

Africa Succulent Elephant's Foot Poached for Smuggling to China in Crates for Toys

By [Rich Co](#) May 30, 2023 12:40 AM EDT

Elephant's Foot, a sort of succulent that may be found in Africa, were poached and smuggled in toy shipping containers bound for China.

Elephant's Foot: Smuggled to China

Recently, shipments of children's toys labeled "Made in China" were strangely returned to China, which piqued the suspicion of South African customs officers.

Upon closer inspection, it was discovered that the packages were actually stuffed with stolen goods rather than toys at all.

Chinese criminal organizations-often the same ones that have already developed smuggling channels in South Africa for illegal abalone or rhinoceros horns-have now shifted their focus to trafficking in elephant feet.

Succulent from Africa Called Elephant's Foot

Elephant's foot is a species of succulent that grows in arid regions like South Africa's vast Karoo.

Its greyish wrinkled bulb remarkably resembles a pachyderm's pad.

The species is a long-lived, slow-growing succulent with above-ground tubers that are covered in layers of corky bark.

In nature, the caudex can reach a height of up to six feet, like an elephant's foot. Stems elongate in a climbing manner. Heart-shaped leaves are present.

Because flowers are dioecious, male and female blooms can only grow on distinct plants.

They often develop in the winter and are a light greenish-yellow color. Male flowers have spiny racemes that are upright. Spinescent, spreading spikes contain female flowers, according to [World of Succulents](#).

Email Newsletter

SUBMIT

Advertisement

MOST POPULAR



[Wildflower Meadow Helps Local Biodiversity, Climate Change Mitigation](#)



[Global Chocolate Consumption Linked to 1.5 Million Hectares of Deforestation in Africa](#)



[Permaculture Farming: A Life-Saving Solution for Tunisian Farmers Dealing With Drought Conditions](#)



[About 200 Million People Under Flooding Threat Due to Plastic Pollution, New Research Warns](#)



[Arctic Ground Squirrels Face Challenges From Warming Temperatures and Shorter Winters](#)

Advertisement

The rare plants, some of which are as much as a century old and can be found only on a single rocky outcrop, are being removed from the wild at alarming rates, according to scientists, and many are now on the verge of extinction.

1.5 Million Succulents

The Succulent Karoo ecosystem, famous for its distinctive biodiversity, extends from Namibia to the Western Cape of South Africa.

Ismail Ebrahim of SANBI noted the region's unique plants, which are part of South Africa's heritage and are found nowhere else.

But some species, especially conophytums alongside other succulents, are in danger of going extinct.

In the last three years, 1.5 million South African succulents have reportedly been taken from the wild, according to [SANBI](#).

Succulents saw a rise in popularity as a result of the pandemic-induced lockdown, as social media influencers promoted their decorative worth.

Over 242,000 succulent plants were seized by law enforcement in 2022 alone due to the growth of the illegal succulent trade.

The South African government has created a national action plan to tackle this trade.

Smuggling Problem

Paul Gildenhuys, an enforcement specialist for CapeNature, has been battling criminal organizations that traffic in succulents illegally.

Without a permit, it is against the law in South Africa to collect or export succulents, and doing so carries fines or jail time.

The most severe punishment for poaching endangered plants is a 400,000 rand fine or a 10-year prison sentence.

Over 90 arrests, largely of those found smuggling plants in cars on highways, have been made as a result of informants.

However, prosecutions that target lower-level members of trafficking organizations-locals who labor for global gangs who extract the plants-frequently result in meager fines and suspended sentences.

Due to the high rates of poverty and unemployment in the area, succulent poaching continues to be appealing despite the modest earnings.

Poached plants are often shipped via numerous channels, including the OR Tambo Airport in Johannesburg, mail, or couriers, to China or Hong Kong.

To deter the lucrative activity, officials avoided giving precise dollar amounts, but they did acknowledge the large profits produced by foreign-run smuggling networks.

China controls the market, despite some illicit commerce with the US and the EU. 98.7% of the roughly 400,000 plants confiscated in the Western Cape between 2019 and 2022 were headed for China.

Houseplants are frequently the only source of greenery in high-rise buildings, and this lack of greenery contributes to the desire for decorative things from China's expanding urban middle class.

Also Read: [Water Turns Into Hydrogen Gas with New Method Taken from Prickly Pear Cactus](#)

Social Media and Succulent Trade

Carl Brown, a CapeNature enforcer, admitted that the issue doesn't elicit as strong a response as rhino poaching, but purchasers might not be aware that the plants they bought were smuggled out of South Africa.

But he stressed the disastrous effects of the trade, pointing out that a tiny plant being smuggled into China might be 150 years old and was supposed to be performing a significant ecological role.

The demand is influenced by the range of succulent plants for sale on websites such as Etsy, eBay, and some Chinese social media sites in addition to the translation of scientific literature on succulents into Mandarin.

The Chinese Embassy in Pretoria responded when questioned about measures to solve the issue by saying that China and South Africa have been working together to combat such crimes by exchanging information, exchanging evidence, and conducting arrests.

Additionally, the embassy noted that Chinese diplomatic missions in South Africa have regularly warned Chinese nationals and visitors not to gather wild plants carelessly, [VOA News](#) reports.

Related Article: [Supergenes, High Temperatures Promote Spread of Common Ragweed, Allergens at Higher Levels](#)

Dioscorea elephantipes "Elephant's Foot"



Find Your Place In The World

Business
Development...
Samsung...
Chertsey

See Job

Azure IAM
Engineer -...
EY
McLean

See Job

Software
Developer, IT...
Tesla
Grünheide (Mark)

See Job

Full Time - Sales
Specialist -...
Lowe's
Tampa

See Job

[Search More Roles](#)

PROMOTED CONTENT



Limelight Media

Discover The Hidden Truth About Political Family Members



Limelight Media

Prince Harry And Meghan's Situation Goes From Bad To Worse



Limelight Media

Meghan Must Be Mortified About The Details Harry Revealed



Limelight Media

Tyra Banks Transformation: The Transformation Has Been Amazing



Limelight Media

Michelle Tells All: The Shocking Truth About Their Relationship



Limelight Media

Michelle Obama Dropped A Bombshell In Front Of The Entire World

Tags [Africa](#), [succulent](#), [elephant's foot](#), [illegal poaching](#), [smuggling](#), [china](#), [Crates](#), [toys](#), [indoor plants](#)

© 2023 NatureWorldNews.com All rights reserved. Do not reproduce without permission.

[Home](#) [Animals](#) [Biology](#) [Environment](#) [Health & Medicine](#) [Tech Travel](#) [Space](#)

[About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms & Conditions](#)

© Copyright 2023 NATURE WORLD NEWS All rights reserved.