



Aloe Fairy Pink

Visitors to this year's Melbourne International Flower and Garden show were overwhelmed by the new "Fairy Pink" used as a flowering perennial in the "Best in Show" gold award winning display garden of the Victorian Tree and Shrub growers. Many could not believe that the dainty white ballerina like flowers, one would normally expect from a herbaceous cottage style garden, were in fact tough and hardy aloes. *Aloe Fairy Pink* is one of a range of new generation garden hybrid aloes, bred in South Africa for spectacular flowering and use as perennials in gardens by leading aloe breeder Leo Thamm.

Fairy Pink is a tiny stemless hybrid aloe with delicate fleshy pale green leaves and soft serrated leaf edges. The foliage reaches a height of about 20cm and whilst the width of a single plant is about 12cm, it has a clumping habit and a clump of plants can reach 30cm wide. Although an individual plant can stand on its own, it is in late summer and early autumn, when numerous dainty white ballerina flowers on branched inflorescences (with a faint pinkish tinge at the base of the flowers) rise 20cm above the foliage of a clump of Fairy Pink, that it's real beauty is experienced.

The dominant parent of Fairy Pink is *Aloe albiflora*, a dainty white flowering spotted aloe with greeny brown leaves from Madagascar. Whilst *Aloe albiflora*, an endangered species, is able to be grown as a pot specimen by succulent collectors, it is difficult to be grown as a garden plant. Through selective breeding and the introduction of genes from tougher aloes, the resultant Fairy Pink is able to be used in garden conditions and is able to flower more profusely and for longer periods than *albiflora*.

Fairy Pink is a hardy plant that is best grown in full or filtered sun (for optimal flower performance) but it can also be grown and flower in part shade. Whilst Fairy Pink can tolerate cold, it is best protected from direct frost. Fairy Pink will tolerate poor soils, but it is essential that the soil is free draining and does not get waterlogged. It grows best in rich, fertile free draining soil. It performs well in pots but if grown in open ground, the position should be well protected and the soil must be free draining. Minimal water is required but Fairy Pink benefits from water during dry periods as this promotes foliage growth- Less water is required in winter.

- ▶ Flowering profusely in autumn, when few other aloes are out, adds considerably to the appeal of this very garden worthy *Aloe* cultivar.

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