



## Krantzkloof in Your Garden Factsheet #7

Scientific Name:

## Stangeria eriopus





Photo credit: Alison Young

Common Names:

Natal grass cycad, Stanger's cycad (Eng); bobbejaankos (Afr); Imfingo (isiZulu); Umfingwani (isiXhosa)

**Conservation Status** 

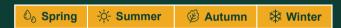
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Vulnerable (VU)

**Plant Type / Size** Slow-growing, perennial shrub, less than 2 m tall

Such a unique looking cycad that it was originally thought to be a type of fern. Two apparent forms, one growing in forested areas and a smaller, hardier one in open grasslands – which can survive annual grass fires and drought. Stems are completely subterranean and the root is carrot-shaped. Young leaves have a fern-like feature of being rolled up at the tip (circinate). Leaf margins can be smooth, serrated, or lobed, and they can vary even on the same plant. Female cones are ovoid/egg shaped and can yield as many as 100 seeds. Male cones are elongated and narrow. Mature cones give off a fruity odor.

Cone Season
Produced throughout the year



**Drought Tolerance** 

Low Moderate High

Grassland form: fairly tolerant.

**Gardening Skill Needed** 

Low Moderate High Expert Low maintenance once established.

Pot Plant Potential

Poor Moderate Good Excellent

If planted in a large container to allow for root development.

**Water Regime** 

Requires consistently moist soil. Water regularly but do not overwater.

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Soil Type

Can grow in granite soils but prefer well-drained sandy, acidic soils, rich in organic material. A mulch layer helps keep the tuber covered and prevent the soil from drying out.

**Ideal Position** 

For more luxuriant foliage grow in shaded areas in well-drained soil.

Natural: grows in full sun in short grasslands, in light and dense shade in forests







How to Propagate Seeds: Viable seeds are produced by planting both male and female plants in a group (wind / insect pollination). Harvest seeds when the female cone begins to disintegrate. Place seeds in water for a day and then remove all of the soft tissue. Store clean seeds in a cool, dry place until the following spring. Press seeds into clean river sand (preferably 25-28°C) - so they are level with the sand, with the long axis parallel to the surface. Never cover the seed with sand. Cover with a glass to keep air humid around the seed. Keep in a shaded area. Water every day. Germination: 2 months. Repot in well-drained growing medium + lime at 10 months or when the leaves appear. Water seedlings sparingly until they show substantial growth.

**Cutting**: Break an entire leaf off the stem – ensuring a portion of stem is attached to the base of the cutting. Trim leaf to prevent loss of moisture. Treat base of cutting with a rooting hormone and place in clean, coarse sand (depth: 8 cm). Root development begins: 10-14 weeks. 18 months a well-developed root system is established.

Maintenance Tips Add mature compost and bone meal in the hole before planting. Regularly feed to maintain a healthy plant. Use a gentle irrigation system/technique to avoid damaging the beautiful leaves.

Uses

**Medicinal:** Xhosa and Zulu people use this species extensively for medicinal purposes. The root is used as a purgative, in the treatment of headaches and is applied to damaged teats of cattle. The plant is also used as protection against lightning.

Ornamental: Ideal for shaded gardens.

**Ecology** Cones are insect-pollinated. Fruit odor attracts beetle pollinators.

