

South West Nature Park



The South West Nature Reserve, better known as the National Botanical Garden, is located in the heart of Windhoek. The area was originally earmarked as a nature park, but lack of funding resulted in this project not materialising. In 1990, the National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI) moved into the buildings adjacent to the reserve and developed the area as a botanical garden funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry (MAWF), to which the NBRI belongs.

The garden is aimed at protecting and promoting the sustainable use of Namibian flora, with an emphasis on education and recreation. Most of the garden has not been landscaped. This is to conserve water and to present plants in their natural environment, allowing visitors to learn about indigenous vegetation and water-wise gardening.

The Desert House, where fascinating plants from the Namib Desert are displayed, was added in 2007. Other features include a dense stand of the Windhoek aloe (*Aloe littoralis*), the symbol of the city of Windhoek and the Lily Walk, which attracts visitors when the plants are in bloom during April.

FACT FILE

Park size:	0.12 km ²
Date proclaimed:	1970
Natural features:	Koppies characteristic of Windhoek with indigenous vegetation.
Vegetation:	Tree and Shrub Savannah Biome. Vegetation type: Highland Shrubland. More than 200 plants species in the gardens, and 365 plant species in the Desert House. Quiver tree (<i>Aloe dichotoma</i>), bottle tree (<i>Pachypodium lealii</i>), stone plants (<i>Lithops</i> spp) Bushman's candle (<i>Sarcocaulon patersonii</i>), halfmens (<i>Pachypodium namaquanum</i>).
Wildlife:	Rock hyrax, variety of small mammals and reptiles. Seventy-five bird species recorded, including white-tailed shrike, Monteiro's hornbill, rockrunner.
Tourism:	Self-guided walking trails. Common plants are labelled. Bird and plant lists available at the reception. Picnic area. Open Monday to Friday, from 8:00 until 17:00 plus every first Saturday of the month from 8:00 to 11:00.

Map



The South West Nature Park is located in the downtown Windhoek, Namibia's capital city.

Conservation successes

The South West Nature Park is an urban oasis, providing an important visual reminder for city dwellers of the beauty and diversity found in Namibia's wild places and the importance of conserving them. This area allows field workers, extension personnel, students and researchers a location to train in survey techniques and plant identification. It also provides an area for the conservation of plant material and for the regeneration and cultivation of plant material as a support service to the National Herbarium, the Vegetation Survey Unit and the National Plant Genetic Resources Centre.

Key management issues

Funding is a challenge, as well as staffing. The gardens should be open to the public during weekends and have more flexible opening hours, but as a government entity, this is difficult to achieve.