

PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Infected leaves should be removed when the plant is dry. Leaves that fall around the base of the plant should be raked up and disposed of. Overhead irrigation should be avoided, if possible; water should be directed at soil level. For fungal leaf spots, a recommended fungicide should be used according to label directions.

SOUTHERN BLIGHT

Plants with southern blight have lesions on the stem, or near the soil line. These lesions develop rapidly, girdling the stem and resulting in a sudden and permanent wilting of the plant. High temperatures above 29 °C promote the disease. The fungus attacks a wide range of plants and survives for long periods in the soil. To control, a recommended fungicide should be applied according to label directions.

Overall control measures of pest and disease control include discouraging of fungal diseases, avoiding the wetting of foliage when watering and, removing and disposing of fallen leaves. Infected plants should be removed completely.

Harvesting methods

The flowers can be harvested when the outer, coloured, petals are open as well as the inner white flower. Harvesting should be done in the early morning or in the late afternoon. Flowers should be harvested when they are free from dew or rain in order to reduce drying time. In the harvesting period good ventilation is necessary to prevent condensation and maintain a low moisture content in the greenhouse. The first stems can be harvested approximately 3 months after planting; between April and May. Within the varieties there can be a difference of 7 to 14 days. Stems should be cut using secateurs/ scissors.

The harvested flowers should be placed directly into a container of water to keep them as fresh as possible before the drying process begins. Flowers do not open any further once placed in water which is why it is advised to pick flowers only when they are as ripe as possible.

Uses

Sea lavender plant is a popular with hardy filler flower that is used in both fresh and dried bouquets. It is most frequently

used in beds, naturalised borders and cultivated for cut flowers. The plant makes a perfect filler for wreathes or fresh-to-dried "keepsake" arrangements because of easy drying.

Reference

MANNING, J. & GOLDBLATT, P. 2007. *West Coast. South African Wildflower Guide 7*. Botanical Society of South Africa, Cape Town



Sea lavender flower

Limonium spp.

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agriculture,
forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Classification

Kingdom: Plantae
Family: Plumbaginaceae
Genus: *Limonium* spp.
Common names: sea lavender; statice; marsh-rosemary

Origin and distribution

Limonium spp. is a genus of 120 flower species and is an herbaceous perennial. As its name indicates, sea lavender grows along the sea, primarily on beaches. It is a shoreline erosion control plant. It helps to trap sand and stabilise the dunes on which other plants can become established.

Sea lavender is native to Southeast Florida, the Bahamas, Mexico, Puerto Rico, North America, Virgin Islands and other Caribbean islands. In some places in North America it grows wild. It has been introduced to and is now naturalised in Hawaii, extreme Southern California, and other regions throughout the tropical world.

Description

The flower has simple leaves, entire to lobed and from 1 to 30 cm long and 0,5 to 10 cm broad. Most of the leaves are produced in a dense basal rosette, with the flowering stems bearing only small, brown scale-leaves (bracts). The flowers are produced in a branched panicle, the individual flowers which are small (4 to 10 mm long) with a five lobed calyx, corolla and five stamens. The flower colour is pink, violet to purple in most species, white or yellow. The tiny funnel-shaped flowers have a delicate, hazy appearance, almost like smoke.

Production areas in South Africa

Sea lavender plants occur naturally along the coastal dunes and from the Cape Peninsula northwards to Clanwilliam, which is a relatively harsh environment.

Climatic and soil requirements

Climate

Sea lavender generally prefers warm and dry conditions. Most species are relatively hard against cold. They can

withstand light but not heavy frost and are wind resistant in coastal areas. Sea lavender flourishes in the Mediterranean climate of the Western Cape.

Sea lavender plants can be grown at a temperature of 12 to 15 °C. A chilling period for flower initiation which takes place for 4 to 6 weeks, requires a temperature of 5 to 10 °C. Temperatures above 25 °C will inhibit the flower development and will increase the risk of diseases. Warm temperatures will decrease the cultivation time, but this way of cultivation requires a high light intensity and long day.

Soil requirements

Sea lavender can be planted in sandy to loamy, well-drained. In keeping with their name, sea lavenders are tolerant to salty air and soil. It prefers a neutral soil pH of 7.

The plant prefers shredded bark mulch which may be placed around its base, compost to insulate the roots from cool temperatures and drought. The mulch should be laid down in autumn after pruning away any dead foliage and watering.

Cultural practices

Propagation

The plants can be propagated by two methods, such as vegetative (shoots bearing rosettes) and seeds. The seeds can be sown in containers placed outdoors during autumn. Small side shoots bearing rosettes of leaves can be propagated in early summer.

Planting

Sea lavender plants should be planted no deeper than they were growing in the containers. The inter-row spacing of the plants should be 22 to 30 cm. It grows to length of about 60 cm and 40 cm wide. The flowers are mostly grown near the coasts.

Fertilisation

Organic fertiliser should be applied lightly to the planting hole. An all-purposed fertiliser should be applied monthly, following the directions on the label.

Irrigation

The plants should be irrigated deeply several times in autumn to strengthen them against winter drought conditions. The soil surface should be allowed to dry out between watering schedules, but the soil should be kept at least lightly moist at all times approximately 2,5 cm down into the soil.

Weed control

Weeds can be effectively controlled during soil preparation. Pre-emergence herbicides can be applied for weeds that appear before sea lavender is planted but more care should be taken to prevent contamination when using the herbicides.

Pests and diseases control

PESTS

There are few pests that affect sea lavender flowers.

DISEASES

Diseases such as rust, leaf spots and southern blight infect sea lavender flowers.

RUSTS

Most rusts are host specific and overwinter on leaves, stems and spent flower debris. Rust often appears as small, bright-orange, yellow, or brown pustules on the underside of leaves. If touched, it will leave a coloured spot of spores on the finger. It is caused by fungi and spread by splashing water or rain; rust is worse when the weather is damp.

Prevention and control: Resistant varieties should be planted and provided with maximum air circulation. All debris should be cleared away, especially around plants that had a problem. Do not water from overhead and water only during the day so that the plants will have enough time to dry off before the night. A labelled fungicide should be applied to control rust on the plant.

LEAF SPOTS

Leaf spots are caused by fungi or bacteria. Its symptoms include brown or black spots and patches which are either ragged or circular, with a water-soaked or yellow-edged appearance. Insects, rain, dirty garden tools can spread this disease.