



## Fact Sheet

# Proteas

Proteas range in height from low ground covers to tall shrubs. The Proteaceae family includes proteas, leucadendrons, leucospermums, banksias and waratahs.

In nature they are found mainly in poor well drained soils low in phosphorous, cool wet winters, dry hot summers.

### ***In the garden:***

*Drainage* - good drainage is essential, NO heavy clay, dig in gypsum and compost.

*Soil* - prefer acidic soil less than 6.5pH.

*Position* - sunny, open position.

*Frost* - all species tolerate light frost (-2 degrees), some will tolerate heavy frosts. Protect from frosts during first 2 winters.

### **Pruning**

Young plants - tip prune spring/late summer.

Old plants - prune after flowering. Leave about 10cm of healthy stem, don't remove more than half leaf volume of plant.

Common causes of proteas dying are:-

- 1 Over watering
- 2 Unsuitable soil - don't use Mushroom compost or added fertiliser
- 3 Root rot fungi

Some proteas will tolerate heavy soil including Pink Ice, Ruby Blush, Firewheel & Shady Lady.

## Tubs

Can be grown in tubs (250mm).

Use a potting mix with no added fertiliser, (acidic potting mix is needed).

Use a slow release fertiliser such as Osmocote for Natives. Keep soil damp with regular watering.

Good tub varieties include King, Mini King, Joey, Inca Gold, Red Devil, Silvan Red, Firewheel, Scarlet Ribbon, and Blushing Bride.

### DO'S & DON'TS

- ◇ Don't cultivate around plant.
- ◇ Mulch to protect surface roots.
- ◇ It is important to water at least twice a week during first two summers.
- ◇ Prune to shape bush.
- ◇ Picking flowers helps maintain shape.
- ◇ Do not fertilize. Proteas are best grown away from plants that need feeding.
- ◇ Proteas grown in most gardens don't need feeding.
- ◇ Don't plant where phosphorous fertiliser has been used.
- ◇ Some proteas can take up to 3 years (King Protea - 6 years) to flower.
- ◇ Need plenty of sun to flower.
- ◇ If not in full sun proteas won't flower, leucadendrons won't colour, but waratahs both red 'Shady Lady' and white will tolerate filtered light.



The name protea comes from Proteus, the seagod who was able to change his shape at will, a reference to the diversity of the species.

Australian natives which are found in the Proteaceae family include Grevilleas and Hakeas. These should be treated in the same way.



### Did you know:

- ❖ Proteas comprise of over 130 species, all of which are natives of Africa, most of them from Cape Province.
- ❖ Leucadendron literally means white tree, an allusion to *L. argenteum*, the silver tree.
- ❖ Leucospermum means white seed, a reference to the white shining seed nuts of some species.
- ❖ Many of the varieties are very popular for floral arrangements.
- ❖ They do exceedingly well in coastal areas.