



in the garden with  
**ross mckinnon**

■ Aloe and behold, succulents are in and the king of them all has well and truly shaken off its reputation as a common garden weed



# Aloe to rising star

**A** whole range of stiff, succulent foliage – sometimes with prickles attached – has the most wonderful structural forms, shapes, sizes and coloured leaves.

Whether for planting in a jazzy retro pot, out in the garden or on coastal sand dunes, these plants are the toughest and most waterwise in the whole garden.

The most popular of these is aloe, which was once regarded almost as a weed but is now the 'in' plant for home and garden decoration.

Often overlooked in their native countries of origin in Africa and the Middle East, these plants have been rediscovered in these countries and now appear in every hotel foyer and resort landscaping with stunning results.

Suitable on steep slopes, aloes can withstand stiff, salty, sea breezes and are ideal for high-rise apartment balconies exposed to the elements and full sun.

Aloes also have virtually no known pests or diseases and are almost maintenance free. They can be left to grow quietly in a pot on a balcony for months without water, which makes them ideal for those who are away from their home or apartment for long periods.

## GROWING CONDITIONS

Aloes require perfectly drained soil and will not stand waterlogging.

A special potting mix is available for potted containers, and out in the garden they do far better in a raised garden that is well drained with no mulch.

To highlight and contrast an aloe's coloured leaves, cover the entire soil surface with an attractive pebble or stone.

Aloes demand as much sunlight as possible every day of the year and it's important to know the mature size of each plant when choosing a species for a pot.

## FERTILISER

I have never used fertiliser on aloes in the Brisbane Botanic Gardens but to hurry along growth or improve leaf colour try a slow release fertiliser.

## FLOWERING

Aloes, agaves and some other succulents are attractive to birds because they provide winter nectar when little else is flowering.

Following flowering the dead stalks should be removed to reveal the interesting and intricate foliage in colours that include light and dark green, light and grey-blue, orange and red.

Aloes are clumping plants and sometimes the clumps become too invasive. When this happens they will need dividing when flowering has finished.

## BUYING

Most larger nurseries carry a fair range of aloe plants but for specialist growers and keen gardeners you may be tempted to purchase some that are not available locally.

Contact the Cactus and Succulent Society of Qld, PO Box 64, Fortitude Valley, Queensland 4006 or phone (07) 3371 3707 for specialist supplier details.

Aloe capitata, ferox and excelsa are all grown as much for their brilliant orange-yellow winter/spring flowers as for their stunning foliage. Aloe parvula has distinctly purple leaves and is one of the small grass-like aloes. Also look for A. bellatula and A. brevisfolia.

## MEDICINAL

We have all heard of aloe vera being used in all manner of skincare preparations and as a salve for irritated or burnt skin.

## AMBER

Amber is the latest release in the Flower Carpet group of colourful ground cover roses. They provide waves of golden amber colour, change to soft pink-apricot blooms

and have the best disease resistance and easy-care attributes of the Flower Carpet Roses.

These really are beginner's roses. You can literally prune them with a chainsaw to ground level after they have flowered for about nine months of the year and they will come back better and stronger.

Now the world's No. 1-selling rose, the Flower Carpet Rose series has sold more than 100 million plants worldwide and the new amber Flower Carpet Rose joins scarlet, pink, white, appleblossom, red, coral and gold Flower Carpet Rose varieties.

Seen widely in municipal planting (roundabouts and parks), you know they must be tough to stand up to the wear and tear of a boisterous public.

They do have thorns, but also possess the most brilliant, dark green leaves.

Late bloomer . . . the once-maligned aloe is proving ever more popular with gardeners

## TIBOUCHINIA

Following a brilliant end to summer, tibouchinias are looking rather ratty and their habit is falling all over the place.

Only a very light trim is recommended because any new growth will be slow to come during the almost dormant winter months.

And in regions that are marginal frost areas – if we do get a frost – the new foliage will burn very quickly.

It's better to put up with an ugly looking tibouchinia until late August when they can then be pruned quite hard. And new spring foliage will result in even better summer, autumn and winter flowering next year.

30% OFF ALL STATUSES FOR MOTHER'S DAY

## MORE THAN A BAMBOO NURSERY!

see for yourself

There's a bamboo for everyone! ...hedges and screens pots and specimens



50% off selected Gingers This weekend only!



"BE INSPIRED" by our Gardens



**BAMBOO DOWN UNDER**

930 Tamborine-Oxenford Rd  
WONGAWALLAN take exit 57

PH: 5573 1844

www.bamboodownunder.com.au

You'll be amazed!

B09E935551 ©