

Cape Leadwort

In its native region from the Cape Province to Natal, the Leadwort grows up to 4 metres high and 6 metres wide under ideal conditions. An excellent shrub or climber in Arriyadh, it seems to have adapted well to the growing conditions there. Owing to tiny glands, the foliage slightly adheres to the skin or clothes. The Latin name *auriculata* refers to the ear-shaped leaf base, and *Plumbago* includes the Latin word for lead because it allegedly healed lead poisoning. Flowers may appear for a very long time, but between June and September the Cape Leadwort is coated in sky blue. ‘Alba’ is a white-flowering cultivar and ‘Royal Cape’ has intensely blue flowers. The campanulate inflorescences attract butterflies. Following pollination, seed capsules, develop retaining their adhesion to allow distribution by passing animals. In its natural habitat, this climber is associated with the Cape Honeysuckle (*Tecomaria capensis*). It may be trained to cover a fence, or grow against a wall or along a trellis. It takes hard pruning and will even flower within the same year. Its limited size means that it can climb into trees without suffocating them. An interesting feature is the suckers that may allow the Cape Leadwort to grow as a large-scale areal cover. It resists drought, and thrives in any type of soil. However, additional watering and high levels of humus and nutrients are welcome. Frost may cause foliage and slender twigs to die back, but plants quickly recover. Propagation may be carried out by cuttings, suckers and seeds.



GENERAL

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

CONDITIONS

Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: vulnerable
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: medium
Salinity/ppm	: moderate (1500 ppm)
Hardiness	: -9°C

SHAPE

Type	: climbers
Height	: 4 m-6 m
Spread	: 3 m-6 m
Foliage	: evergreen

FLOWER

Colour	: light blue
Size	: 3 cm
Period	: June - September

FRUIT

Type of fruit	: capsule
Fruit size	: 0.8 cm