

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT RENOSTERVELD

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What exactly is renosterveld?

- Renosterveld is a small-leaved, evergreen shrubland that is found only in the South, South West and South East Cape of South Africa. It is frequently dominated by the renosterbos (*Elytrapappus rhinocerotis*) although this is often due to past disturbance.
- It is also extremely rich in species and bulbs (geophytes) which produce magnificent flower displays in spring. Many of these are endemic, which means they occur nowhere else in the world.
- Renosterveld can have a high grass cover and provide valuable grazing for animals.
- Typical renosterveld species include many members of the daisy, lily, iris and oxalis family.

Did you know?...

...More than 1000 species have been found in pristine renosterveld areas, while 200 species of these are bulbs. 188 of the endemic plant groups are threatened while at least 50 groups of bulbs are threatened.

How did renosterveld get its name?

Did you know?...

...Almost all large mammals have disappeared from renosterveld areas, while the Quagga, Bluebuck and Cape Lion are extinct. Due to the actions of farmers and the reation of the Bontebok National Park, the extinction of the bontebok was prevented.

- The connection with the 'renoster' remains a mystery – one suggestion is that the dull, grey appearance of a group of renosterveld bushes when viewed from a distance resembles the wrinkled hide of a rhino.
- Another suggestion is that rhinos, which once roamed the Cape used to regularly use renosterveld for food and shelter.

Did you know?...

...The first account of renosterveld was made by Simon Van Der Stel in 1685 when he passed through the Oliphants River Valley in the south western Cape.

How does renosterveld differ to Fynbos?

Did you know?...

... One third of all species endemic to the Cape Floral Kingdom are renosterveld plant species.

...The Fynbos biome includes not only fynbos, but in the lowland areas is comprised of:

- 1. Fynbos*
- 2. Renosterveld*
- 3. Strandveld*

Renosterveld can be distinguished from Fynbos in 4 ways:

1. Renosterveld grows on fine-grained, clay-rich soils (eg. Shales), whereas Fynbos occurs on sandy, nutrient-poor soils.
2. Renosterveld occurs under different climatic conditions to Fynbos: rainfall is between 250 – 600 mm per year (at least 30% occurs in winter), and the altitude is less than 300 m above sea level. Where the rainfall and altitude is higher, renosterveld usually gives way to Fynbos.
3. It normally lacks Cape reeds (restoids)
4. Proteas and ericas are extremely rare

Why is renosterveld so scarce and how much is left?

- Renosterveld used to be wide-spread in the Cape, but because it always occurs on fertile soils, more than 90% has been replaced by agricultural lands.
- The transformation of renosterveld to pasture and cereals accelerated when mechanised agriculture expanded in the Cape after World War II.
- Today less than 4% of renosterveld's original extent remains, while a mere 1.6% is formally conserved in reserves.**


Did you know?...

... The Geometric tortoise or occurs only in renosterveld and is the only species of tortoise that is endemic to Fynbos. Because only small patches of renosterveld remain, it has become highly endangered and approximately only 4000 - 5000 individuals remain. Geometric tortoises are very specialist feeders and eat bulbs and succulents in the renosterveld.

Why does renosterveld not look the same everywhere?

- There are a number of different types of renosterveld that have different characteristic species and other features. Renosterveld is divided into two broad categories: **mountain renosterveld** occurring at higher elevations with a higher proportion of succulents than **coastal renosterveld** on the lowlands.
- Renosterveld is geographically distributed in two different blocks – **western** (Swartland) and **southern** (Overberg) areas. Western communities have a stronger Fynbos influence, a sparser grass cover and higher variety of annuals and bulbs. The southern renosterveld has a higher rainfall, greater altitudinal variation and more grass cover.

Did you know?... *that there are different types of renosterveld.*



Renosterveld (RV)

Coastal RV
Mountain RV

West Coast renosterveld
South West Coast renosterveld
South Coast renosterveld

How can humans use renosterveld?

Did you know?...

... The renosterbos was used as a remedy to treat influenza in the 1918 epidemic and to treat typhoid fever.

- Renosterveld provides protein-rich grazing for livestock.
- The renosterbos burns well even when green and can be used as fuel.
- The tips of the branches are infused in wine or brandy and used to treat dyspepsia and other digestive disorders.
- A number of renosterveld plants provide valuable traditional medicines and various oils widely used in the flavour and pharmaceutical industries.

What are the threats to renosterveld?

- Overgrazing
- Invasive alien plants
- Incorrect veld burning practices
- Illegal flower picking
- Bad ploughing practices and development
- Use of non-biodegradable poisons and fertilizers

Did you know?...

... Renosterveld was not historically dominated by renosterbos to the extent it is today. Burning and overgrazing by the European settlers in the early 1800's caused the grass component to decline and renosterbos to become the dominant species.

How should renosterveld be managed?

Did you know?...

...Once disturbed, it takes a long time for renosterveld to recover and regain the full variety of species that it originally had. A partial recovery is perhaps possible after 25 years of non-disturbance

- **Burning** – If one wishes to re-establish the grassland in renosterveld, autumn is considered the best season for burning renosterveld. It is important to let the veld recover sufficiently between burns, and to be careful not to graze too heavily after a burn.
- **Grazing but not burning** – A loss of diversity (i.e. variety of different types of plants) will be caused by this form of management as the species that need fire to germinate and re-sprout will be excluded. Selective grazing can be used to stimulate palatable species to the detriment of unpalatable plants.
- **Brushcutting** – this favours grasses, bulbs and resprouting shrubs, but can cause a decline in the diversity of plants.

Did you know?...

...Threatened renosterveld insect species include:

- ❖ *Dickson's Monkey Blue butterfly*
- ❖ *Cottrell's Blue butterfly*
- ❖ *Lion's Head Copper butterfly*

Did you know?...

Some of the threatened renosterveld birds include:

- ❖ *Lappetfaced vulture*
- ❖ *Martial eagle*
- ❖ *Cape Vulture*
- ❖ *Stanley's Bustard*
- ❖ *Ludwig's Bustard*
- ❖ *Grass Owl*

Did you know?...

Mammals found in renosterveld that are threatened include:

- ❖ *Honey badger*
- ❖ *White-tailed mouse*
- ❖ *Serval*
- ❖ *African wild cat*
- ❖ *Antbear*
- ❖ *Cape Mountain Zebra*