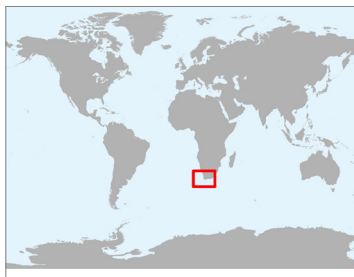




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Geographical range

Species of the Day: Mace Pagoda

The **Mace Pagoda**, *Mimetes stokoei*, is listed as 'Critically Endangered' on the Interim Red Data List of South African Plant Taxa. A member of the protea family, a group of plants characteristic of South Africa's fynbos shrublands, it has a life cycle adapted to fire.

The Mace Pagoda was previously known from a single population in the mountains bordering False Bay in the Western Cape. However, in 1965 an experimental plot was unknowingly established on top of the only existing population (the site was cleared and burned to make way for the new protea orchard); when no more plants were seen after 27 years and two fires, the species was presumed to be extinct. Fortunately, the Mace Pagoda's seeds turned out to remain viable underground for more than 50 years, and in 1999 a runaway wildfire created the very specific conditions needed for germination, producing 24 new seedlings.

The Mace Pagoda is still extremely vulnerable due to its small population size, restricted distribution, and extreme population fluctuations in response to fire. Urgent conservation measures are likely to be needed if the species is to survive.

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