Helichrysum petiolare | Plantz Africa

Introduction

Description

A soft, vigorous shrub, which grows 0.5m - 1m x 1m. The dense, aromatic foliage consists of roundish leaves which are covered with silver-grey hairs. Tiny creamy-white flowers make up abundant flower heads on long stalks which add to the decorative effect of this plant in midsummer (December and January).

Distribution and habitat

Distribution description

*Helichrysum petiolare* occurs in the drier inland parts, sheltered slopes and forest margins of the Western Cape (Cederburg and Jonkershoek Mountains), Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

Derivation of name and historical aspects

History

The name *Helichrysum* is derived from the Greek *(h)elios* for sun and *chrysos* for gold, although not all species have golden flowers; *petiolare* refers to long leaf stalks.

Uses

Use

Ailments such as coughs, colds and infections are treated with this popular medicinal plant. The leaves are
used by Rastafarians to make an infusion to treat asthma, chest problems and high blood pressure. The smoke of the burning leaves is inhaled as a pain reliever. The leaves are also widely used on wounds to prevent infection.

The Khoikhoi used the leaves and flowers as bedding; campers still do the same today. Burning a mixture of Helichrysum and Artemisia afra leaves, makes a pleasant insect repellent. It is very effective at keeping flies and mosquitoes away.

**Growing Helichrysum petiolare**

**Grow**

This plant can be propagated from cuttings or from seed sown in autumn (March). It should be planted in full sun in well-drained soil. This decorative plant spreads rapidly and should be cut back occasionally.

The cultivar Helichrysum petiolare 'Limelight' has luminescent yellow-green foliage in place of the usual grey. It does well in semi-shade and looks good inter-planted with dark coloured foliage plants to create interesting contrasts. It is short lived and need replacing every 2 years.

**References**


**Credits**

*Roger Oliver*

*Harold Porter Botanical Garden*

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