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Aloe hardyi

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Aloe hardyi Glen

Family: Asphodelaceae

Common names: Penge aloe

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Aloe hardyi is a decorative pendent aloe with grey-green soft leaves in rosettes at the end of hanging stems.



Description

Aloe hardyi is a fast growing aloe forming solitary rosettes hanging from cliff faces. Its roots are cylindrical and up to 6 cm diameter and form a network which anchors the plant in crevices on cliffs. The stems are simple or occasionally branched from the base to form loose hanging leaf clusters with stems up to 1,5 m long. The leaves are pendulous or curve downwards, and are borne in dense rosettes, up to 400-700 mm long and 50-80 mm in diameter, at the ends of branches. During the rainy season the leaves spread slightly and curve inwards, but during the dry season they draw together and curve downwards. The skin (epidermis) of the leaves is bluish to pale green with a powdery bloom and with a reddish colour during the dry season or during prolonged droughts. The leaves on young plants are distichous (regularly arranged one above the other in two opposite rows, one on each side of the stem) for the first two years. The inflorescence is a simple raceme 450 mm long in total. At first it hangs but then curves upwards so that the flower-bearing part, which is up to 200 mm long, is almost upright. The flowers are spreading to sub-pendulous, with orange-red, green-tipped tepals 25-40 x 7 mm. The fruiting capsule is ascending-spreading and 25 x 7 mm. The seeds are angular, 3-sided, and grey, and there are about 55-70 per capsule.



Flowering occurs mainly during midwinter (July, southern hemisphere).

Conservation Status

Aloe hardyi is rare. However it is not threatened due to its safe cliff habitat.

Distribution and habitat

Aloe hardyi is a dolomite endemic, confined to the Olifants River Valley between the Strydom tunnel and Penge asbe mine in the Limpopo Province and adjacent territory where the same geological formation occurs. Its habitat consists vertical cliffs, up to about 500 m high, on exposed N and NW aspects but also on southern and eastern slopes. The temperature can be extremely high, especially on north-facing aspects during summer (35-45°C). Temperatures on th shadier south-facing lopes are lower. Winters are cool to cold but frost is absent. Rain falls mainly during summer and ranges between 300 and 400 mm per annum (with thunder showers mainly from October to May). The vegetation co of Poug Dolomite Mountain Bushveld of the Savanna Biome (Mucina et al. 2005). *Aloe hardyi* shares its habitat with plant species such as [Sterculia rogersii](#), *Aloe sessiliflora*, *Euphorbia lydenburgensis*, [E. tirucallii](#), *Sarcostemma vimina*, *Commiphora marlothii*, [Ficus abutilifolia](#) and a species of *Vellozia*. The geology consists of dolomite of the Chuniespc Formation, Malmani subgroup (Transvaal Supergroup).

Seeds are dispersed by wind during early spring (end of September), just before the spring rains.

Derivation of name and historical aspects

Named by Dr Hugh Glen after Mr. Dave Spencer Hardy (1931-1998) horticulturist at the former Botanical Research Inst and responsible for building up a considerable collection of succulent plants from South Africa and Madagascar (Gur Codd, 1981).

Aloe hardyi is related to [Aloe arborescens](#), at once distinguished by its flaccid drooping stems. Its juvenile leaves ren distichous for at least two years whilst in *Aloe arborescens* they form a spiral in the first year. *Aloe arborescens* is a st shrub up to 1,5 m tall.

Ecology

Aloe hardyi is pollinated by sunbirds.

Uses

No uses have been recorded.



Growing Aloe hardyi

Aloe hardyi thrives in warm dry gardens and also as a pot or container plant. It prefers full sun and a steep slope which provides sufficient growing space. Plants will benefit from compost or any organic feeding. Although the plants are n frost-tolerant they can survive light frost. *Aloe hardyi* thrives in a wide range of soil but prefers alkaline soil. It is fairly free, but may occasionally get attacked by the Aloe snout weevil. Over-watering will lead to fungal infection in the crk resulting in rot.

Propagation

Aloe hardyi is easily propagated from seed sown in spring or summer time. It is recommended to add a fungicide when watering. The plants grow fast and can reach flowering stage in 3 years. They are best sown in a sandy, well-drained potting soil in a warm shady position in standard seed trays. Germination will take place within 3 weeks and the seedlings grow fast. Cover with a thin layer of sand (1-2 mm) and keep moist. The seedlings can be planted out in individual bag containers as soon as they are large enough to handle.

References

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Ernst van Jaarsveld

Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden

March 2007

Plant Attributes:

Plant Type: Succulent

SA Distribution: Limpopo, Mpumalanga

Soil type: Clay

Flowering season: Winter

PH: Acid

Flower colour: Orange

Aspect: Full Sun, Morning Sun (Semi Shade), Afternoon Sun (Semi Shade)

Gardening skill: Easy

Special Features:



Attracts birds



Drought resistant

Horticultural zones



Zone 1 Coastal summer rainfall, frost free

Zone 2 Coastal winter rainfall, frost free

Zone 4 Summer rainfall
Karoo and Highveld, Frost
in winter
Zone 5 Bushveld summer
rainfall, Light frost

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