

by Johann Kikillus @ The Garden Centre, Kirstenbosch

FRAGRANCE IN THE GARDEN

There can be nothing more pleasant in a garden than the scent of many different plants filling the air. I am not referring to roses and pennyroyal, but to the plants that grow wild in South Africa.

Plants with scented leaves

The most well known fragrance in the Western Cape surely has to be that of the buchu. Anyone driving between Riversdale and Plettenberg Bay or walking in the Cape mountains will understand what I mean. Buchu is the collective name for a group of aromatic shrublets from the Rutaceae family. There are three main genera that are available commercially:

Agathosma, *Acmadenia* and *Coleonema*. Buchus are normally very difficult to grow, but there are a few species that can be grown quite successfully in a Western Cape garden. These are the garlic-scented buchu *Agathosma apiculata*, bergboegoe *A. ciliaris*, *A. martiana*, *A. glabrata* with its beautiful mauve flowers, *A. ovata* and *A. serpyllaceae*. Every

garden should also have a confetti bush - *Coleonema album* and *C. pulchellum*. If the soil in your garden is oily sand then the best buchu to plant are *Agathosma collina*, *Acmadenia heterophylla* and the confetti bushes.

Pelargonium species also have wonderful fragrances. Little wonder that some expensive perfumes are derived from these plants. The three most scented ones are the lemon-scented pelargonium *Pelargonium citronellum*, the peppermint-scented pelargonium *P. tomentosum* and the rose scented pelargonium *P. capitatum*.

Artemisia afra, otherwise known as wormwood, not only has a refreshing fragrance, but is used as a medicinal plant to get rid of blocked noses. Wild rosemary *Eriocephalus africanus* smells very similar to that of exotic rosemary and gets white 'cottonwool'-like flowers.

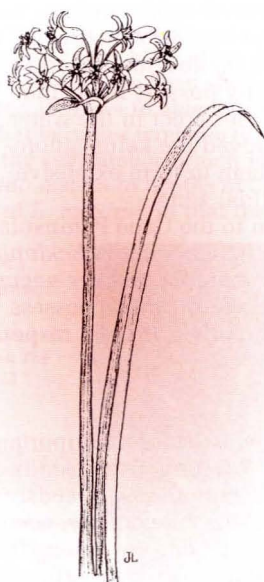
The curry bush *Hypericum*

revolutum is a large attractive shrub with yellow star shaped flowers. This plant, coupled with kooigoed *Helichrysum petiolare*, gives a wonderful, almost overpowering scent.

Kruidjie-roer-my-nie *Melianthus major* is a very strange looking plant with purple-brown flowers on top of a tall thin stem. The fragrance, in my

opinion, can best be described as roasted peanuts. Sunbirds love this plant.

Other plants with fragrant leaves are *Salvia chamelaeagnea*, *S. africana-lutea*, the ginger bush *Tetradenia riparia*, *Plectranthus neochilis*, the wild camphor tree *Tarchonanthus camphoratus* and the ever popular wild garlic, *Tulbaghia*.



Tulbaghia simmleri.

Plants with scented flowers

Of all the plants

with scented flowers, the wild jasmines, *Jasminum multipartitum* and *J. angulare*, are the most striking. These plants make superb climbers on any sunny fence. Another plant with almost the same shape flowers and scent is the num-num, *Carissa macrocarpa*. This shrub must rank as the best barrier plant as it has hundreds of vicious thorns and, once fully grown, is impossible to see through. Whilst on the subject of barrier and hedge plants, let us not forget the buddlejas, namely *Buddleja auriculata*, *B. salviifolia* and *B. saligna*. *Gnidia* too has a strong fragrance, especially at night.

These are but a handful of all the fragrant indigenous plants available. However, all of the above plants are usually readily available at The Garden Centre at Kirstenbosch. They are fairly easy to grow and require little maintenance. And remember that the autumn months are the best time to plant in the garden.