



## McGregor Museum Kimberley

### Botany Department: Functions of the KMG Herbarium

Herbaria are important storage and retrieval systems for plant-related data. This raw data forms the basis of many fields of plant research, where the first step is usually the correct identification of a species. Herbaria are important to a country concerned with conserving, utilizing, and managing its biological diversity.

#### The various functions of the KMG Herbarium are:

##### **1. Plant collection**

Systematic sampling to build up a representative collection of all the species in the various vegetation types of the Northern Cape is a vital function. The KMG Herbarium has a programme aimed at plant collecting in areas that are botanically relatively unexplored or under-collected. Plant collecting trips are carried out whenever funds are available. Funds are obtained through contract work and other fund-raising activities, which take a lot of time and effort.

##### **2. Plant identification**

Identification is done for scientists, the private sector/industry, commercial ventures and the public. Ideally this requires a taxonomist, but in the absence of this professional, the curator and collection manager undertake identification. Identifications often take much longer to complete and hence less plants can be identified. Plants that cannot be identified are sent to other herbaria and taxonomists for identification. A fee is charged for plant identifications, and the various rates are listed under [General Enquiries](#).

##### **3. Information and Consultation**

Herbaria play an important role in supplying other researchers, industry and the public with botanical information. The KMG Herbarium answers scientific requests such as "which plants are rare and threatened in the Northern Cape", and "where do they occur". Checklists of the plant species of specific areas are drawn up. This herbarium has an important role to play in Environmental Impact Assessment studies. These are detailed under: [Contract Work: Botanical Surveys](#).

##### **4. Conservation**

Herbarium staff assists with the compilation of checklists, Red Data Books and specialist reports. They participate in conferences on the environment, conservation and biological

diversity. They also play a role in the collection and research of threatened plants. Previous research on the rare plants of part of the Northern Cape added 19 new species and subspecies to the Red Data List of Southern African Plants.

## 5. Research

This should be a major function and include research in taxonomy in general, conservation, ecology, ethnobotany, and floristics. With the present number of staff and expertise it is not possible to fulfill all these aims, but we are hoping that new posts will be created in future. See [Research Projects](#).

## 6. Collection Curation and Maintenance

Existing collections need continual administration, updating, maintenance and expansion to meet international standards and this function is ongoing. This is the main task of our collection manager.

## 7. Cataloguing

Cataloguing plant specimens and their associated data is essential. In the past this was done using accession registers and catalogue cards. Today computer-based data capture is a more efficient means of recording, storing and retrieving data. The collection manager is busy with the data capture of the herbarium's plant specimens using Specimen DB on MySQL. See [Plant Database](#).

## 8. Publications

Herbaria publish plant-related research and information in the form of checklists, pamphlets, research papers, monographs, floras and scientific and popular botanical books. For a list of recent publications see [Publications](#).

## 9. Education

One of our goals is active education of the public (all ages) on topics pertaining to the Northern Cape's plant diversity, as well as its wise utilization. Staff interacts with the media, government departments and makes an effort to reach out to communities. See [Community Services & Educational Programmes](#).

