

Exotic Waterwise Options



Trevor Cochrane

The Australian gardens where we film our TV shows are mostly an eclectic mixture of plants originating from across the globe. While Australian native species are often the focus of designers and experts in

importantly, they perform beautifully in Australian gardens, providing colours, shapes, forms and textures that no other plant family can offer. Unlike many Australian native garden designs proteas are rarely found as mass plantings of species which is a shame, as they genuinely have a lot to offer and the diversity of the family provides tremendous variety. They

are also easy-care plants that benefit from regular pruning and require very little supplementary watering once established—a prerequisite for waterwise gardens of the future. Interestingly, they suffer few pests here and love our long, sunny summer days.

So with all this wise advice and endorsement it would have been hypocritical of me not to make them a big part of my new garden. I suppose, being completely honest, I was lucky to see inspirational plantings at one

of Australia's most revered specialist nurseries, Proteaflora. This nursery is something very special when it comes to professional commercial production nurseries and has won Australia's best wholesale nursery at the Australian Nursery Industry Awards for the past four years. One tremendous feather in their cap is the fact that their plants, which are of amazing quality, are exported internationally, with enormous demand for them in places such as Japan where a protea revolution is under way.

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recommending waterwise species, there are also good options that originate from countries with similar climatic conditions or general environment to our home.

One such place is South Africa, home to many of the Protea family. While we have many Proteas here in Australia, including Banksia, Dryandra and the Waratah, it’s the South African forms that are most often used by florists internationally as cut flower greenery or as features in floral arrangements.

The plants themselves, however, do not make a major impact for the average garden centres range. Yet as garden specimens they are every bit as valuable as the most popular Australian native plants sold today. Proteaceous genera such as *Leucospermum*, *Leucadendron* and *Protea* are examples of Africa’s most beautiful flowering plants and, more



This was originally a barren windswept

re-visited a former Italian garden

island is the mainline tower, erected by