

Katse Botanical Garden in international exchange programme

The Katse Botanical Garden was initiated by the Lesotho Highlands Development Authority as a repository for plant material removed from the Katse Dam basic floor before it was inundated with water. To date the garden has a unique collection of indigenous Lesotho plants, many of them rare and endangered, and others of medicinal value to traditional healers.

Many overseas visitors have been to the Katse Botanical Garden. Such is the interest in this facility that an exchange programme has been established between the LHDA initiated conservation garden and the Botanical Garden at the University of Munich in Germany, called the “Botanischer Garten Munchen-Nymphenburg”.

Mrs Jenny Wainwright-Klein, a horticulturist based in Munich, spent the month of January 2005 at the Katse Botanical Garden in the Lesotho highlands, working with the resident horticulturist, Mr Bongani Ntloko. Ntloko has over the years gained much experience in propagating indigenous plants, and has particularly achieved impressive success in the propagation of the Spiral Aloe (*Aloe polyphylla*) from seed.

The Spiral Aloe is the national flower of Lesotho. It is regarded as an endangered species which has been overexploited from its natural habitat. It is listed on Appendix 1 of CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species), and no international trade is allowed because of this. By propagating the Spiral Aloe at the Katse Botanical Garden, it is hoped to remove pressure from the wild population, to supplement the wild population by re-introduction of plants bred in the garden, and to provide plants for sale to interested gardeners and collectors. It is hoped that this would contribute to a downlisting of the aloe from Appendix 1 of CITES.

Later in the year Mr Ntloko will travel to Germany to spend a month in the Munich Botanical Gardens.

The exchange programme is funded by a foundation in Germany. It is hoped that this will be the first of many more international exchange programmes with the Katse Botanical Garden.



Mrs. Jenny Wainwright-Klein and Mr. Bongani Ntloko at the Garden