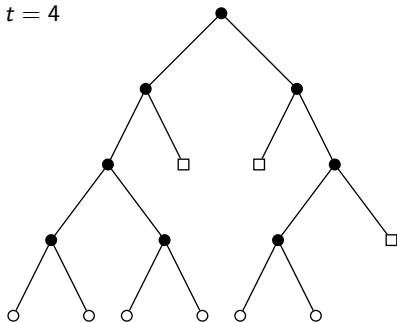
- internal node
- anchor (active leaf)
- leaf (dead leaf)

Growing process

- At the beginning ($t = 0$), our tree is an anchor ○
- At any moment $t \geq 1$, replace each anchor ○ by
 - a leaf □
 - or a subtree



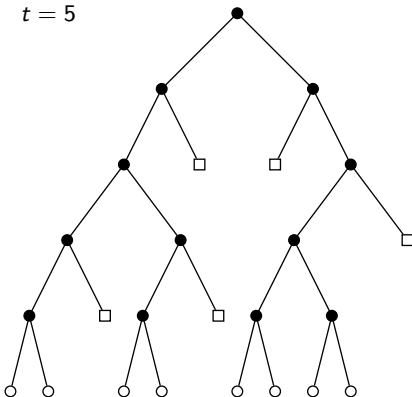
$t = 4$



Vertex types

- ## Growing process

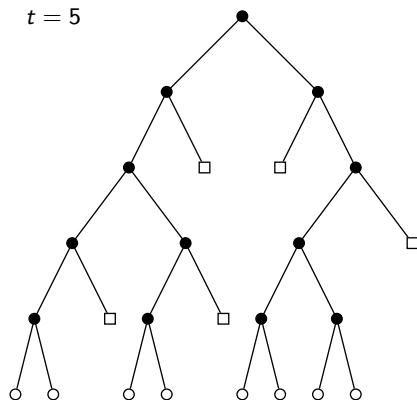
-
- A diagram of a simple tree structure. It consists of a single root node at the top, represented by a solid black circle. Two lines (edges) extend downwards from the root node to two separate leaf nodes at the bottom, represented by open white circles.



Vertex types

- ## Growing process

-
- A diagram of a simple tree structure. It consists of a single root node at the top, represented by a solid black circle. Two lines (edges) extend downwards from the root node to two separate leaf nodes at the bottom, represented by open white circles.



Studied objects: **active trees** (i.e. trees that have anchors)

Counting

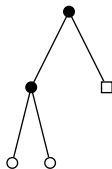
$$t_{n,m} = \{\text{active trees with } n \text{ internal nodes } m \text{ anchors}\}$$



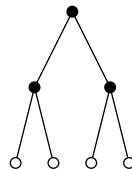
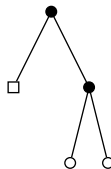
$$t_{0,1} = 1$$



$$t_{1,2} = 1$$



$$t_{2,2} = 2$$



$$t_{3,4} = 1$$

Counting

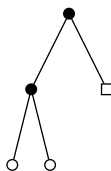
$$t_{n,m} = \{\text{active trees with } n \text{ internal nodes } m \text{ anchors}\}$$

 x

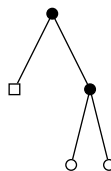
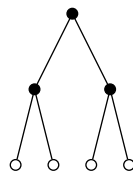
 $x^2 z$


$t_{0,1} = 1$

$t_{1,2} = 1$

 $x^2 z^2$


$t_{2,2} = 2$

 $x^2 z^2$

 $x^4 z^3$


$t_{3,4} = 1$

Marking variables:

■ x marks anchors

■ z marks internal nodes

$$T(x, z) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} t_{n,m} x^m z^n$$

$$T(x, z) = x + x^2 z + 2x^2 z^2 + \dots$$

Relations

- Growing process replacement:

$$\begin{array}{ll} \circ \mapsto \square & \circ \mapsto \begin{array}{c} \bullet \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \circ \quad \circ \end{array} \\ x \mapsto 1 & x \mapsto zx^2 \end{array}$$

- Equation:

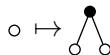
$$T(x, z) = x + T(1 + zx^2, z) - T(1, z)$$

Relations

- Growing process replacement:

$$\circ \mapsto \square$$

$$x \mapsto 1$$



$$x \mapsto zx^2$$

- Equation:

$$T(x, z) = x + T(1 + zx^2, z) - C(z)$$

- C_n are Catalan numbers

- $C(z) = 1 + zC^2(z)$

$$\sum_{m=1}^{\infty} t_{n,m} = C_n$$

Relations

- Growing process replacement:

$$\begin{array}{ll} \circ \mapsto \square & \circ \mapsto \begin{array}{c} \bullet \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \circ \quad \circ \end{array} \\ x \mapsto 1 & x \mapsto zx^2 \end{array}$$

- Equation:

$$T(x, z) = x + T(1 + zx^2, z) - C(z)$$

- C_n are Catalan numbers

- $C(z) = 1 + zC^2(z)$

$$\sum_{m=1}^{\infty} t_{n,m} = C_n$$

- Recurrent relation ($n, k > 0$):

$$t_{n,2k-1} = 0 \quad \text{and} \quad t_{n,2k} = \sum_{m=k}^{\infty} \binom{m}{k} t_{n-k,m}$$

Mandelbrot Polynomials

- Define

$$p_0(x, z) = x, \quad p_{n+1}(x, z) = 1 + zp_n^2(x, z)$$

Mandelbrot Polynomials

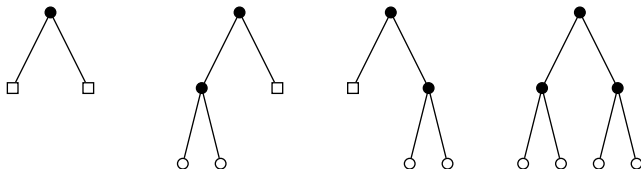
■ Define

$$p_0(x, z) = x, \quad p_{n+1}(x, z) = 1 + zp_n^2(x, z)$$

■ $p_n(x, z)$ counts binary trees:

- of height at most n ,
- anchors are at level n ,
- leaves are at levels $k < n$

○



$$p_2(x, z) = 1 + z + 2x^2z^2 + x^4z^3$$

Mandelbrot Polynomials

■ Define

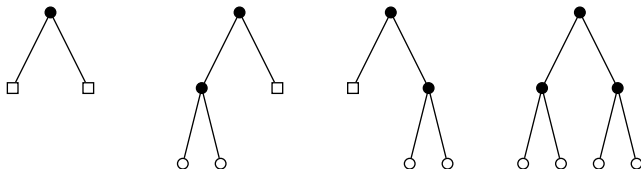
$$p_0(x, z) = x, \quad p_{n+1}(x, z) = 1 + zp_n^2(x, z)$$

■ $p_n(x, z)$ counts binary trees:

- of height at most n ,
- anchors are at level n ,
- leaves are at levels $k < n$

$$\text{for } k > n: \\ [z^k]p_n(x, z) = C_k$$

○



$$p_2(x, z) = 1 + z + 2x^2z^2 + x^4z^3$$

Mandelbrot Polynomials

- Define

$$p_0(x, z) = x, \quad p_{n+1}(x, z) = 1 + zp_n^2(x, z)$$

- $p_n(x, z)$ counts binary trees:

- of height at most n ,
- anchors are at level n ,
- leaves are at levels $k < n$

$$\text{for } k > n: \\ [z^k]p_n(x, z) = C_k$$

- Define

$$q_n(x, z) = zp_n(x, z)$$

- $q_n(1, z)$ are known as **Mandelbrot Polynomials**

Mandelbrot Polynomials

- Define

$$p_0(x, z) = x, \quad p_{n+1}(x, z) = 1 + zp_n^2(x, z)$$

- $p_n(x, z)$ counts binary trees:

- of height at most n ,
- anchors are at level n ,
- leaves are at levels $k < n$

$$\text{for } k > n: \\ [z^k]p_n(x, z) = C_k$$

- Define

$$q_n(x, z) = zp_n(x, z)$$

- $q_n(1, z)$ are known as **Mandelbrot Polynomials**

- Corollary: for $k < n$, $[z^{k+1}]q_n(1, z) = C_k$

Cumulative value of anchors

- Denote

$$\tilde{T}(x, z) = \frac{\partial T}{\partial x}(x, z)$$

- Equation:

$$\tilde{T}(x, z) = 1 + 2xz \tilde{T}(1 + zx^2, z)$$

Cumulative value of anchors

- Denote

$$\tilde{T}(x, z) = \frac{\partial T}{\partial x}(x, z)$$

- Equation:

$$\tilde{T}(x, z) = 1 + 2xz \tilde{T}(1 + zx^2, z)$$

- Relation:

$$\tilde{T}(x, z) = 1 + \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} (2z)^k \prod_{\ell=0}^{k-1} p_{\ell}(x, z)$$

Cumulative value of anchors

- Denote

$$\tilde{T}(x, z) = \frac{\partial T}{\partial x}(x, z)$$

- Equation:

$$\tilde{T}(x, z) = 1 + 2xz \tilde{T}(1 + xz^2, z)$$

- Relation:

$$\tilde{T}(x, z) = 1 + \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} (2z)^k \prod_{\ell=0}^{k-1} p_{\ell}(x, z)$$

- In terms of Mandelbrot polynomials:

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} m t_{m,n} z^n = 1 + \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} 2^k \prod_{\ell=0}^{k-1} q_{\ell}(1, z)$$

Anchor distributions

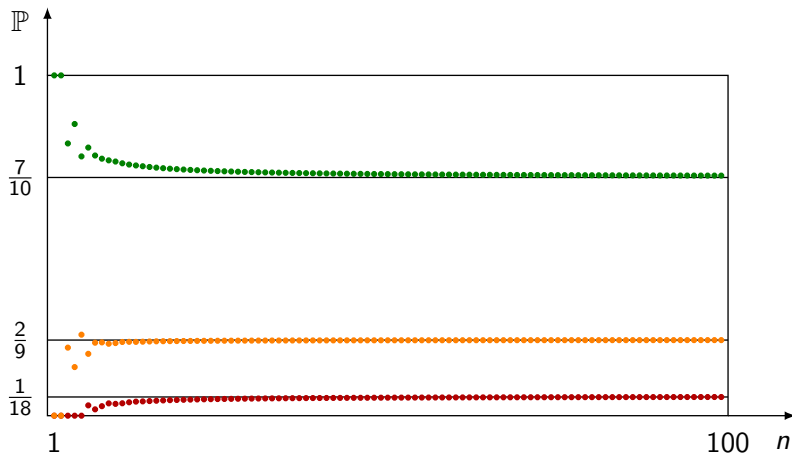
n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
$t_{n,2}$	1	2	4	12	32	104	328	1080	3648	12544	43600
$t_{n,4}$	0	0	1	2	10	24	92	308	1028	3584	12736
$t_{n,6}$	0	0	0	0	0	4	8	40	176	584	2144
$t_{n,8}$	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	10	84	282
$t_{n,10}$	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
$t_{n,12}$	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C_n	1	2	5	14	42	132	429	1430	4862	16796	58786

It looks like eventually

- $\frac{t_{n,2}}{C_n}$ is decreasing,
- $\frac{t_{n,2k}}{C_n}$ is increasing for $k > 1$,

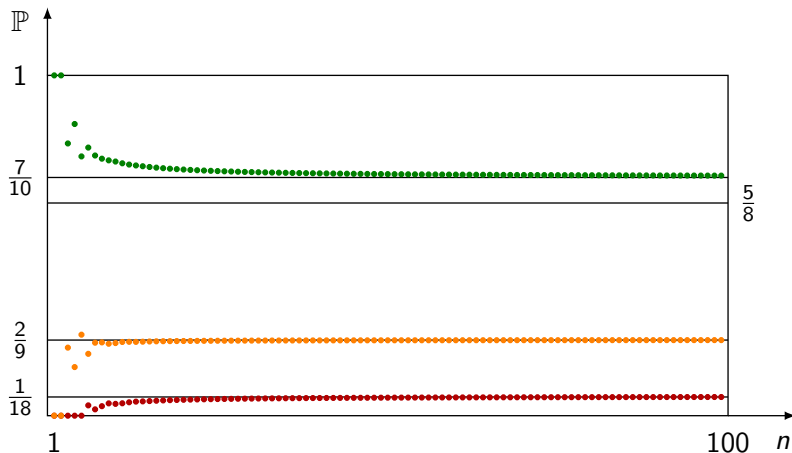
and there are some limits.

Proportions of the first three lines



Note that $\frac{t_{200,4}}{C_{200}} > \frac{2}{9}$ and $\frac{t_{200,6}}{C_{200}} > \frac{1}{18}$

Proportions of the first three lines



Proposition:

$$\liminf_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{t_{n,2}}{C_n} \geq \frac{5}{8}$$

Column nonzero values

n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
$t_{n,2}$	1	2	4	12	32	104	328	1 080	3 648	12 544	43 600
$t_{n,4}$	0	0	1	2	10	24	92	308	1 028	3 584	12 736
$t_{n,6}$	0	0	0	0	0	4	8	40	176	584	2 144
$t_{n,8}$	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	10	84	282
$t_{n,10}$	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24

Column nonzero values

n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
$t_{n,2}$	1	2	4	12	32	104	328	1080	3648	12544	43600
$t_{n,4}$	0	0	1	2	10	24	92	308	1028	3584	12736
$t_{n,6}$	0	0	0	0	0	4	8	40	176	584	2144
$t_{n,8}$	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	10	84	282
$t_{n,10}$	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24

■ Define $a_n = \max\{k : t_{n,2k} > 0\}$

n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
a_n	1	1	2	2	2	3	4	4	4	4
a_{n+10}	5	6	6	7	8	8	8	8	8	9
a_{n+20}	10	10	11	12	12	12	13	14	14	15
a_{n+30}	16	16	16	16	16	16	17	18	18	19

Column nonzero values

n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
$t_{n,2}$	1	2	4	12	32	104	328	1080	3648	12544	43600
$t_{n,4}$	0	0	1	2	10	24	92	308	1028	3584	12736
$t_{n,6}$	0	0	0	0	0	4	8	40	176	584	2144
$t_{n,8}$	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	10	84	282
$t_{n,10}$	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24

■ Define $a_n = \max\{k : t_{n,2k} > 0\}$

n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
a_n	1	1	2	2	2	3	4	4	4	4
a_{n+10}	5	6	6	7	8	8	8	8	8	9
a_{n+20}	10	10	11	12	12	12	13	14	14	15
a_{n+30}	16	16	16	16	16	16	17	18	18	19

■ Lemma: The sequence (a_n) satisfies

$$a_1 = 1, \quad a_n = \max\{k : k \leq 2a_{n-k}\}$$

Sequence of repeating elements of (a_n)

n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
a_n	1	1	2	2	2	3	4	4	4	4
a_{n+10}	5	6	6	7	8	8	8	8	8	9
a_{n+20}	10	10	11	12	12	12	13	14	14	15
a_{n+30}	16	16	16	16	16	16	17	18	18	19

Define

$$\ell_n = \#\{k: a_k = n\}$$

Sequence of repeating elements of (a_n)

n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
a_n	1	1	2	2	2	3	4	4	4	4
a_{n+10}	5	6	6	7	8	8	8	8	8	9
a_{n+20}	10	10	11	12	12	12	13	14	14	15
a_{n+30}	16	16	16	16	16	16	17	18	18	19

Define

$$\ell_n = \#\{k: a_k = n\}$$

We have

$$(\ell_n) = 2, 3, 1, 4, 1, 2, 1, 5, 1, 2, 1, 3, 1, 2, 1, 6, 1, 2, 1, \dots$$

Description of (ℓ_n)

Proposition

The sequence (ℓ_n) satisfies

$$\ell_n = \begin{cases} p + 2 & \text{if } n = 2^p, \\ p + 1 & \text{if } n = 2^p a, \text{ } a \text{ is odd, } a > 1. \end{cases}$$

In particular,

- $\ell_{2n} = \ell_n + 1$ for even indices,
- $\ell_{2n+1} = 1$ for odd indices greater than 1,
- $\ell_1 = 2$.

Induction based on $a_n = \max\{k : k \leq 2a_{n-k}\}$

Description of (a_n)

Proposition

The sequence (a_n) satisfies

$$a_n = a_{n-1-a_{n-1}} + a_{n-2-a_{n-2}}, \quad a_0 = a_1 = a_2 = 1$$

- Question. How to explain this recurrence combinatorially?

Description of (a_n)

Proposition

The sequence (a_n) satisfies

$$a_n = a_{n-1} - a_{n-1} + a_{n-2} - a_{n-2}, \quad a_0 = a_1 = a_2 = 1$$

- Question. How to explain this recurrence combinatorially?
- (a_n) is known as a **meta-Fibonacci sequence**

Corollary (Tanny, 1992)

- $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{a_n}{n} = \frac{1}{2}$
- $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n z^n = z \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \prod_{i=1}^n (z + z^{2^i})$

Trees of fixed height

$t_{n,2k,h} = \#\{\text{active trees with } n \text{ internal nodes } 2k \text{ anchors of height } h\}$

k								
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
3	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0
2	0	0	0	2	6	0	0	0
1	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	0
$h = 3$	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	n							

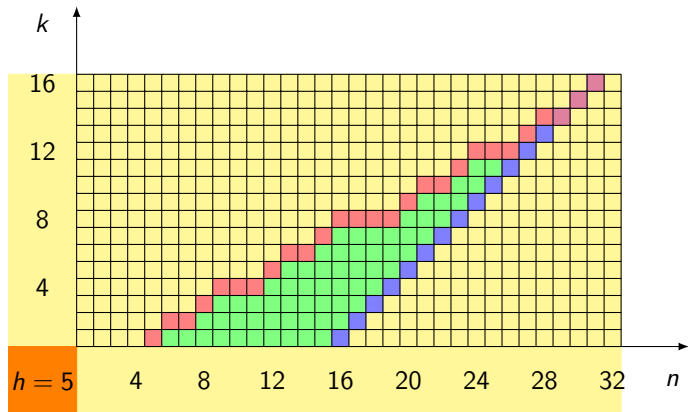
Trees of fixed height

$t_{n,2k,h} = \#\{\text{active trees with } n \text{ internal nodes } 2k \text{ anchors of height } h\}$

8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	28	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	24	56	0	0	0	0
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	60	70	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	24	80	56	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	4	16	36	60	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	8	16	24	24	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
$h = 4$	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16								

Trees of fixed height

$t_{n,2k,h} = \#\{\text{active trees with } n \text{ internal nodes } 2k \text{ anchors of height } h\}$

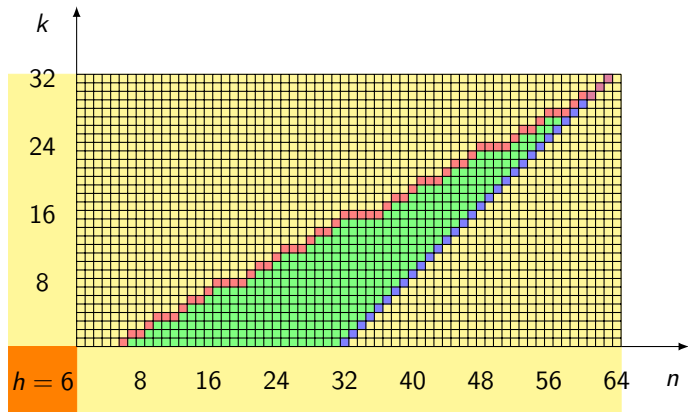


$$S_h = \{(n, k) : t_{n,2k,h} \neq 0\},$$

$$|S_h| = 2^{h-2}(2^{h-1} - h + 2)$$

Trees of fixed height

$t_{n,2k,h} = \#\{\text{active trees with } n \text{ internal nodes } 2k \text{ anchors of height } h\}$

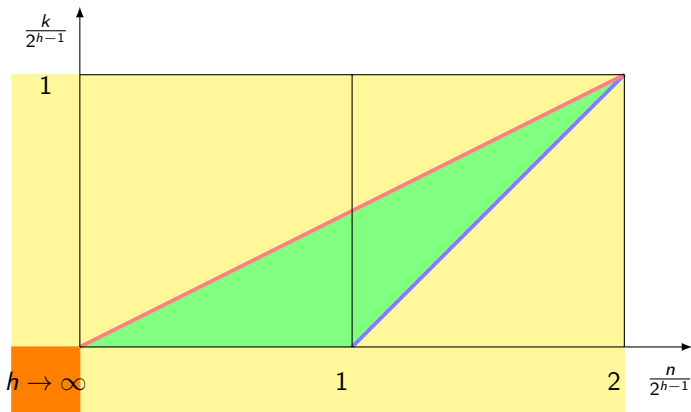


$$S_h = \{(n, k) : t_{n,2k,h} \neq 0\},$$

$$|S_h| = 2^{h-2}(2^{h-1} - h + 2)$$

Trees of fixed height

$t_{n,2k,h} = \#\{\text{active trees with } n \text{ internal nodes } 2k \text{ anchors of height } h\}$

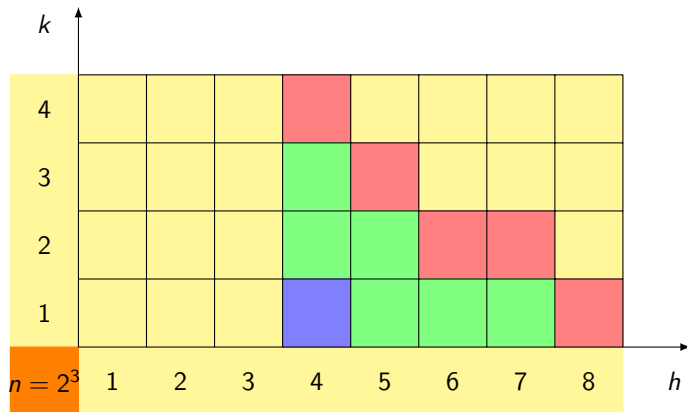


$$S_h = \{(n, k): t_{n,2k,h} \neq 0\},$$

$$|S_h| = 2^{h-2}(2^{h-1} - h + 2)$$

Trees of fixed size

$t_{n,2k,h} = \#\{\text{active trees with } n \text{ internal nodes } 2k \text{ anchors of height } h\}$

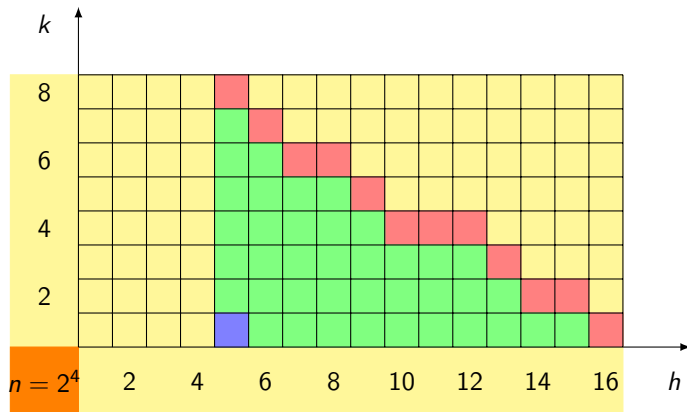


$$\hat{S}_n = \{(h, k) : t_{n,2k,h} \neq 0\},$$

$$|\hat{S}_{2^m}| = 2^{m-2}(2^m - m + 1)$$

Trees of fixed size

$t_{n,2k,h} = \#\{\text{active trees with } n \text{ internal nodes } 2k \text{ anchors of height } h\}$

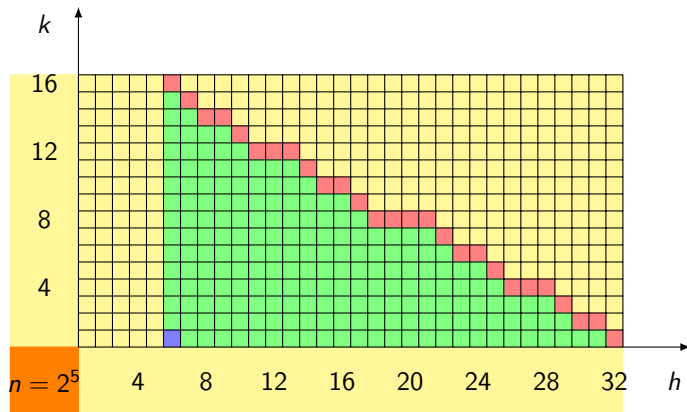


$$\hat{S}_n = \{(h, k) : t_{n,2k,h} \neq 0\},$$

$$|\hat{S}_{2^m}| = 2^{m-2}(2^m - m + 1)$$

Trees of fixed size

$$t_{n,2k,h} = \#\{\text{active trees with } n \text{ internal nodes } 2k \text{ anchors of height } h\}$$

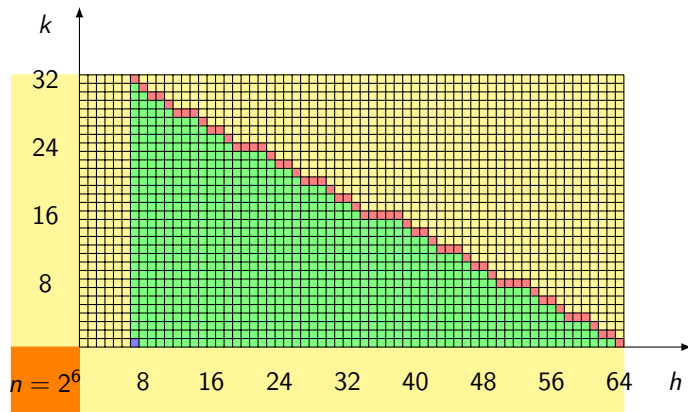


$$\hat{S}_n = \{(h, k) : t_{n,2k,h} \neq 0\},$$

$$|\hat{S}_{2^m}| = 2^{m-2}(2^m - m + 1)$$

Trees of fixed size

$t_{n,2k,h} = \#\{\text{active trees with } n \text{ internal nodes } 2k \text{ anchors of height } h\}$

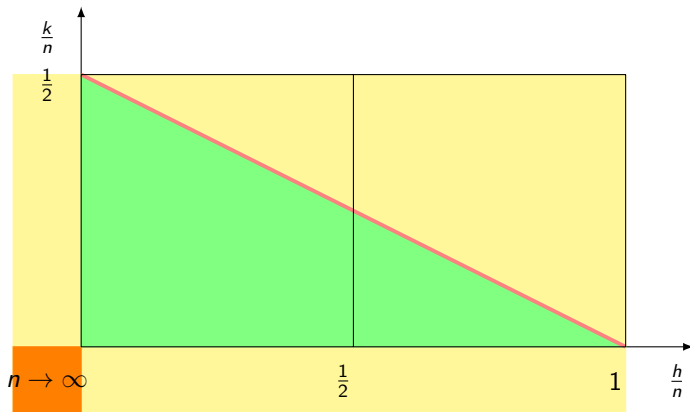


$$\hat{S}_n = \{(h, k) : t_{n,2k,h} \neq 0\},$$

$$|\hat{S}_{2^m}| = 2^{m-2}(2^m - m + 1)$$

Trees of fixed size

$t_{n,2k,h} = \#\{\text{active trees with } n \text{ internal nodes } 2k \text{ anchors of height } h\}$



$$\hat{S}_n = \{(h, k): t_{n,2k,h} \neq 0\},$$

$$|\hat{S}_{2^m}| = 2^{m-2}(2^m - m + 1)$$

Conclusion

1 Studied objects:

- growing binary trees.

2 Related objects:

- Mandelbrot polynomials,
- meta-Fibonacci sequences.

3 Results:

- relations for generating functions,
- bounds for anchor distributions,
- behavior of the maximal number of anchors,
- limit forms of nonzero domains.

Thank you for your attention!

Literature I



Neil J. Calkin, Eunice Y. S. Chan, Robert M. Corless
Some Facts and Conjectures about Mandelbrot Polynomials
Maple Transactions, 2021.



Stephen M. Tanny
A well-behaved cousin of the Hofstadter sequence
Discrete Mathematics, 105 (1-3), 1992, pp. 227–239.