

## DNA testing shows an extinct plant species

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*Dracaena umbraculifera* was originally described in 1797. It is believed to have originated from Mauritius, a small island in the Indian Ocean, 1,200 miles from the southern coast of Africa. After many attempts to locate species on Mauritius, botanists declared the plant extinct.



However, there are also claims that *D. umbraculifera* is being grown in botanical gardens around the world. Researchers at the Missouri Botanical Garden have identified the origin of this plant by arranging the genome and comparing it to their nearest relatives. Their analysis showed that *D. umbraculifera* is closely related to *Dracaena reflexa*, a plant in Madagascar.

This new genetic data contributes to the search for new species in Madagascar, another African island in the Indian Ocean, west of Mauritius. Botanists think there are five wild populations.

The researchers say their work - published in *Oryx* - emphasizes the importance of recording plants and animals of Madagascar and other islands in the Western Indian Ocean.

Nearly 90% of plants found in Madagascar are endemic, meaning they cannot be found anywhere else. But many of them are being threatened as a result of deforestation. Scientists hope these additional studies will contribute

to strengthening every strong conservation effort on the island.

Christine Edwards, a researcher at the Missouri Botanical Garden, said: " *This project is a good example of how DNA analysis can be used to bring new values ??to new botanical collections. Discovered* ' .

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