

# Officials left high and dry over dagga at Zuma guest house

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A DAGGA bush is growing along the boundaries of the presidential guest house in Pretoria.

And officials from a city improvement organisation say it is evidently being allowed to grow because the ground around it has recently been cleared.

The bush, which has freshly turned soil and almost no weeds around it, leans against one of the two security fences near the Stanza Bopape (Church) Street security fences of the Sefako Makgopgo Makhatho Residence.

Yesterday, members of the public, who had noticed the bush between the fences, said it had suddenly stood out after the piece of land was cleared two months ago.

"Judging from its height and the lushness of the leaves, one can tell that the bush has been there for a



The dagga bush growing on the grounds of the presidential guest house near the Union Buildings.

PICTURE: JOHN MAKONI

while. It is obvious that the people working there know about it," said a passer-by who asked to remain anonymous.

He said the piece of land bordering the guest house and between the inner and outer fences had become overgrown and "quite

messy" over the Christmas holidays.

"The groundsman did a good job of clearing the place and removing all the unsightly weeds, but they left this one standing," he added.

While presidential spokesman Mac Maharaj expressed shock at the idea of the illegal, addictive and intoxicating drug growing near the guest house, he referred all enquiries to the Department of Public Works, whose responsibility it is to take care of the grounds.

The department's spokesman, Thamsanqa Machunu, confirmed the department's responsibility to care for the grounds, but said no one was allowed to cultivate a drug on the property.

"It should have been cut down," he said, before adding that he would get information and clarification on the existence of the bush from horticulturists.

Machunu could not say if anyone would be held responsible for the bush's cultivation.

Although dagga has been used for medicinal purposes, it is widely used as a recreational drug across the world. The online publication weed.co.za says: "... it is widely produced, used and exported from South Africa. It is known by connoisseurs as of very high quality.

"The fact is that many travellers don't just come to South Africa for the spectacular scenery or to visit Nelson Mandela's prison cell on Robben Island or to experience the wall-to wall wildlife - many come to sample some of its more exotic, natural produce - *cannabis sativa* - known in South Africa as dagga."

These travellers become members of the growing cannabis tourism fraternity, the website adds. [ntando.makhubu@irn1.co.za](mailto:ntando.makhubu@irn1.co.za)