



Global
Conservation
Consortium
Erica



About the Global Conservation Consortium for *Erica*

The Global Conservation Consortium for *Erica* brings together the world's *Erica* experts, conservationists, and the botanic garden community to ensure that no wild species of *Erica* becomes extinct.

The aim: to deploy their unique sets of skills for effective conservation of the genus in order to prevent species extinctions.

The Global Conservation Consortia are coordinated by BGCI. Contact us ggc@bgci.org.



**BOTANIC
GARDENS**
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Lead Institution

Bergen University Gardens

Mildeveien 240

N-5259 HJELLESTAD

Norge

www.uib.no/en/universitygardens



For questions or more information, or if you are interested in learning more about current GCC for Erica activities please contact [Mike Pirie](#), GCC for Erica Coordinator.

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Current Steering Committee Members:



Ismail Ebrahim
South African National
Biodiversity Institute
South Africa



Jo Osborne
Millennium Seed Bank,
Royal Botanic Gardens,
Kew
United Kingdom



Tim Pearce
Millennium Seed Bank,
Royal Botanic Gardens,
Kew
United Kingdom



Robbie Blackhall-Miles
FossilPlants
United Kingdom



Dr. Nicolai Nürk
Ä-BG Bayreuth
Germany



Dr. Felix Forest
Royal Botanic Gardens,
Kew
United Kingdom



Michael Knaack
HBLFA für Gartenbau Schönbrunn
und
Österreichische Bundesgärten
Austria



Daniel Rohrauer
HBLFA für Gartenbau Schönbrunn
und
Österreichische Bundesgärten
Austria



Victoria Wilman
South African National
Biodiversity Institute
South Africa



Dr. Mike Pirie
Bergen University Gardens
Norway



Rupert Koopman
South Africa



Alex Lansdowne
South Africa

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Diversity

With well over 800 species, *Erica*, the heaths or heathers, is a plant genus of huge diversity that lends its name to the habitats in which it is found: the heathlands; the Latin word *erica* means “heath”.



The heaths are an ecologically important genus, supplying a diverse range of ecosystem functions, including providing food to a wide range of fauna.

They are used across the world for their beauty, both as cut flowers and in ornamental horticulture, as well as more practical purposes such as making brooms, baskets and even, historically, buildings.



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Distribution

Erica species have a centre of diversity in the small but botanically megadiverse Cape Floristic Region (CFR) of South Africa. Their distribution extends through tropical Africa and Madagascar, to the Mediterranean basin and Europe.

Across this range they are threatened, suffering the immediate impacts of habitat destruction, invasive species, changes in natural fire regimes and climate change.

Their diversity brings with it a complex and unique set of conservation challenges, for which fundamental research is needed to better understand the species and prioritise action, making options to safeguard them for future generations.



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Threats

Astonishingly, almost 700 *Erica* species are concentrated in the CFR. All are regional endemics, and typically for Cape plant groups many show striking local variation, some of which is formally described under distinct subspecies and varieties.

Of 944 such taxa currently included in the [South African National Biodiversity Institute's Red List](#), 108 are classified as rare, a further 84 as Vulnerable, 60 Endangered, and 46 Critically Endangered.

Three are already extinct in the wild. Over a hundred more are 'Data Deficient' – species with populations insufficiently known to be able to estimate the degree of threat to their survival.



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Operational Regions

South Africa

The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) lists 944 *Erica* taxa. Species richness is highest to the south-west of the Western Cape, but regional endemism is high across the range including in the Drakensberg mountains in eastern South Africa. The [Red List of South African Plants](#) lists 84 taxa as Vulnerable, 60 as Endangered, 46 as Critically Endangered and three as Extinct in the Wild, with 118 species considered Data Deficient.

Tropical Africa

There are around 23 *Erica* species native to tropical Africa, some with widespread distributions and local endemic subspecific taxa, and all restricted to isolated temperate zones in the high mountains particularly of East Africa. They are in need of conservation assessment.

Madagascar and the Mascarene Islands

There are around 40 *Erica* species native to Madagascar and the Mascarene Islands. Most of the species are endemic to Madagascar, but taxonomic revision is needed to reassess species diversity and enable conservation assessments.

Europe and Mediterranean basin

Europe and the Mediterranean basin are home to around 21 *Erica* species. Threatened species include *E. maderensis*, which is assessed on the IUCN Red List as Critically Endangered.