

Growing Eremophilas

Features of Eremophilas

- Low water use and ability to withstand long periods of dryness and still produce masses of flowers (one or 2 good deep waterings in an extended dry period will do them good)
- Mostly grow in areas of rainfall less than 400mm annually
- Can grow in a variety of soils
- Diverse range of foliage, flower shape and colour in the species
- Flower colours range from Bright red, through to pink, blue, purple, yellow and white
- Include prostrate, small and large bushes and small trees
- Bird and insect attracting – Bird attracting species have long tubular flowers which are normally red, pink, white, yellow or orange. Insect attracting flowers are broader and are mostly shades of blue, lilac, purple and white.
- In a severe drought Eremophilas may drop leaves, or droop and look dead but may still come back to life after a good rain.
- Some species are long lived – 30 to 45 years.

Landscaping with Eremophilas

Rockerries and nature strips – choose low growing or prostrate species

Low and medium sized shrubs look good amongst other plants

Taller shrubs can be great screening plants and wind breaks

Cultivation of Eremophilas

Water: After planting follow up watering is necessary every 2 to 3 weeks until established with half to a full bucket of water per plant. Make a levee bank around the plant to retain the water during establishment.

Once established only water the plant if there is a long dry period. In the case of AAEV eremophilas could be given a long deep watering followed by another 2 weeks later in mid- summer. That should be enough.

* Too much water rather than not enough will kill Eremophilas once established so for this reason NEC has decided to try some Eremophilas on mounds where water tends to drain more freely than on the flat ground.

Soil preparation: It's important to dig soil over. If clay soil use a crowbar to break through the clay so roots can penetrate. Sprinkle gypsum in clay soil.

Mounding to prevent water logging is beneficial in areas of higher rainfall than the eremophilas usually grow in.

Sandy or light soils will need some compost.

Planting: mid spring to end March is best in southern Australia while the soil is warm. Earlier in the planting season is best as the summer is the plants growing season.

Dig hole at least to depth of pot and wider at the sides. Fill hole with water and allow to soak in repeating this 2 or 3 times to encourage roots to go downwards. Remove plant from pot, tease out roots that are compacted, place in hole and fill in the hole. A low phosphorous fertilizer can also be mixed with the soil being placed in the hole.

Mulch around the plant with an organic mulch such as bark mulch, newspaper, composted garden material, straw, with sand or gravel or weed mat or living mulches such as ground covers. Lighter coloured mulches keep ground cooler in summer.

Weeds: keep weeds down for quicker growth and to prevent fungal growth.

Pruning: Some plants require light pruning frequently others require none. Prune after flowering but before new flower buds.

Guarding: Rabbits may mean guarding is necessary

Fungus: Wet winters may result in fungal attack. Remove old flowers and affected parts. Make sure plants have plenty of air movement (weed around them) and plant them in a sunny spot.

What species to grow?

We have selected some species to try on mounds or surrounding areas which are found in South Australia and most are available at Belair State Flora Nursery. In your own gardens you could try others of the 215 species!

PROSTRATES/GROUNDCOVERS:

***Eremophila glabra* (Roseworthy form):**

Description: bright green leaves, orange-red flowers, long lived.

3 to 4 m wide x .4 m high. Good for mass planting in place of lawn but not where there is foot traffic.

Eremophila biserrate* x *glabra

Description: grey green leaves, burgundy brown flowers in late spring to summer. Great ground cover.

SMALL TO MEDIUM SHRUBS: 1-2 m high by 1-2 m wide

***Eremophila crassifolia*:**

Description: .8 high x 1m wide. Small bright green leaves with blue, white or pale pink flowers spring to mid summer. Requires well drained soil, full sun to light shade. Lightly suckering. Originates from Southern SA and Western Victoria. (available Belair Nursery)

Eremophila decipiens: 3 to 1m high x 3 m wide. Bright green leaves, bright red flowers from late winter to mid summer. Originates from Central and southern WA and southern SA.

Grows in most soils in full sun to filtered shade. Great for exposed areas. Does not need much pruning.

Eremophila glabra: Varieties differ from prostrate to large shrubs of 3m. Leaves vary from bright green to silver grey. Flowers may be green, yellow, orange or various reds. Flowering from late autumn to mid summer. Originates in all mainland states.

Grows in a variety of soils. Best in full sun although can also tolerate shade.. Wind tolerant. Can be pruned severely

Eremophila maculata: .5 to 3m tall and almost as wide. Leaves are dark green. Flowers may be pale pink to deep pink, red, yellow and apricot often with spots. Flower time late autumn to early summer.

Grows naturally in heavy clay soils but will grow in wide variety of soils. Full sun to light shade. Pruning best until spring to early summer. Can be heavily pruned.

Eremophila weldii: .5 to 1.5m high and wide. Small blue green leaves and pale to deep lilac flowers mid winter to early summer. Originates from southern coast of WA and SA.

Grows in a wide variety of soils including heavy clay. Responds well to pruning.

LARGE SHRUBS: 2-3 m high by 2-3 m wide

Eremophila scoparia: 2.5 high by 2 m wide. Broom like shrub. Silver grey leaves with pale to deep lilac flowers. Popular with rabbits so use guard. Wind tolerant. Prefers well drained soils.

Eremophila alternifolia: .5 to 3m high by same wide. Leaves are bright to dark green and flowers in shades of pink, sometimes white, cream or yellow from late winter to early summer.

Grows in a variety of soils in full sun or part shade. Responds well to pruning.

SMALL TREES 3-4 m high

Eremophila oppositifolia: Shrub to small tree to 4m x 3m wide. Silver grey to grey green leaves with white, cream pale yellow, pink or purple flowers from Autumn to spring.

Grows in most soils including heavy clay in full sun or filtered shade. Responds well to pruning but keep above lowest leaves and after flowering. Can be incorporated into a windbreak or screen.

Eremophila longifolia: upright shrub or small tree with a single trunk to 4 m x 3 m wide. Dull green leaves are long and narrow. Flowers are dusky pink to brick red spring to summer. Grows in a variety of soils including heavy clay in full sun or filtered shade. Responds to heavy pruning. Can be prone to fungal disease. Can sucker, forming dense thickets which can be dug up and replanted in other areas if desired.

References

Boschen, N, Goods, M and Wait, R. (2008) **Australia's Eremophilas – changing gardens for a changing climate** Bloomings books, Melbourne Australia. www.bloomings.com.au
(available at your local library)

State Flora Nursery Catalogue Government of SA, Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation. www.stateflora.com.au

* There is a newly established Eremophila garden in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens behind the wine centre – an extension of the Australian plant section.