



Strong contrast of flower colour with texture and colour of cycad foliage.



Strong structural shape of aloes when not in flower.



Fairy pink used with other perennials.

*(This information is provided to assist purchasers of aloe-aloe hybrids (commercial landscapers and gardeners alike) in growing healthy plants so that they are able to be rewarded by the beauty of these amazing hybrids. Please note that whilst some of these notes appear generic in nature, they relate specifically to aloe-aloe hybrids and not all aloes).*

### **Growing and Landscaping with Aloe-Aloe Premium Hybrid Aloes**

Historically garden lovers in Australia have wanted gardens with colour, seasonal change and diversity but the less-robust herbaceous plants we have used in the past has meant that these plants cry out for shade and irrigation in the midday heat and can no longer be used. Aloes are increasingly being used by designers, developers, landscapers and gardeners in Australia because of their environmental sustainability and their reliable performance. The aloe-aloe cultivars take this a step further because of selective breeding to obtain magnificent flowering, allowing us to put colour back in our gardens without the need for irrigation. In addition the cultivars have been bred to better adapt to local garden conditions than pure species of aloe.

#### **Landscape and garden applications**

- 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.
- Aloes are very hardy and extremely low maintenance plants - In fact they still look at their best even with minimum watering.
- Traffic islands & nature strips are generally difficult to maintain, mow or water and most of the aloe-aloe cultivars (in particular the medium to larger ones) can be used to very good effect in masses where the climate is hot, dry and unforgiving as they produce a dramatic display when they all flower simultaneously.
- Some varieties like Fairy Pink and Topaz require more protection and moist soils and are better suited to be planted with other garden plants - there is an aloe-aloe variety for every environment.
- It is important to recognize that aloe-aloe cultivars are "garden plants" rather than desert plants and can be used effectively with companion plants (flowering and non-flowering) such as agapanthus, dietes, dianella, zephranthes, euphorbia's, cycads and strelitzias to name a few.
- Larger single stemming statuesque cultivars (Like Saturn or Big Red) are ideal as a centerpiece in any landscape.
- Our aloes can also be used as vertical planting on green walls, rock walls or retaining walls and provide the landscaper with an additional dimension and increased area for green life. Trailing varieties like Aries are particularly useful in this application.



Use of aloe in a traffic island.



Aloe hybrids.



Use of aloes in extreme conditions.

### Flowering

- The aloe-aloe cultivars have been bred predominantly for their flowering qualities, being prolific, being long lasting and flowering as young plants. The best characteristics of parent varieties are combined to form a new plant. Certain cultivars (eg Always Red, a 2009 release) are capable of flowering for more than 10 months of the year.
- 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) Different colours are able to be used in relation to others in the landscape design.
- The timing of the flowering also differs and cultivars can be planted in a manner which ensures that there are flowers in the garden at different times for up to 12 months of the year.
- Aloe flowers attract a variety of birds and insects to the gardens.
- If the mature hybrid produces a poor flower or none at all then the plant must be inspected for insects, illness or sun starvation.

### Roots & Anchorage

Generally the network of roots of aloes grows a few centimeters below the soil surface allowing the plants to benefit from even relatively low amounts of rain and irrigation. They can be planted close to man made structures like walls without risk of damage (eg breaking concrete) as their roots are relatively soft and do not increase in girth with age. This also makes them ideal for container planting and applications like green roofs.

### Planting out

- Potted plants should be placed in a hole bigger than the pot and we recommend that well rotted organic compost also be added. See below for guidance on soils and drainage.
- Aloe plants can last for more than a month out the ground. If acquired ex-ground it is better to let damaged roots dry out before planting the aloe hybrids. A newly planted aloe should not be over-watered, particularly if planted ex-ground as a dry plant will make new roots but a wet plant can not. The risk of rotting is further reduced by lightly covering the roots with soil and staking up top heavy plants.

### Rainfall and Irrigation

- It is important to understand that aloe-aloe cultivars are drought tolerant plants rather than being water resistant plants, dry land or arid zone plants.
- Many of the dry zone plants in use originate from regions in the world where most rain falls in winter. They are therefore unable to handle extremes of heat, humidity and rain in the Australian tropical and subtropical summer (This includes pure species like Aloe polyphylla and aloe plicatilis which come from winter rainfall regions and struggle for example in the tropical Queensland climate).
- On the other hand aloe-aloe cultivars in fact prefer generous watering during their growing (summer season) season, especially during the warmer months.
- However whilst the aloe-aloe cultivars require some water initially when planted, once the roots are established they are able to cope with deprivation of water for long periods. When the rains come they flourish as they simply take a big gulp and fill up their roots and leaves enabling them to survive until the next rain.
- Water can be cut back in the winter months but the cultivars are not adversely affected if they receive winter rain.



Informal use of aloe.



Contrasting leaf textures.



Hybrid aloes in garden with companion plants.

**Temperature**

- Aloes flourish in high temperatures but during the colder months their metabolism slows down considerably.
- The aloes can tolerate some frost and certain cultivars like Tusker and Capricorn are more frost tolerant than others like Fairy Pink or Aries. Aloes are more likely to tolerate frost if kept dry and if grown in well protected areas like against a north facing wall or large rock. If they are exposed to extreme frost, the leaves normally die back from the tips but new growth quickly replaces the damaged leaves with the onset of warmer temperatures.

**Light Intensity**

- Aloes need sunlight for the best flowering, particularly the mature and larger growing cultivars.
- If previously kept in a shady position, they need to be introduced slowly to sun as just like us, they too can get sunburnt. Changes in light intensity, temperature or watering can induce stress - leaves turn reddish brown. This is nothing to worry about as plants recover quickly.
- The cultivar "Fairy Pink" copes well in lower light conditions (and still flowers) such as light filtered by a tree or on a verandah.

**Soil**

- Aloes can tolerate poor soils with the exception of clayey soils which do not drain well. It is essential that the soil be well drained and open so as to allow water to pass through the root catchment area so that the aloe can absorb only what water (and nutrients) it needs.
- Drainage can also be achieved from planting on a slope where the rain water can run off.
- If planted in clayey soils, a reasonable quantity of river sand should be added and the hole prepared for planting should contain a mix of soil with generous amounts of sand and organic compost. Well rotted cow manure can be applied as mulch. It may be necessary to build up a mound of sandy soil above the normal soil level if the soil is extremely clayey.
- For a new garden, a mix of 60% commercial garden soil, 30% of course river sand and 10% well rotted organic compost (eg cow manure) is recommended.

**Container use**

- In habitat aloes often grow on tight rock crevices and are therefore perfectly adapted for container growth.
- Good drainage is essential and in pots they perform better with regular feeding.
- It is important that they are not left standing in water, nor should they be allowed to dry out completely.
- Whilst the plants will grow in most commercial potting mixes, if they are to remaining the container for more than 12 months we recommend use of a heavier succulent mix to which 10% organic compost can be added.



Tusker & Copper shower.



Outback Orange together with mixed subtropical companion plants.



aloe-aloe hybrids.

### Feeding/Fertiliser

- Aloes grow best in free draining soil containing decomposed organic material. Despite being able to tolerate poor soils, flowering aloe hybrids are hungry feeders and like rich sandy soils with ample humus and decomposed organic material. Well rotted cow manure is excellent compost for aloes but should be applied as a top dressing only in spring. Alternatively if using a non organic fertilizer is preferred, a slow release fertiliser is recommended where the nitrogen levels in the NPK ratio (Nitrogen: Phosphorous: Potassium) is not too high relative to the others.

### Mulching

- Whilst mulching is useful to suppress weed growth, applying mulch too thickly so can adversely prevent rain water from flowing through to the aloe roots as it is held in the mulch.
- Using pebble is useful in providing a barrier to soil evaporation (like mulch) but also allows rain to flow through the soil.

### Pests

- Aloes are relatively pest free in habitat but concentrating them in gardens creates conditions where garden pests can spread to the aloes even though they are no more susceptible to pests than other garden plants. These can include scale, aphids, mites, rust, mealy bug and ants.
- Most of these pests are easily controlled with a contact pesticide or fungicide.
- The best protection is a healthy plant with good nutrition (soil/water) and sufficient light.

### Growth habit, life span and propagation

- Plants in the aloe-aloe collection range from small dainty aloes to large tree aloes with each cultivar displaying unique behavior.
- In general the hybrid aloes are much faster growing than pure species and a plant like Capricorn is able to reach a height of 1 meter within 1 year when planted in the ground under ideal conditions.
- Certain cultivars are clumping in nature (eg Topaz, Fairy Pink, Gemini and Aries) which means that side-shoots (suckers) are sometimes produced. These can be removed if apical dominance is preferred (eg Gemini looks better as a single plant) or retained to allow spreading of the plant. In general the larger growing cultivars (eg Tusker) do not produce side shoots but if they do they are equally easy to remove with a sharp secateur.
- Unlike agaves, where the dominant plant dies after flowering, aloes do not die and in fact flowering performance improves significantly in the second, third and subsequent years.
- The cultivars are unable to be reproduced by seed because seedlings from hybrid aloes never contain the superior characteristics of the hybrid parents and revert back to inferior qualities.
- These cultivars are long life plants and whilst it is difficult to estimate their lifespan, in habitat certain pure species of aloe have been estimated to be over 200 years old.

Please do not hesitate to contact us on [info@aloe-aloe.com.au](mailto:info@aloe-aloe.com.au) should you have any other specific queries.  
For large commercial orders we would be happy to work with you on larger plantings, including design and variety selections.  
Happy Gardening from the team at aloe-aloe.