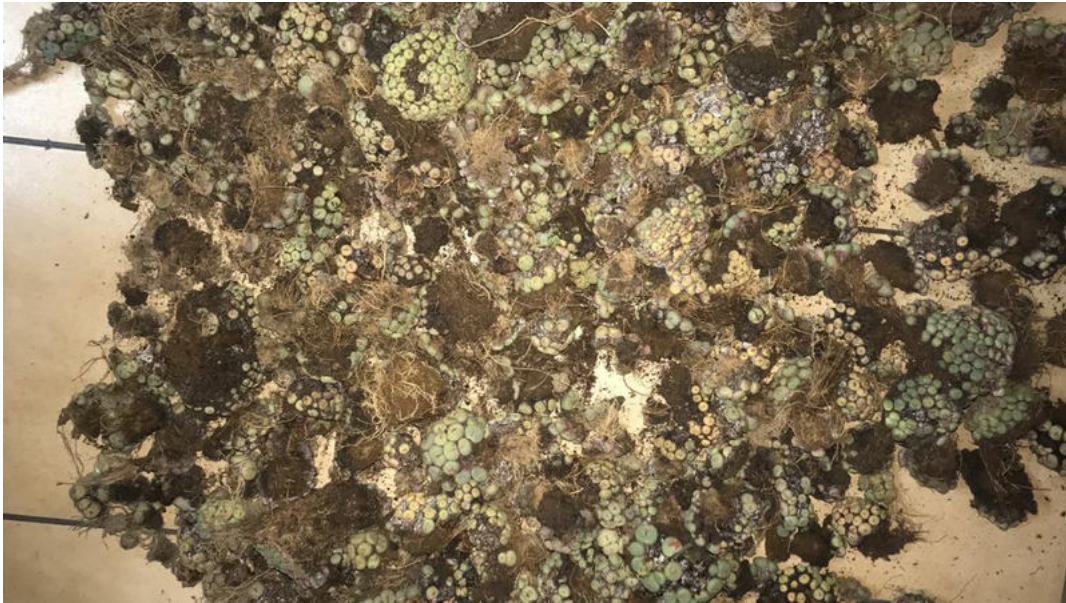


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Two men arrested for dealing in endangered plants



Endangered plant species *Conophytum pageae*. Picture: SAPS/Twitter

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Written by
African News Agency

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By ANA Reporter

Springbok - Two men have been arrested after they were found in possession of an endangered plant species worth about R200 000 in Springbok in the Northern Cape in the early hours of Sunday morning, the South African Police Service (SAPS) in the province said.

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The two suspects were arrested in a joint operation consisting of members of the Springbok SAPS stock theft and endangered species unit, the K9 unit, the public order policing (POP) unit, and the Namakwa SAPS crime intelligence unit, SAPS Northern Cape spokesperson Brigadier Mohale Ramatseba said in a statement.

"The two suspects were arrested in connection with dealing in protected plants. The suspects were found in possession of *Conophytum pageae* plants in Springbok valued at about R200,000. The suspects were arrested this morning, 18 October at about [2am]."

The VW Jetta car in which the two men were driving was confiscated as it was used in the transportation of endangered plants. The suspects were expected to appear in the Springbok Magistrates' Court on Monday. The police investigation was continuing, Ramatseba said.

According to the South African National Biodiversity Institute (Sanbi) Red List of South African Plants, the *Conophytum pageae* is the most widespread species from genus *Conophytum*. It occurs in southern Namibia and the Namaqualand region of South Africa.

Illegal collecting to supply the specialist succulent horticultural trade is a major pressure on the species, which is currently the most highly sought after Conophytum.

Between 5000 and 10,000 specimens have been removed from habitat since March 2019 with rates and volumes of harvesting increasing constantly, according to the Sanbi website.

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