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# "Radical Stories in the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden: Emergent Ecologies' Challenges to Colonial Narratives and Western Epistemologies"

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When the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden was established in Cape Town, South Africa, in 1913, it was envisioned as a site that served white citizens. Kirstenbosch was presented as a landscape in which plants functioned as representatives of their wild habitats. The botanical garden's curatorial practices silenced histories of colonial occupation, frontier violence, colonial agriculture, and slavery that had shaped the land on which it was built. Narratives that celebrated colonial histories were cultivated in monumental gardening. Throughout its existence, Kirstenbosch has centered Western epistemologies. Where Indigenous knowledge systems were featured, they were mediated through ethnobotany. While human stakeholders lacked commitment to transformation, emergent ecologies evolved that interrupted colonial narratives and Western epistemologies. Discussing histories of wild almond trees, hybrid plants, and cycads, the author suggests that the emergent ecologies around them introduced radical stories to Kirstenbosch. The emergent ecologies' storytelling is radical because it works at the roots of plants and historical genealogies, and it roots different narratives—of ruination and new flourishing, diversity and local becomings, multispecies kinship and love—into Kirstenbosch. In doing so, the emergent ecologies introduce possibilities for reimagining the botanical garden as an institution of environmental governance from within its confines and its disciplines. (Abstract)

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