

Natal Plum

This spiny shrub is native to South Africa. Its leathery leaves are shiny and oval with acute tips. Many sharp thorns protect the twigs, making planting close to walkways somewhat hazardous. Milky sap is secreted when the branches are injured. Showy, white flowers contrast perfectly with the dark-green foliage. They may reach 5 cm in diameter, are star-shaped, sweetly scented, and grow in clusters in spring and early summer. The fruit is a red, egg-shaped berry up to 5 cm long with a delicious, refreshing taste. The Natal Plum is frost-tender but revels in heat, and grows at a moderate speed to a height and width of 3 metres. In its home country, it may even become a small tree up to 9 metres high. It does well in full sun, but also tolerates some shade at the cost of flowering and fruiting. The glossy leaves resist desiccation from wind. Cultivars grow more compactly and remain shrubs of manageable size. They are ideal bushes for small gardens and are useful as screening hedges, groundcover, grouped planting or in containers. The soil should be well drained and neutral. To encourage establishment by an extended root system, watering must be deep. Both drought and soil with a high salt content are tolerated. General-purpose fertilisers are best applied in early spring after the plants' dormancy. As a hedge plant, it takes shearing in spring after flowering, but recovers slowly from harsh cutting back. Recovering rapidly from frost, damaged branches need to be removed, which may spoil the shrub's appearance.



GENERAL

Origin	: Mediterranean, sub-tropical
Humidity	: semi-arid, semi-humid, very humid
Propagation	: sowing and pricking out, cuttings
Maintenance	: moderate

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: resistant
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: medium
Salinity/ppm	: high (5000 ppm)
Hardiness	: 0°C

SHAPE

Type	: shrub
Height	: 1 m-3 m
Spread	: 1 m-3 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: white
Size	: 4 cm - 5 cm
Period	: April - July
Smell	: scented, moderate, flower

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: berry
Fruit size	: 2 cm - 5 cm
Toxicity	: edible, fruit