

# Walter Sisulu honoured with Sisulu Circle Garden unveiling

The Sisulu Circle Garden - a landscaped area paying tribute to the late Walter Sisulu - has been unveiled by the Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa and Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom. The garden was funded by the Department of Tourism as part of its plans to develop tourism destinations across the country and enhance the visitor experience and features a bust sculpture of Walter Sisulu, a water feature with aquatic plants, and information and interpretation points.



Minister of Tourism Derek Hanekom and Minister of Environmental Affairs Edna Molewa with members of the Sisulu Family at the unveiling of the Sisulu Circle at the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden.

Speaking at the unveiling, which took place at the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden, in Roodepoort this morning, Molewa reiterated that South Africa is the third-most mega-diverse country in the world, millions of people annually experience the beauty and bounty of our magnificent country through visits to, for example, places such as the Walter Sisulu National Botanical Garden.

"Our natural heritage remains one of the most popular attractions for South Africans, some of whom are able to enjoy brief sojourns to the botanical gardens found in eight of our provinces to reconnect with nature, and to relax," said Molewa.

"The introduction of the Sisulu Circle here is an ideal opportunity for the public, and in particular the youth, to reconnect with our country's important heritage. It is an opportunity to not only honour a great man, but to learn more about the role played by Walter Sisulu in the attainment of the democracy and freedoms we have enjoyed since 1994," added Molewa.

## Garden conservation role

The garden plays an important conservation role, including protection of one of the few remaining populations of the endangered Albertina Sisulu Orchid (*Brachycorythis conica* ssp. *transvaalensis*) in Gauteng that is threatened by pending housing developments and uncontrolled recreational vehicle activities. The garden also hosts a breeding pair of Verreaux's Eagles – nearly 250 bird species have so far been recorded in the garden.

The department has also signed a master agreement with SANBI to implement improvements at Thohoyandou (National) Botanical Garden, Mokopane National Zoological Gardens and the Mokopane Biodiversity Conservation Centre (MBCC).

"We will continue to work with our sister department to improve on public assets of high tourism growth potential, this ensures that our contribution makes a difference in improving their visitor offerings.

“ *Ministers Edna Molewa and Derek Hanekom along with members of the Sisulu family have officially unveiled the statue of Walter Sisulu* [@environmentza #SisuluCircleUnveiling pic.twitter.com/gQhYRO1xsT](https://twitter.com/gQhYRO1xsT)— SA Biodiversity (@SANBI\_ZA) [July 10, 2018](#) ”

"The naming of this rare Orchid in honour Mama Albertina and the completion of the Sisulu Circle could not have come at an appropriate moment. It is a priceless gesture and the celebration of a legacy as we honour Mama Albertina Sisulu on this year of the centenary of her birth. The accolades with which this garden prides itself makes it any tourist's, must-go-to place," said Hanekom.

The Walter Sisulu NBG is one of the fastest growing gardens amongst the South African National Biodiversity Institute's (SANBI) network of gardens, attracting more than 300,000 visitors per annum. The garden has been voted the Best Picnic spot in *Johannesburg Reader's Choice* publication and was listed in *Huffington Post* as second amongst a list of 13 of the best botanical gardens in the world.

The Sisulu Circle will enable thousands of visitors, both current and future generations to appreciate Walter Sisulu's legacy, personal sacrifice and significant contribution made over a period of 90 years towards the achievement of democracy in South Africa.

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