

# A stunning new species of dragon tree discovered in Thailand

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This is the new dragon tree species *Dracaena kaweesakii* viewed from below showing the rich branching. Credit: Paul Wilkin

The newly discovered dragon tree species *Dracaena kaweesakii* from

Thailand is characterized by its extensive branching. The new species reaches an impressive 12 m in both height and crown diameter, and has beautiful soft sword-shaped leaves with white edges and cream flowers with bright orange filaments, all highly distinctive features. The study describing this exciting new species was published in the open access journal *Phytokeys* by an international team of scientists.

*Dracaena kaweesakii* is a relative of the beautiful Canary Island dragon tree *Dracaena draco*. It is an ecologically important [species](#) found only on limestone hills and mountains that are often associated with Buddhist temples in Thailand.

*Dracaena kaweesakii* is extracted from the wild for use in horticulture in Thailand and is one of the more popular species due to its extensive branching. *Dracaena* species in general are thought by Thai people to bring luck to households that have them, hence their popularity. A number of populations of *D. kaweesakii* are protected by proximity to temples or having been transplanted into their gardens. There is no direct evidence yet of over-extraction but sustainability studies are needed at population level to insure the protection of this beautiful species.



This image demonstrates the thickness of a trunk base in a large tree of *Dracaena kaweesakii* showing the corky, fissured surface. Credit: Warakorn Kasempankul/Parinya Siriponamat



This image shows flowers of *Dracaena kaweesakii*. Credit: Warakorn Kasempankul/Parinya Siriponamat

"*Dracaena kaweesakii* is thought to be endangered through having a limited distribution, destruction of limestone for concrete and extraction of trees for gardens," comments Dr Wilkin about the conservation status of the new dragon [tree species](#).

**More information:** Wilkin P, Suksathan P, Keeratikiat K , van Welzen P, Wiland-Szymanska J (2013) A new species from Thailand and Burma, *Dracaena kaweesakii* Wilkin & Suksathan (Asparagaceae subfamily Nolinoideae). *PhytoKeys* 26: 101. [DOI: 10.3897/phytokeys.26.5335](https://doi.org/10.3897/phytokeys.26.5335)

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