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# Nine Northern Cape suspects bust in Cape Town for possession of protected plants



A joint operation by police in the Northern and Western Cape led to the arrest of nine suspects for possession of protected plants. Photo: SAPS

Published Jan 10, 2022



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## CAPE TOWN - Nine suspects are expected to appear in the Goodwood Magistrate’s Court soon after they were found to be in possession of protected plants.

According to the Northern Cape’s provincial police spokesperson, Lieutenant Colonel Sergio Kock, police members from the Springbok and Kuilsriver Stock Theft and Endangered Species Units (STESU) successfully conducted a joint buy and bust operation.

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He said the operation took place on Thursday, January 6, in Elsies River in the Western Cape.

“Police confiscated 3 500 Conophytum Achabense plants worth approximately R200 000 and Conophytum Fredericea plants with an estimated street value of R150 000.

“Police also confiscated a VW Polo, an Opel Kadett and five cell phones that were allegedly utilised in the commission of these crimes,” Kock said.

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The genus Conophytum can be used as a good botanical model for studying patterns of diversity and speciation in the succulent Karoo biome, the effects of climate change on dwarf succulents, and for informing conservation planning efforts, Scielo.org reported.

Conophytum is a genus of South African and Namibian succulent plants that belong to the family Aizoaceae.

According to SANBI.org, the genus Conophytum is believed to have sedative properties, possibly as a result of mesembrine-type alkaloids.

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Kock said all nine suspects are from Springbok in the Northern Cape and are facing charges of dealing, collecting, transporting and the illegal possession of protected plants.

“The suspects should be appearing in the Goodwood Magistrate’s Court soon. The investigation continues,” he added.

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