Nemesia strumosa | Plantz Africa

Introduction

This striking annual comes in yellow, orange, pink, cream, red, mauve or white, and on its own it is capable of creating a riot of colours so typical of the Namaqualand landscape. It is therefore well-suited to the sunny small garden, pots and larger gardens alike. But whatever the location, be prepared for a rich explosion of colours.

Description

*Nemesia strumosa* is an annual of up to 40 cm. It occasionally branches from the base. The opposite leaves are narrow and slightly toothed. Flowers appear in a compact cluster and are two-lipped and pouchied at the base. Colour varies from white, cream, pink, yellow, mauve and red to orange, with dark marks in the throat. The throat is coarsely hairy. Flowering is from September to October.
Conservation Status

Status

This nemesia has a current status of Near Threatened (NT). It is estimated that this annual species has lost over 80% of its habitat to wheat cultivation. This decline is continuing, due to alien plant invasion and coastal development.

Distribution and habitat

Distribution description

*Nemesia strumosa* is found on sandy flats from Hopefield to Melkbos, north of the Cape Peninsula.

Derivation of name and historical aspects

History

The genus name *Nemesia* is derived from the Greek name *nemesion* for a plant similar to these herbs. The specific epithet *strumosa* means to have cushion-like swellings.
Approximately 60 species of *Nemesia* are found in southern Africa.

It is one of the South African annuals which has been in cultivation for a long time. Lighton (1973) reports that Hildagonda Duckitt sent seed to Suttons in England in 1890. They started marketing the seeds in a range of colours in 1893 and it has remained popular ever since. Miss Duckitt so liked the plant that her house in Wynberg was called Nemesia Cottage.

**Ecology**

The seed is extremely light and is dispersed by the wind. It is not known whether any insects assist with any pollination.

**Uses**

No medicinal or cultural uses have so far been reported. It is an amazing landscaping species and as such it is useful in small to larger gardens and pots.

**Growing Nemesia strumosa**

**Grow**

Sow the seed of *Nemesia strumosa* during early autumn using a well-draining medium, and place in a sunny position. Level the medium and then sow the light seeds evenly on a windless day (if outside), water gently and cover with a thin layer of sand or bark. The seed will germinate within the first two to three weeks.

Prick seedlings out from the beds or trays as soon as they are large enough to be handled.
It is sometimes required that the compacted soil in the flowering bed be loosened up and aerated. Organic fertilizer and well-rotted compost can also be added; use a rotovator or fork to work it into the soil. Level the soil out by using an iron rake. Plant the seedlings close together.

Flowering starts during August right through towards October. Seed will be ready for harvesting from September onwards.

*Nemesia strumosa* is ideal for mass plantings or mixed plantings with other annual species in small or larger flower beds. It also performs well in pots. There are various other annuals which either occur with this species in its natural habitat or which have been found to complement it rather well. These include: *Ursinia anthemoides* (marigold), *U. cakilefolia* and *U. speciosa* (Namaqua-ursinia), *Senecio elegans* (wild cineraria), *Dorotheanthus bellidiformis* (Livingstone daisy), *Heliophila coronopifolia* (blue flax), *Dimorphotheca pluvialis* (white Namaqualand daisy) and *Dimorphotheca sinuata* (Namaqualand daisy).

References


Credits

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