Malawi is a small tropical country in southeast Africa between 9° and 17° S. Landlocked, it is neighbored by Tanzania, Zambia, and Mozambique and bordered by the immense Lake Malawi (also known as Lake Nyasa) to its east. A provisional checklist of the succulents of Malawi lists about 120 species, and while this seems a low figure compared to some 318 species in neighboring Zimbabwe and 380 in Kenya, the paucity of succulents in Malawi does not simply result from the small size of the country, but relates to the rather high summer rainfall (Malawi usually gets 800–1000 mm per year). Beyond that, most parts of Malawi experience temperatures lower than might be expected for its tropical latitude, because they are situated above 1000 meters.

The genus Sansevieria in Malawi

The first record of Sansevieria from Malawi is found in Sir Henry Hamilton Johnston’s book *British Central Africa*. Johnston (1858–1927), a British explorer, botanist, and colonial administrator, gives a rather crude description of the plant:

*The Sansevieria plants should be classed amongst the grotesque if they did not lead us by a natural transition to the useful. They are absurd things, just segments of crude vegetation which might be stalks, but which are, I suppose, leaves that come up out of the ground anyhow. One triangular leaf may be standing alone, although there may be a Stonehenge clump of four or five others growing stiffly together and yet having as little connection with each other as possible. It is very rare to see these things in flower. When they do flower the blossom comes out at the side of the leaf;*