

**WATERWISE
PLANTING**

Protea power

This popular South African native thrives in warm Aussie conditions

Proteas are native to South Africa and enjoy similar growing conditions to leucospermum and leucodendron, as well as Australian natives grevillea and waratah.

These popular cut flowers bloom from winter through to spring and last for weeks in a vase.

FLOWERS AND LEAVES

The leaves of a protea plant range from oval in shape to fine needle-like foliage, often with a leathery texture that helps them conserve water.

Chunky cone-shaped flower heads have coloured leaf-like structures surrounding the base, and the flowers are mostly pink, cream or shades of red.

GROWING CONDITIONS

Protea plants are tough, growing in temperatures from -3 to 40°C. Some varieties even survive occasional frost.

Lots of full sun gives the flowers vibrant colour and plants grown in too much shade are dull in comparison.

SOIL AND MULCH

Most proteas come from areas with poor soil so the roots have developed over time to seek out nutrients.

Sandy, acidic soil is the best environment and provides excellent drainage. Protea roots tend to rot if the soil remains damp.

Weed control is essential as protea roots are delicate and can be damaged by weeding around the base. Mulch with old straw, bark or blue metal to deter weeds, keeping mulch away from the stem to avoid collar rot.

FOOD AND WATER

As with Australian native plants, proteas have a low tolerance for artificial fertilisers.

Planted in the garden they don't usually need fertiliser, although if the soil is very sandy add a compost and slow-release fertiliser suited to natives.

Proteas must be watered regularly for the first year then most species are fairly drought tolerant.

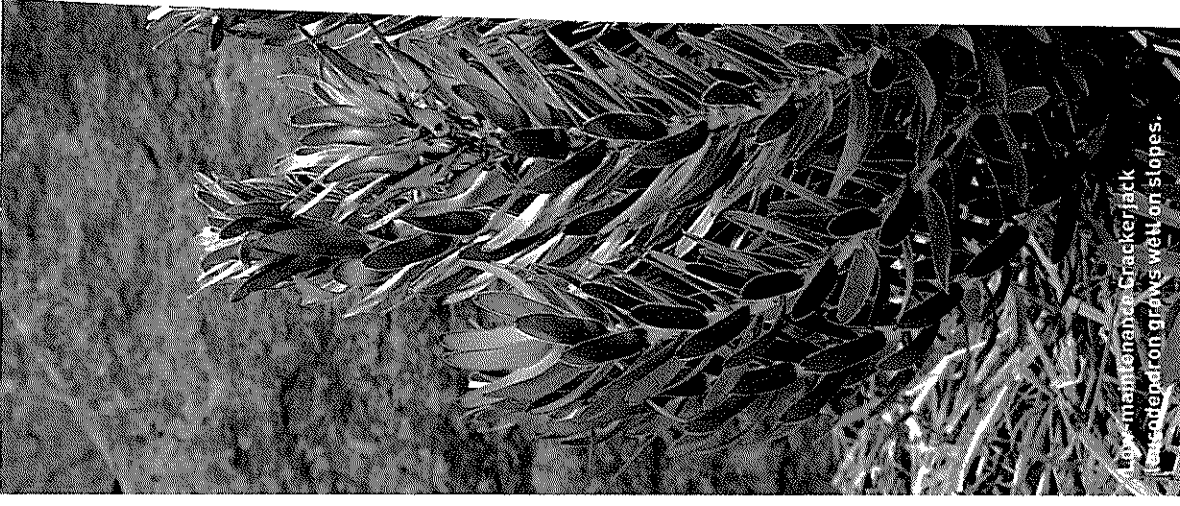
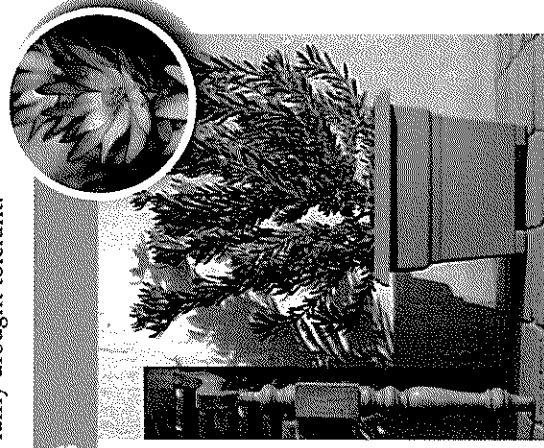
Growing in containers

Choose a pot about 250mm wide and a quality potting mix without added fertiliser. Mix in a handful of fertiliser designed especially for natives.

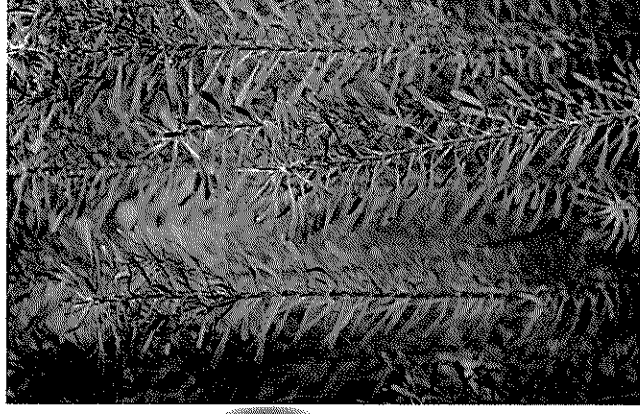
Raise pots off the ground to help with drainage and water once a day in hot weather.

Plant large varieties into a pot the next size up as they quickly outgrow their space.

Red Devil leucodendron is small and compact, suited to pots.



Low maintenance Crackerjack leucodendron grows well on slopes.



Purple Haze is mauve through winter and produces silver cones at Christmas.