

Warming to a frost-tolerant customer



Oddspot

All plants weird and wonderful with Melanie Kinsey

THIS Canary Island endemic (right) came to me from Lyle Filippie at Roraima Nursery in Lara Victoria. I was first attracted to the foliage so similar to that of a melianthus but reputedly hardier with regard to frost.

The leaves of the two species are a similar blue-grey and feel slightly succulent to touch.

They also both have toothed margins – the melianthus quite large and jagged looking, the dendropoterium gently rounded. Dendropoterium, however, does not stink of car tyres like the melianthus.

Dendropoterium menendezii (pictured) is in the Rosaceae family and the genus name comes from the Greek for dendron, a tree, and poterium, which was the name for salad burnet (now *sanguisorba*), whose leaves and flowers it faintly resembles – in short ‘a tree-like poterium’.

My plant has grown to one metre high and wide in five years and The Diggers Club, which also grows this plant, says it can get to 3m by 3m.

If you remove the dead leaves, you can see the woody stems, which exfoliate attractively.

The newer leaves of *Dendropoterium*

menendezii fold inwards and I had to stop myself from rushing out to water it during its first year in the ground because it was not actually wilting.

The stems blush an attractive dusky pink and this feature makes the plant an ideal companion for *Yucca desmetiana*'s burgundy leaves, the striped burgundy, green and cream leaves of *Cordyline* ‘Kiwi Dazzler’ as well as the purple leaves of *Berberis thunbergii atropurpurea*.

The pale pink flowers are almost hidden in the foliage and are produced in spring.

Each dense head of tiny bottlebrush-like flowers is no more than a few millimetres in length but many are carried in a drooping panicle arrangement about 10 centimetres long.

They are followed by seed that is obviously viable because a few volunteers have come up around my plant.

Full sun and good drainage is preferred by this drought-tolerant plant.

Frost has not bothered it in my garden at all.

Propagation of *Dendropoterium menendezii* is by seed.

Stephen Ryan from Dicksonia Rare Plants also has this plant and has recently obtained another species, *D. pulidoi*, which is apparently smaller overall and with flowers that are more upright.



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Say ‘aloe’ to new saucy bottlebrush

A NEW hybrid tree aloe has hit the Australian market for the first time.

Aloe-Aloe Horticulture has released the Aloe Bottlebrush (Aloe LEO 1463).

Like other hybrid aloes in the Aloe-Aloe collection, it has been bred in South Africa for its spectacular flowering qualities.

The flowers on Aloe Bottlebrush are extremely decorative with yellow buds opening slowly in late winter so as to reveal striking orange stamens that “glow” and resemble a bottlebrush.

These flowers tower above the statuesque 2.5m tree comprising of a dominant single trunk and one or more terminal rosettes of large chunky sword shaped green leaves.

Aloe Bottlebrush is exclusively available across the country through the Garden Express on-line nursery.

* Visit www.gardenexpress.com.au



RIGHT: The new Aloe Bottlebrush flowers in late winter.