

OBTAINING A PLANT COLLECTING PERMIT

Information from the National Botanical Institute

South Africa is a signatory to the International Convention on Biological Diversity and therefore all the provincial nature conservation authorities are currently drafting legislation, regulation and implementation measures to deal with the conservation and sustainable use of South Africa's biological diversity. The clauses contained within the Convention will be a determining factor in the granting of collecting permits. All recipients of permits will be obliged to abide by that Convention and local rules intended to protect the biological and genetic resources of South Africa.

At present the collecting of plant material (dead or alive and including seeds) is prohibited by law in South Africa unless you have been issued with a permit by the appropriate authority. The application for such permits needs to be done well in advance, preferably two months prior to the anticipated initial collecting date. The application must provide acceptable motivation for collecting including the reasons for applying for a permit and an indication of the applicants affiliation to a professional, semi-professional or relevant amateur organization in South Africa or country of origin. In certain cases permits will only be granted if an appropriate project proposal is provided with the application.

The information required for each application varies from province to province but generally includes an indication of:

- Which taxonomic group(s) will be collected.
- The type of material e.g. herbarium vouchers, seed, live plants, cuttings, etc.
- Quantities involved.
- Where and when collecting will take place.
- The issuing of permits is entirely at the discretion of the nature conservation authorities and the grounds for refusal do not have to be made known to the applicant.
- Permits issued usually prohibit the collecting of any

material within a distance of 90 m from the centre of any public road.

- Successful applicants require the written permission of the landowner if they wish to collect material on privately owned land.
- Applicants issued with general collecting permits are not automatically qualified to collect in provincial nature reserves or national parks. (Permission from the specified reserve or park must be requested simultaneously.)
- The permit may stipulate that a certain percentage of the material, especially type specimens be lodged with a recognized South African scientific institution.
- The permit may stipulate that publications arising from the use of the material must acknowledge the assistance of the conservation authority and a copy or copies of the publication must be sent to them.
- A report indicating the scientific identity of the material collected, collection numbers and collection localities must be submitted to the conservation authority that issued the collecting permit.
- Applicants intending to take live or dead biological material out of the province where they collected it, are usually required to apply for an export permit from the provincial conservation authority and an import permit from the conservation authority in the recipient province or country. Any international export must abide by the phytosanitary and CITES requirements in the province or country of origin and country of destination.

(See 'Requirements for sending seed and plant material overseas' in *Veld & Flora* 85(1), pp. 43.) 🌿

If you would like an address list of southern African conservation authorities responsible for issuing collecting permits, please contact the National Botanical Institute at (021) 762 1166.