



INTRODUCING SOUTH AFRICA'S FORESTS

In South Africa a **forest** is defined as, 'an area of land **dominated** by **tree species** with **overlapping canopies** covering at least 75% of the area and very little grass or herbaceous ground cover.'



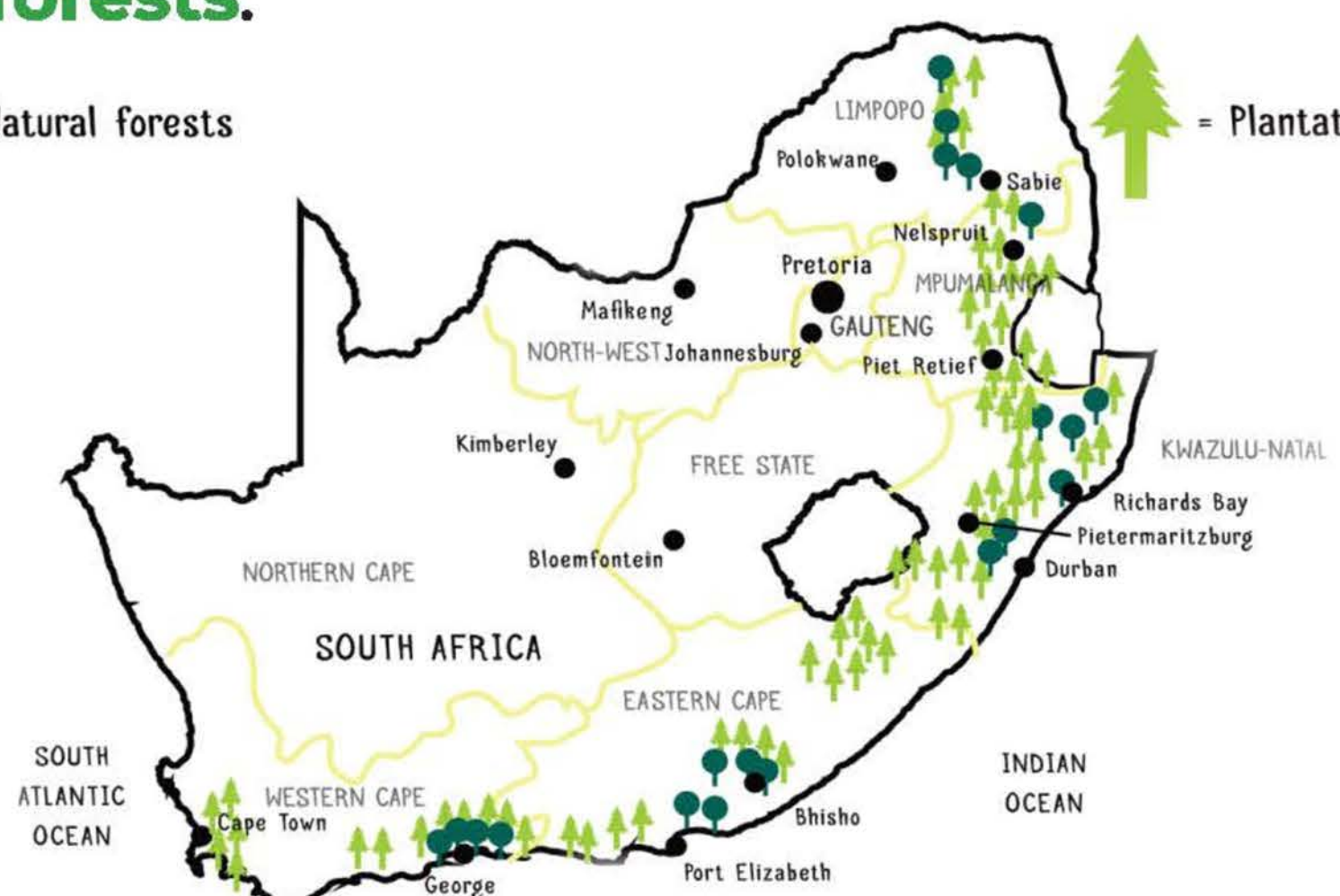
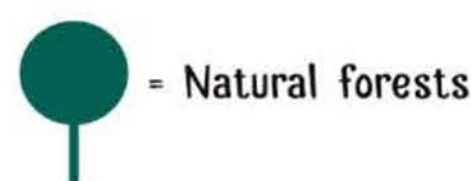
SOUTH AFRICA'S INDIGENOUS & PLANTED FORESTS

South Africa is not a forest-rich country, with only **0.5%** of its land area covered in **indigenous forests**. A further **1.2 million hectares**, approximately **1%** of South Africa's land area, is covered by commercially **planted forests**.

There are **five forestry provinces** in South Africa:

- Limpopo - 4%
- Mpumalanga - 41%
- KwaZulu-Natal - 40%
- Eastern Cape - 12%
- Western Cape - 3%

with the majority of the forestry landscape found within Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal.



THE ROLE OF FORESTS IN THE PROVISION OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

Forests, both indigenous and planted, provide an array of ecosystem services, these include:



- **Capturing carbon:** Carbon dioxide (CO_2) is taken up by the trees' leaves and converted into oxygen (O_2), which is released, while the carbon remains locked away in the trees' wood, even after the trees are harvested.
- **Erosion prevention:** Tree roots create networks in the soil that binds it, reducing erosion.
- **Water filtration:** Trees act as water filters, removing impurities and reducing the risk of flash flooding.



Forests also provide **social** and **economic services**, including agroforestry, ecotourism, recreation, traditional medicines and forest products.



PLANTED FORESTS & BIODIVERSITY

While planted forests do not contain the levels of biodiversity found in indigenous forests amongst their trees, only 70% of the forestry landscape is planted. The rest is mainly natural areas - managed, monitored and maintained by the forestry sector. This includes:

- 64 000 hectares **indigenous forests**
- 171 197 hectares of **grasslands**
- 59 000 hectares of **water bodies**
- 12 000 hectares of **fynbos**

all preserved within the forestry landscape.



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