



FAIRHOLME
PLANTS

Newsletter

September 2017

“The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies.”

PELARGONIUMS

perfect for the dry garden

This month we discuss pelargoniums. These tough plants will add color and foliage interest to dry gardens. Shrubby pelargoniums are easy to grow in either borders or pots.

Most pelargoniums grow fast and soon add value to new plantings. Scented pelargoniums can be grown close to patios or paths. Their leaves release aromatic oils when you brush against them. Fairholme stocks a range of scented pelargoniums.

Pelargoniums will add interesting foliage and bright colors to the dry garden.

Pelargonium or geranium?

The parents of modern hybrid pelargoniums came from South Africa. Pelargoniums have been popular in Europe for centuries. Gardeners call them geraniums, which is confusing, because geraniums are a different genus.

It is easy to tell pelargoniums and geraniums apart. Pelargonium flowers are zygomorphic. This means that the flowers have a single plane of symmetry. You can only draw one line through the flower to produce two mirror images.

Geranium flowers are actinomorphic. They show radial symmetry, which is symmetry around many axes. There are many potential lines through the flower that will produce mirror images.



Pelargonium fruticosum

Pelargonium fruticosum is indigenous to the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and the Karoo.

Size

↑ 45 cm

↔ 45 cm

Soil

Loam

Requires good drainage

Exposure

Full sun

Season

Flowering peaks in spring and early summer

Drought resistance

5 months per year



Pelargonium x fragrans

Pelargonium x fragrans has nutmeg scented leaves.

Size

↑ 30 cm

↔ 60 cm

Soil

Loam

Requires good drainage

Exposure

Full sun to partial shade

Season

Flowers spring to early summer

Drought resistance

4 months per year



Pelargonium cordifolium 'Valentine'

Pelargonium cordifolium is indigenous to the Western Cape.

Size

↑ 1 m

↔ 1 m

Soil

Sand or loam

Requires good drainage

Exposure

Full sun or light shade

Season

Flowers spring to early summer

Drought resistance

4 months per year



Pelargonium quercifolium

Pelargonium quercifolium occurs naturally in Oudtshoorn and Willowmore.

Size

↑ 1.5 m

↔ 75 cm

Soil

Sand or loam

Requires good drainage

Exposure

Full sun or light shade

Season

Flowers early spring to midsummer

Drought resistance

5 months per year

Growing pelargoniums

- The majority of pelargoniums come from southern Africa, particularly the Western Cape. They are perfect for Cape gardens.
- The pelargoniums featured in this newsletter are all small shrubs. They are evergreen, but may stop growing under very dry conditions. Pelargoniums need good drainage. Most do well on sandy loam.
- Pelargoniums prefer light or full shade for part of the day. They do better if their roots are cool and will enjoy a thick mulch. Full shade is not suitable for pelargoniums. The plants become leggy if they do not receive enough sun.
- Pelargoniums can withstand considerable drought. During establishment, apply 20 to 30 liters of water into the basin every two to three weeks. Thereafter, reduce watering. Depending on your microclimate, the plants may not need any supplemental water.
- Be careful not to overwater pelargoniums. They do not appreciate wet feet and are prone to rotting. Like all fynbos plants, pelargoniums like air movement around them. Do not crowd them.
- Pelargoniums do not ask for much care. Cut back strong growers by as much as two thirds in late summer or early autumn. Remove weak stems and dead leaves. The plants will reward you with bushy new growth.



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Pelargonium x domesticum

In addition to species pelargoniums, Fairholme also stocks a range of *Pelargonium x domesticum*, better known as Regal pelargoniums. These showy plants were developed by crossing different species. From top to bottom are salmon, 'Strawberry Sundae', and purple and black.

