

# An aloe succulent that anyone will love

Hybrid aloe have a wider range of flower, foliage colours and textures

Most of us are familiar with Aloe vera, that humble plant with such potent healing and medicinal qualities. But the Aloe genus also contains about 400 other species of flowering succulent plants, native to Africa, Madagascar, the Arabian Peninsula, and the islands of Africa.

But what's so special about succulent plants? Basically, they have the ability to store water in their leaves, stems and roots. So they can cope with extended dry periods by drawing on the water resources they have stashed away in the good times.



The important thing to remember here is that, just because they are good at storing water, it doesn't mean they can't tolerate water when it comes. Aloes are becoming increasingly popular in the landscape because they don't need constant irrigation and, in well drained sites, can survive even in periods of prolonged rain.

A new range of Aloe was introduced to the Australian market in 2008 by a company called Aloe-Aloe. These hybrid forms have been bred in South Africa and are grown just over the border at Mount Tamborine.

The Aloe-Aloe range has been bred for a wider range of flower and foliage colour and texture, faster growth, longer flowering periods, dramatically more profuse flowering, pest and disease resistance, younger flowering, and easy care. All plants in the Aloe-Aloe collection are clones of unique selected superior plants, so the growers can guarantee quality plants.

Because these new aloes have been around for a few years now, we have been able to observe their performance in normal garden conditions. Don't think about them as desert plants that don't like rain – this range of aloes can cope with a wide range of garden conditions – drought, rain, heat and cold.

They tolerate medium frost, particularly if they are in a protected position. If they are subjected to frost, the flowers may be damaged but the plant should survive. They have proven to be able to withstand high rainfall for long periods. They will be perfectly happy in just about any soil type. If you have heavy clay soil, then plant them in a raised bed or on a slope.

The Aloe-Aloe range is extensive, from small and dainty flowering pot aloe, heavy flowering and striking foliaged garden aloe, to statuesque specimens of flowering tree aloe. The flower colours range from white ('Fairy Pink', 'Tusker') through yellow ('Southern Cross') and orange ('Topaz', 'Gemini') to red ('Big Red') and pink ('Aries') and there are also bicoloured flowers ('Capricorn' and 'Saturn').

The earliest flowerers are just starting now but the timing of the flowering differs so you can plant a few different varieties to ensure almost year-round colour.

Aloes can be used in most garden and landscape styles, in modern and traditional landscapes, in both informal and formal settings, as feature plants, shrubs, bedding plants or as ground covers.

Because aloe roots are shallow, relatively soft and don't become big and fat as they age, the plants are ideal for pots and can be planted near paths and walls without risk of damage.

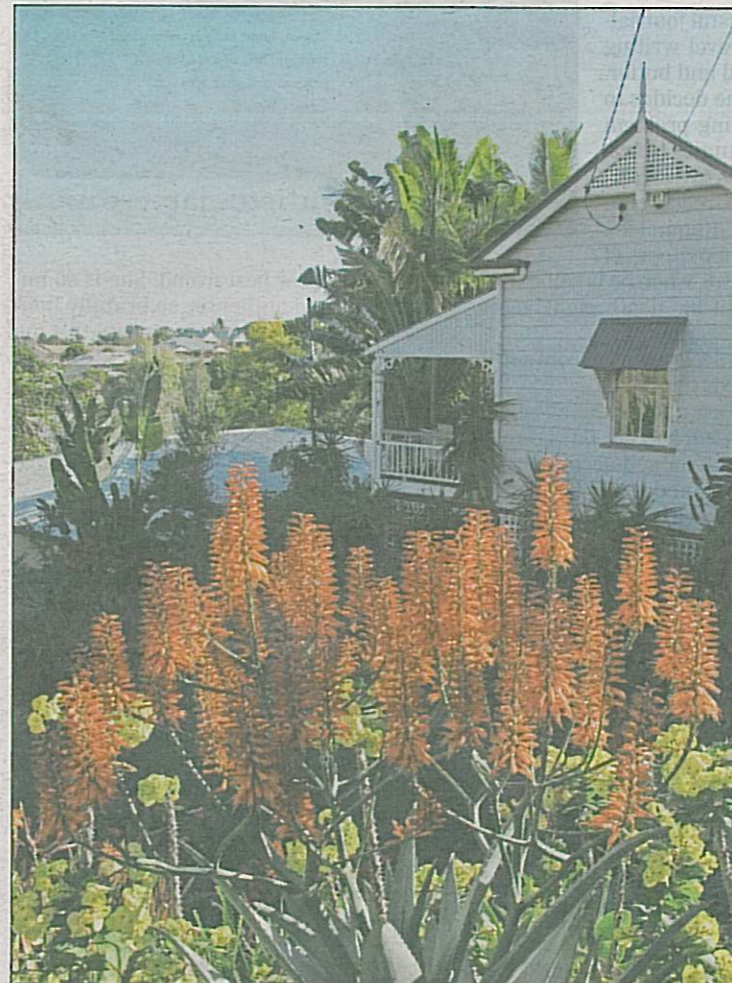
Maree Curran owns the Eden at Byron nursery, 140 Bangalow Rd, Byron Bay. Ph: 6685 6874.



Aloes can be used in most gardening and landscape styles with dramatic results.



The Aloe-Aloe range comes in a variety of forms.



For easy care, try the aloe genus.

## 5 things to do this week

- 1: Buy some spring flowering bulbs and cool them in the fridge for a couple of weeks before planting.
- 2: Weed, weed, weed and weed some more while the soil is lovely and soft.
- 3: If you are looking for particular camellia varieties, order them now from your local garden centre.
- 4: Plant dill, coriander, and broccoli.
- 5: Remove spent flowers from ixoras. This is all the pruning they really need.