

Yellow Hottentot Fig, *hay alam*

The Hottentot Fig, or hay alam in Arabic, grows wild in South Africa. It is a coarse-textured, vigorously spreading groundcover with bold, succulent leaves. They are triangular in section, curved and up to 12 cm long. Creamy or yellow flowers appear in spring and may be seen until summer. *Carpobrotus edulis* var. *rubescens* has pink flowers that resemble those of the Red Hottentot Fig. The edible fruits are not at all as tasty as true figs (*Ficus carica*). Hottentot Figs expand quickly when the woody branches root wherever they touch ground. It fits in well in rock gardens, but may also be used as a ground cover next to a pool or along roads. Soils should be sandy with good drainage. Full sun is essential for healthy plants and profuse flowering. Supplemental watering is needed in summer, while heat and low temperatures are tolerated. The plants sometimes become bare when old, and must be discarded to prevent an unsightly appearance. Alternatively, cuttings may be placed wherever bare spots show up. In order to quickly cover a new area, the plants should be spaced about 40 cm apart. The fleshy foliage should never be stepped on. Cutting it back entirely usually results in the loss of the plant. In spring, seeds may be sown in warm, moist conditions. Much faster is propagation by stem cuttings that should be allowed to dry before placing them in compost. The latter method is most successful in late summer. Invasions are to be expected on disturbed sites only. Suffers from fungus disease if overwatered.



GENERAL

Origin	: Mediterranean
Vigour	: fast growing
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	: low
Salinity/ppm	: very high (8000 ppm)
Hardiness	: 0°C

SHAPE

Type	: cacti, succulents
Height	: 0.15 m-0.2 m
Spread	: 2 m-4 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: yellow, pink, light yellow
Period	: March - June

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: capsule
Fruit size	: 2 cm
Toxicity	: edible when processed, fruit