

Referencing botanical treasures of the Dragon's lair

The Uniqwa Herbarium is situated on the remote Qwaqwa Campus of the University of the Free State, Phuthaditjhaba. The herbarium currently houses over 3500 specimens, having been started in 1983 on what was known then as the Lere la Tshepe campus, and holds valuable collections of specimens from Golden Gate Highlands National Park, QwaQwa, the western Malotis, and the adjacent eastern Highveld. Turnover of academic staff, lack of devoted attention, and general neglect have resulted in the Herbarium falling into disrepair. However, we have a vision for this Herbarium to become a valuable physical and digital reference resource of the local flora to service the rapidly growing research culture on QwaQwa Campus, notably that driven by the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU) and a variety of international partners. The project has two main Aims: (1) Re-organising and verifying specimens in the collection; (2) Digitising the collection and placing it on global online platforms via BRAHMS. Partners in this exercise include Geo Potts Herbarium, Bews Herbarium, and Buffelskloof Private Nature Reserve Herbarium.