

CRASSULACEAE

CRASSULA MAPUTENSIS: A NEW RECORD FOR THE FSA REGION

At the time of its first description (R. Fernandes 1978), and subsequent treatment in the *Flora zambesiaca* (R. Fernandes 1983), *Crassula maputensis* was only known from southern Mozambique and Inhaca Island. The type specimen was recorded from Maputo Province, on the road between Salamanga and Ponta do Ouro. Its possible occurrence in KwaZulu-Natal was nevertheless suspected (R. Fernandes 1983).

Recent botanical collecting in KwaZulu-Natal and a study of herbarium collections in PRE, PRU, NH and LMU, have confirmed that *C. maputensis* is indeed present in northeastern KwaZulu-Natal (Maputaland). The latter area is part of the Maputaland Centre of Plant Endemism, with *C. maputensis* being one of more than 230 plant species or infraspecific taxa which are more or less restricted to this region (Van Wyk 1996). The known geographical distribution of *C. maputensis* is shown in Figure 1.

In southern African herbaria specimens of *C. maputensis* were sometimes filed under *C. expansa* Dryand., probably the nearest relative of our species. In fact, Tölken (1985) does not recognise *C. maputensis* as a separate species, but considers it merely as an extreme form of *C. expansa* subsp. *expansa* characterised by somewhat larger leaves and larger flowers. However, based on evidence from geographical distribution, ecology and macromorphology, the recognition of *C. maputensis* as a distinct species seems to be justified. In accordance with many other Maputaland Centre endemics, *C. maputensis* appears to be of fairly recent diversification (neotendemic), an impression supported by the fact that it is confined to the Maputaland coastal plain which is relatively youth-

ful (Quarternary); and that its nearest relative, *C. expansa*, is still extant.

Crassula maputensis differs from *C. expansa* (Figures 2 & 3) by the broader (1.5–0.7 mm), flat, obtuse leaves, by the solitary axillary flowers which are usually borne all along the stems, and by the flowers with petals 1.5–2.0 mm wide. In *C. expansa* the leaves tend to be narrower, usually 1–2 mm, and more terete, particularly in subsp. *expansa*; the flowers are borne mainly on the distal parts of the stems, and are smaller with the petals 1.0–1.25 mm wide. Additional distinguishing characters are supplied by Fernandes (1983).

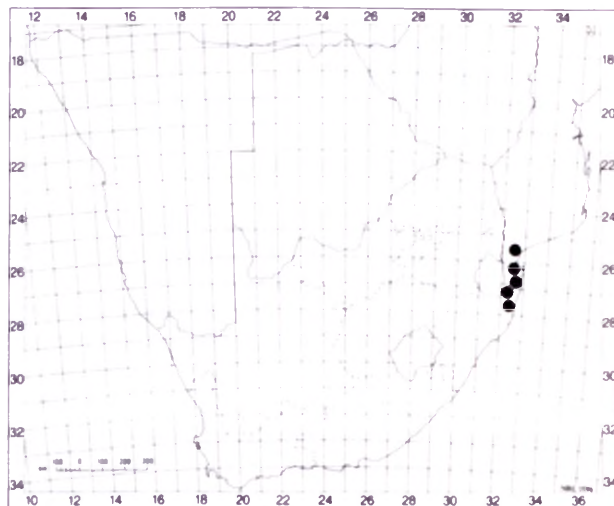


FIGURE 1.—Known distribution of *Crassula maputensis* based on collections at PRE, NH and LMU.

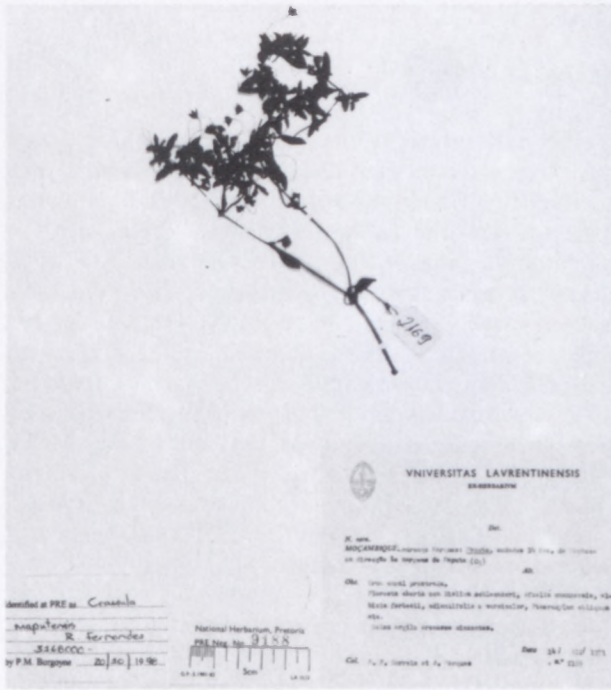


FIGURE 2.—*Crassula maputensis*. Habit, $\times 0.2$. Note the long thin pedicels and single flowers. Photograph by A. Romanowski.

In KwaZulu-Natal *C. maputensis* is mainly associated with sand forest. The species has a prostrate habit with succulent, rather fragile stems and relatively thin, succulent leaves. The distribution of the species is erratic, with plants occurring as dense localised stands in well-shaded and somewhat moist places along the edges of forest and bush clumps. Soils at these sites are sandy and rich in humus. Sand forest is a rare vegetation type mainly associated with ancient north-south trending dunes on the Maputaland coastal plain. In view of its localised occurrence, and the rarity of its sand forest habitat, *C. maputensis* should be considered a vulnerable species.

Specimens examined

KWAZULU-NATAL.—2632 (Bela Vista): Ndumu Hill, (–CD), Pooley 475 (NH). 2732 (Ubombo): Tembe Elephant Park, (–AB), Van Wyk 12603 (PRU); Ingwavuma, (–BB), Strey 4777, Tinley 511 (NH); Mtante, (–CA), Ward 93, (NH); False Bay Park, (–CD), Lawson 369, 459 (NH); Mpangazi, (–CD), Strey 5085, (PRE, NH).

MOZAMBIQUE.—2532 (Maputo): Magude, (–BA), Correia & Marques 787 (LMU); Manhoca, (–DC), Correia & Marques 2169 (LMU); Vila Luisa, (–DC), Marques 2292 (LMU). 2632 (Bela Vista): Inhaca, (–BB), Rodrigues, Pereira, Marques & Balsinhas 358 (LMU).

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FIGURE 3.—*Crassula expansa* subsp. *expansa*. Habit, $\times 0.2$. Flowers are borne in clusters on short pedicels. Photograph by A. Romanowski.

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