

Expanding South Africa's network of national botanical gardens

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The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) is the only institution mandated to managing, maintaining, and developing national botanical gardens in South Africa, according to the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act No. 10 of 2004. SANBI currently manages a network of 11 national botanical gardens spread across eight of South Africa's nine provinces. Following broad consultation, South Africa's national Minister for the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) published the South African National Botanical Garden Expansion Strategy 2019-2030 in December 2020 for implementation. The goal of this Strategy is to raise awareness, contribute to education about biodiversity, and to support conservation by establishing, maintaining, and expanding a representative network of botanical gardens with their associated biodiversity (plants and animals) and ecological interactions, across South Africa. This goal will be achieved through (a) establishing at least one national botanical garden in each province of South Africa, (b) establishing a botanical/demonstration garden representative of each biome in South Africa, (c) the use of opportunities to expand existing national botanical gardens, where considered feasible and appropriate, and (d) entering into agreements with other institutions that manage botanical gardens in South or southern Africa. Through the Strategy, opportunities exist to expand selected national botanical gardens into suitable adjacent natural habitats. This presentation outlines SANBI's experience, achievements, and challenges in implementing the national botanical garden expansion strategy to date, as well as recommendations to address the challenges.