

General Cultivation

In mild areas of this country many varieties may be grown outside as long as the soil is extremely free draining, acidic and very low in nutrients.

A good position would be a south facing steep slope in full sun. Alternatively, planting on a raised mound and adding bark and grit for drainage would make a useful substitute for a steep slope. Proteas will not put up with wet feet for long periods!

All Proteas should be protected from frost. They should be covered with horticultural fleece or overwintered in a greenhouse if pot grown and hard frosts are forecast.

If you can protect them from the worst of 'wintery conditions', whether that be for just a few weeks, or a couple of months in prolonged bad weather, then you should be successful with what must be among the most exotic flowering shrubs available.

How do I prune my Protea?

Most proteas should only be pruned to remove damaged, or diseased stems, or to control the shape of the plant.

Some however, like the *Protea cynaroides* (King Protea) produce a lignotuber. This can be cut back to the ground and will then regrow.

For more information you can refer to the sources under 'Further Information', or by all means contact us.

Further Information

Please note that this information is only intended as a guide – put together from our knowledge and experience.

It should be noted, that on occasion, a plant can thrive in one situation but struggle under almost identical conditions. Like us, plants are living individuals – all different and unique. They should therefore be treated as such.

One of the best bits of advice we can give you however, is to have a look at your neighbour's garden and see what they are growing. Armed with this information and the ideas included here, you should be able to enjoy Proteas in your own garden.

For further information on proteas try reading:

'The Protea Book—A guide to cultivated Proteaceae' by Lewis J Matthews

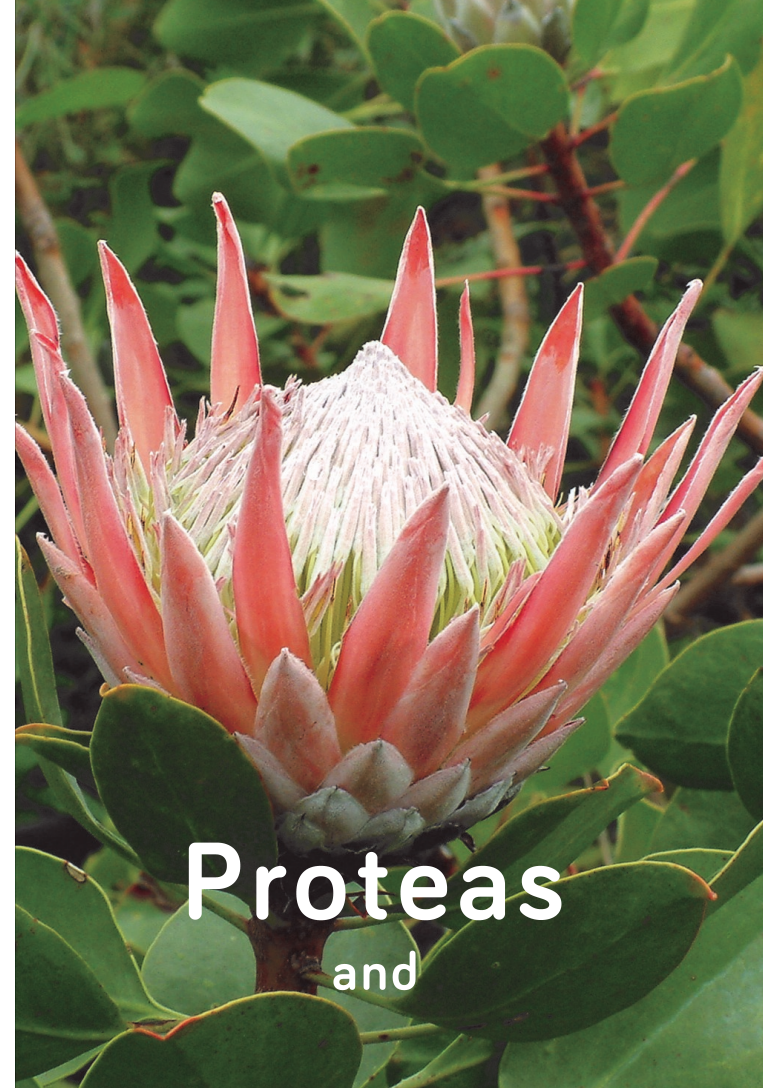
'Proteas: A field guide to Proteas of Southern Africa' by Tony Rebelo

'Gardening on the edge: Drawing on the Cornwall experience' (contains a useful chapter on all proteas) by Phillip McMillan Browse

For more information get in touch with us, and we'll do our best to help and advise you.

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Proteas
and

**Banksia
Hakeas
Grevilleas
Leucadendrons**

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Background

Proteas have been grown in this country since the 1780s when only the most affluent collected them and grew them in large flue heated conservatories – a perfect, dry environment for these plants. Mainstream popularity for them didn't actually take off however, until fairly recently, as experimentation with growing more exotic plants from the southern hemisphere, including South Africa where these plants originate, increased.

Pot Cultivation

Proteas make excellent tub and patio plants when sited in an open sunny position. They look great in terracotta pots, just be sure they have good drainage.

The use of pot feet is recommended, and the addition of at least 2–3" of crocks or small pieces of polystyrene to the bottom of the pot will assist with this too.

We sell our own ready-made Protea compost but you can mix up your own extremely well drained acidic compost mixture using some peat, composted bark, perlite, small and large grit, composted pine needles, polystyrene beads and vermiculite.

Note, it is not critical to have all these ingredients – the key is to make sure that the mix is very free draining. At Trevena Cross we also use 10% sterilised soil in the mix.

Proteas dislike stagnant, humid conditions. Always grow them on a site with good air circulation even if over wintering them in greenhouses. Give them plenty of ventilation and keep them on the drier side during the winter.

When grown in containers let the top 2" of compost dry out before re-watering, and when you do water, only wet the compost, not the plant; in order to ensure that the foliage remains dry. In hot weather water in the mornings and evenings only.

One common misconception is that Proteas in pots do not need much watering. In their natural habitat they send out roots looking for moisture but when in a pot, they are reliant on you providing them with necessary moisture.

Feeding

The very fine roots of a Protea have the unique ability to absorb any nutrients from very poor soils. They are very delicate and are generally found close to the surface. Mulching with bark or pine needles; the latter in particular, is therefore a great way to get nutrients into the soil, acting as a mild slow release fertilizer as well as

providing protection from excessive drying in the heat of the sun. Pine needles also offer the best opportunity to bring the soil pH down to the very acidic levels Proteas thrive in.

We also recommend using Trevena Cross Protea fertiliser, which we have specially blended (slow release and faster acting soluble versions) to provide exactly what the plants need. Ensure not to feed with any fertilizers containing phosphates.

More recently we have also come to appreciate the benefits of introducing completely natural, eco-friendly mycorrhizal into the planting hole – a friendly fungi that germinates to produce in effect, a secondary root system which helps enhance the plant's ability to take up necessary moisture and nutrients. Mycorrhizal is available to purchase at Trevena Cross.

