

WILD WONDERS SPRING-FLOWERING DAISIES

YOU TOO CAN HAVE THEM IN YOUR GARDEN!



The colourful blooms of spring wild flowers along South Africa's West Coast transform this part of the country from its usual starkness with breathtakingly beauty. Carpets of daisy-like flowers coat the land with magnificent and radiant colours for only a few weeks each year once the worst of the winter rains have passed.

Outside the flowering season, this part of the country is dulled due to the harsh environmental conditions vegetation has to withstand. But the spring spectacle brings in both tourists and locals alike, clad with cameras, awe and excitement as they marvel at Nature's perfection.

Spring-flowering daisies include *Osteospermum* spp., *Dimorphotheca* spp., *Gazania* spp., *Felicia* spp., *Senecio* spp., *Arctotis* spp., *Didelta* spp. and *Euryops* spp.

Vygies include *Dorotheanthus bellidiformis* (bokbaai vygie), *Carpobrotus* spp., *Ruschia* spp., *Delosperma* spp., *Drosanthemum* spp. and *Lampranthus* spp.

Other plants flowering in spring to add colour to your garden include *Agathosma* spp. (buchu), *Nylandtia* spp. (tortoise berry), *Lobostemon* spp., *Polygala* spp., *Podalyria* spp., *Lachanalia* spp., *Herbenstreitia* spp., *Babiana* spp., *Indigofera* spp., *Nemesia* spp., *Ixia* spp., *Oxalis* spp., *Zaluzianskya* spp., *Diascia* spp., *Chasmanthe* spp., *Eriocephalus* spp., *Primula* spp., *Veltheimia* spp. and *Heliophila* spp.

Below are some striking examples of what these flowering beauties can do to your garden. There is more information on some of the above listed plants.



















VYGIES / MESEMBS

The plants belonging to the family Mesembryanthemaceae make up a large and unique group of southern Africa's flora, especially in the more arid parts where they are adapted with low growth forms and fleshy succulent leaves. Common names include "mesembs" or the popular Afrikaans word "vygie".

Their water-storing leaves and brightly-coloured flowers are their most obvious characteristics, making vygies easily recognisable. Unlike most other plant groups, vygies have an interesting and somewhat humorous concoction of features, giving them an appearance that will undoubtedly steal one's heart.

There is an extremely high diversity of vygies and many can be found in the Succulent Karoo and Fynbos Biomes. Within their greater distribution, there are many endemics which excite many a botanist and lay plant-lover too.

There are many different plants making up the all-encompassing vygie/mesemb group, not all from the same genus either. A popular annual for the garden is the bokbaai vygie, *Dorotheanthus bellidiformis*. Other favourite vygies include *Carpobrotus* spp., *Drosanthemum* spp., *Ruschia* spp., *Delosperma* spp. and *Lampranthus* spp. A collective benefit of all these different vygies is that they attract butterflies to the garden and are excellent water-wise plants.

Traditionally, mesembs are used medicinally as well as in soap making and preserves. The leaves of *Carpobrotus*, for example, are used as antiseptic to treat bluebottle stings and for the medicinal treatment of sore throats. *Carpobrotus edulis*, commonly known as the sour fig, is eaten as dried fruit or in jam in the Western Cape.





BOKBAAIVYGIES

Dorotheanthus bellidiformis, the bokbaai vygie, is a great source of spring colour! Flowering occurs around August and promises to impress with a shimmering colourful display.

Bokbaai vygies like sun and well-drained sandy soils, making them perfect for the Cape. The species name *bellidiformis* suggests that they resemble the English daisy, *Bellis*. Their showy petals range from white to pinkish-purple. Bokbaai vygies occur naturally in white sand all around Cape Town, but are most prolific at Bokbaai near Darling on the north of the Cape Peninsula, hence the common name.

Their fleshy, succulent leaves help these plants to survive a harsher environment; the outer layers of the leaves carry tiny water sacks. It does extremely well in rocky gardens or between paving stones, as its natural habitat is in arid environments and often in awkward positions. For a striking effect that will bring a smile to faces, these attractive plants can also be planted on mass.

The bokbaai vygie is an annual and can be planted as seed or seedlings. Sowing happens in March or early autumn. Seeds should be sown in trays or straight into the garden. Either way, the soil mixture should be light and moist. If in trays, transplant the seedlings four-five weeks after germination. Whilst growing, avoid drying out of the soil.

Not only do they fit in well with other garden plants, these annuals are great for window boxes and container gardening.





DIMORPHOTHECA & OSTEOSPERMUM

Some of the common Namaqua or spring daisies found along the West Coast belong to the genera *Dimorphotheca* and *Osteospermum*. To the untrained eye, flowers from these two different groups may look identical. And although they belong to the same family, Asteraceae, the one characteristically distinguishing difference is that *Dimorphotheca* plants are annuals while *Osteospermums* are perennials.

OSTEOSPERMUM

Osteospermum is a genus producing beautifully radiant flowers in a range of purple, white and yellow shades in spring. These daisies have hard seeds, hence their scientific name; *ostean* is Greek for bone and *spermum* is Latin for seed. Although previously known and sometimes still referred to as *Dimorphotheca*, *Osteospermum* plants are perennials. *Osteospermums* are not hardy enough to survive persistent frosts, but they do extremely well in the Western Cape's Mediterranean climate.

DIMORPHOTHECA

The centre for diversity of *Dimorphotheca*, also known as the Cape marigold, is southern Africa. *Dimorphotheca pluvialis* is endemic to the south-western Cape, Namaqualand and Namibia. This species flowers in spring, transforming the landscape to a carpet of glittering white flowers that resemble snow.

These annuals are adapted to germinate, grow, flower and set seed during the rainy winter. They can therefore survive the long dry summer as seed.

Seeds of *Dimorphotheca* are produced in two different forms - flat, papery seeds forming the central disc, and thorn-like seeds with thick coats forming the outer ray florets. The papery seeds of the disk germinate in abundance in spring; these are the seeds normally planted in the garden. Seeds of the ray florets have delayed germination to protect the species against unpredictable conditions in their arid environment.





ARCTOTIS

The genus *Arctotis* comprises one of the many spring-flowering beauties in southern Africa belonging to the family Asteraceae.

Commonly known as the African daisy, these spectacular flowers produce a variety of magnificent spring colour for only a few weeks every year.

In the late afternoon and when the weather is overcast the flowers tend to close, but many cultivars have been developed for gardens that stay open longer and flower deep into summer.





SENECIO

Senecio, belonging to the daisy family Asteraceae, is one of the largest genera of the flowering plants. There are over 1200 species in the genus *Senecio*, meaning 'old man'. An impressive 300 of these occur in southern Africa. The genus is extremely variable, including annuals and perennials.

Particularly along South Africa's West Coast during the famous wild flower season, delicate yellow and pink-mauve flowers of these spring-flowering daisies create breathtaking blankets of colour.

In the garden, *Senecio* make beautiful colourful borders and do well in pots. The daisy-like flowers come in fantastic colours such as red, pink, blue, purple and white.





THE BEST OF THE REST
Plant the following for added colour this spring...



Zaluzianskya spp. (above) and *Nemesia* spp. (below)





Indigofera spp. (left) and *Herbenstreitia* spp. (right)



Heliophila spp. (above)



Chasmanthe aetiopica (left) and *Veltheimia bracteata* (right)



Ixia spp. (above)



Diascia spp.



Diascia spp.



Diascia spp.



Oxalis spp.



Oxalis spp.



Oxalis spp.



Felicia spp.



Felicia spp.



Felicia spp.



Romulea tabularis



Lachanalia spp.



Lachanalia aloides



Podalyria spp.



Euryops pectinatus



Polygala spp.



Babiana spp.



Didelta spp.



Agathosma spp.



Nylandtia spp.



Eriocephalus africanus



Primula malachoides



Lobostemon spp.



Lobostemon belliformis



Lobostemon glaucophyllus

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