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## Berzelia abrotanoides | Plantz Africa

### Introduction

*Berzelia abrotanoides* is a distinctive and beautiful, softly textured shrub endemic to the Western Cape. Displays of masses of fluffy ball-like flower heads in early summer make it an interesting and pretty addition to a fynbos garden.



### Description

### Description

*Berzelia abrotanoides* is a densely leaved, erect shrub, growing to approximately 1.5 metres. The leaves are narrow, softly textured and crowded densely on slender, branching stems. Many tiny cream to white flowers are clustered together, forming rounded flower heads produced on prominent red, often fleshy peduncles. Each flower head is 10 mm in diameter and the stamens protruding from the flowers create a fluffy ball appearance. The flower heads occur *en masse* on the tips of the branches in late winter to early summer (August-November).





## Conservation Status

### Status

According to the Red List of South African Plants, *Berzelia abrotanoides* has been given an automatic status of Least Concern (LC).

## Distribution and habitat

### Distribution description

*Berzelia abrotanoides* occurs in flat damp places and seepages, along stream sides and in marshes in the Western Cape. It can be found from the Silvermine plateau to the southern end of the Cape Peninsula. Like [B. lanuginosa](#), *B. abrotanoides* is a clear indicator of moist areas.

## Derivation of name and historical aspects

### History

The family Bruniaceae, of which *Berzelia abrotanoides* is a member, is one of the distinctive families in the Cape fynbos flora and is mostly endemic to the Western Cape. There are 12 species in the genus *Berzelia*, which was named after Count Jacob J. Berzelius, a Swedish chemist, physician and founder of chemical symbols. The species name, *abrotanoides*, is derived from *abrotanum*, resembling or having a similarity to *Artemisia abrotanum*. Members of the Bruniaceae family with similar flower heads are *Brunia* and *Nebelia*.

### Ecology

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*Berzelia* species are pollinated by bees, flies, beetles and other crawling insects. Occurring within fynbos, a naturally fire-driven system, *Berzelia* species are able to resprout after fire, coppicing from lignotubers.





## Uses

### Use

There are no known medicinal or magical uses recorded for *Berzelia abrotanoides*, however as a garden plant, it adds interest and is beautiful in mixed fynbos beds. It is also suitable for planting in moist areas and on the edges of ponds and streams. *Berzelia* species are also used in the cut-flower industry and make long lasting additions to fynbos flower arrangements.

## Growing Berzelia abrotanoides

### Grow

Grow *Berzelia* species in a well ventilated, semi-shaded to fully sunny position amongst other moisture loving fynbos species. They do best in acidic soils that are moist but well-drained. The soils should contain organic matter such as compost or leaf mould. *Berzelia abrotanoides* is fairly hardy, but water the plants well during dry seasons. After flowering, prune them lightly to maintain and encourage a compact bushy growth form.

*Berzelia abrotanoides* is propagated by seed and cuttings. Seed is sown in early autumn (February to March) and should be treated with smoke extract before sowing. Seed trays must be kept moist and shaded.

Cuttings are made in late summer, autumn and spring. Semi-hardwood and softwood cuttings are made in a medium of 50% bark and 50% polystyrene. Slightly coarse sand is also used as a rooting medium. A rooting hormone is used and cuttings are placed in a greenhouse with hotbeds and overhead intermittent mist spray. Once rooted, the small plants can be planted into pots and kept in a shaded area to harden off and establish before being placed in the garden.

## References

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## **Credits**

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