



## McGregor Museum Kimberley

### Botany Department: The KMG Herbarium – An Ark Of Plant Diversity

Maria Wilman started the McGregor Museum Herbarium, Kimberley, in 1908. First director of the McGregor Museum, she traveled extensively through Griqualand West, Lesotho and Botswana studying and recording the botany, rock art, and Bushman culture. Her botanical, rock art and cultural collections, as well as her books *Rock-engravings of Griqualand West* and *Preliminary Checklist of the Flowering Plants and Ferns of Griqualand West* are outstanding scientific contributions. In recognition of her contributions she is commemorated through botanical discoveries that bear her name: Wilman lovegrass (*Eragrostis superba*), *Watsonia wilmaniae*, *Stapelia wilmaniae*, *Ruschia wilmaniae*, *Hereroa wilmaniae* and *Nananthus wilmaniae*.

The KMG Herbarium houses an important historical collection as well as valuable type specimens. It is responsible for serving as a regional herbarium for the Northern Cape Province, which covers almost one third of South Africa. This province has an estimated 5400 plant species, which amounts to approximately a quarter of the plant diversity of South Africa. The collection consists of more than 35 000 specimens, mostly collected in the Northern Cape.

If many plant species become extinct, these specimens will be the only direct evidence that they existed. DNA extractions from well-preserved specimens could be used to recreate these plants in future. These specimens are therefore a valuable and important resource.

