

Media Release:

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Rare Plant Species Discovered

Botanists at the Alice Springs Desert Park have successfully cultivated a rare plant species, *Typhonium* sp. 'Sandover', that was recently discovered near Alice Springs by Aboriginal Traditional Owners and staff from the Central Land Council and the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) Herbarium.

Alice Springs Desert Park Curator of Botany Scott Pullyblank said the species was found near Utopia on a trip led by Traditional Owners and the Central Land Council.

"The Central Land Council were on a targeted survey to find the *Typhonium* based on advice received from NRETAS scientist Dave Albrecht, and they were led to the site near Utopia where only 12 plants exist," Mr Pullyblank said.

"After its discovery Traditional Owners consented for a corm of the plant to be brought to the Alice Springs Desert Park for cultivation, where it has successfully grown to a mature size at 30 cm high with a spread of approximately 50 cm.

"The NRETAS Herbarium and Kings Park and Botanic Garden in Western Australia assisted in identifying the species."

Mr Pullyblank said *Typhonium* is principally a tropical genus that typically flourishes in conditions experienced in the Territory's Top End.

"*Typhonium* is a fascinating plant that generates heat of up to 12 degrees above the environment around it, sending out a unique smell that attracts native dung beetles as pollinators," Mr Pullyblank said.

"It has pale green leaves with a distinct flower that is a vibrant maroon colour.

"Since this remarkable discovery Desert Park Botanists will continue to monitor the growth of the corm to ensure that such a rare species can continue to prosper in the arid climates of Central Australia."

Central Land Council staff plan to assist Traditional Owners in protecting the native population of this rare and unique plant.

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Media Note – for more information contact Scott Pullyblank on 8951 8764.

Image – The rare *Typhonium* sp. 'Sandover'

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