



Jasminum angulare

South African Jasmines for the garden

Indigenous jasmines recommended above exotic species for local gardens, and how to achieve best results.

by Rod Saunders, Kirstenbosch National Botanic Gardens

In South Africa, *Jasminum* is neglected horticulturally and the 10 indigenous species are not widely cultivated.

Occasionally native species are grown in gardens and are sometimes sold at nurseries. In my mind, these rival most of the exotic species for showiness and

ease of cultivation. These two native species are *Jasminum angulare* and *Jasminum multipartitum*.

World-wide, the genus *Jasminum* has some 200 species of trailing, climbing or erect shrubs, occurring mainly in Asia and Europe. Flower colour is

generally white, sometimes yellow and rarely reddish. The blooms are usually scented and at least one species, *Jasminum officinale*, is a source of perfume. The plants are easy to cultivate (propagation is mainly by cuttings) and they succeed in a variety of soil types. The genus is important for its horticultural value, and provides us with some well-known climbers.

Jasminum angulare: In nature, this plant is found amongst boulders on hillsides, along rivers, in coastal bush and scrub forest. Its habitat extends from the eastern Cape, through the Transkei and Natal, to the Transvaal border. It is best described as a straggling shrub or climber, and is equally at home covering a bank or used as a ground cover. If encouraged, it can be made to climb a trellis or fence.

The white, sweetly scented flowers (1,5-2 cm across) are borne in terminal cymes and appear erratically throughout summer, although a flush of flowers is produced in late spring or early summer. These are extremely showy, particularly against the evergreen trifoliolate leaves.

Established plantings can withstand a fair amount of drought. For example, plants of *Jasminum angulare* at "The Wilds" in Johannesburg grew and flowered well during the 1978-1986 drought, with minimal water. No evidence of frost damage was observed, therefore plants should succeed in colder gardens.

Plants can be propagated easily from semi-hardwood cuttings made in spring or summer when plants are actively growing. Cuttings must be placed under mist. Rooting is improved if the cuttings are treated with Seradix 2 or similar rooting hormone. For anyone wanting one or two extra plants, they grow well from runners.

Jasminum multipartitum: This species has a wide distribution in South Africa, occurring in the Cape near Uitenhage, King

William's Town and Albany, and throughout the drier parts of Natal, Swaziland and the eastern Transvaal. It may be found growing on rocky slopes, in woodland and in scrub.

This is a real aristocrat amongst plants, growing up to 3 m tall. If encouraged, it will climb, although not very strongly, and is best used as a shrub of up to 1,5 m. The characteristic single large, white flower (4 cm across) which appears in spring and early summer is delicately perfumed during the day, but becomes markedly stronger scented with nightfall. As with *J. angulare*, the flower set against the contrasting dark green foliage makes a fine show in the garden.

Although it will tolerate full sun, it prefers a partially shaded position — a well-drained, shaded corner of the garden is ideal. It is also able to withstand some frost, although in colder gardens it will need a protected corner. During long, dry spells in summer, the plants will require some watering.

This species of *Jasminum* is an extremely successful container plant, and is attractive even without flowers. It succeeds in a variety of soils and shows no particular preference for soil types, although it grows best in a soil which has plenty of well-rotted organic matter added.

Other South African species

At present, three other species of *Jasminum* are cultivated at Kirstenbosch. They are *Jasminum breviflorum*, *J. glaucum* and *J. tortuosum*. *J. glaucum* appears to have good horticultural potential and, as it comes from the Van Rhynsdorp-Clanwilliam area, will be of particular interest to south-western Cape gardeners.

In time we hope to be able to introduce all 10 species of South African jasmines to the gardening public.



Bibliography

- Flora of Southern Africa*. Vol. 26 (1963).
Botanical Research Institute, Pretoria.
Royal Horticultural Society Dictionary of Gardening (2nd edn.). (1956).
Clarendon Press, Oxford.