



African potato



Plant Botanical Name:

Hypoxis hemerocallidea

USBG Plant Location:

Conservatory

Conservatory Room Location:

Medicinal Plants

A tuberous perennial found in the grasslands of South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. The beautiful yellow flowers appear throughout the spring and summer. The plant is short lived and close at midday. The underground 'potato' is actually a corm, not a tuber, but is somewhat similar to a sweet potato. This misleading common name is Afrikaans "Afrika-patat," patat being Dutch for potato.

This plant is dependent on naturally occurring fires, which promote the growth of new leaves and production of seed. Traditionally the leaves were used to make black dye. The plant has also had historic use in traditional medicine and is being studied for use to treat arthritis, certain cancers and urinary tract infections.

It is an excellent rock garden plant for full sun and well-drained locations. Although not Red Listed by IUCN, it is of conservation concern due to over harvesting and the loss of the needed natural fires.

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