



## How to Grow Protea Plants

The term Protea refers to any member of the Proteaceae Family. The classification of plants is based largely on the shape of flowers, thus protea flower ranks as one of the easiest to identify.

Other featured characteristics of the Protea Family are that all are woody shrubs or trees, although some have underground stems or sprawl on the ground. The leaves are hard and leathery, snapping rather than folding over when bent- and are either entire or dissected into needle-like lobes.

The name is also indicative of it's qualities; the protea was named after the Greek god, Proteus. Proteus was a minor sea god who was ale to change shape at will.

Plants in the family of Proteacea share several requirements and characteristics in common:

- 1.) Either need of prefer good drainage
- 2.) Do not tolerate phosphate fertilizers
- 3.) Prefer deep, infrequent watering
- 4.) Have highly showy flowers and/or foliage
- 5.) Most make excellent cut flowers
- 6.) Prefer to be well mulched around base
- 7.) Do better in poor soils with minimal care

Proteas typically enjoy sandy, acidic, well drained soils. California soils are typically heavy clay or silt, alkaline, high in phosphorus, and poorly drained. This can create problems if certain requirements are ignored. First of all, gardeners should learn to prepare their soil and get protea started right. Protea grow and respond well to fish emulsion and cottonseed meal. Use of an inorganic fertilizer with phosphorus is not recommended as this can have a bad effect on Protea. Feeding Master Nursery Green All FST twice a year is also recommended. Also, Proteaceous plants should not be planted in highly watered areas such as near lawns or annual color beds. We also recommend a



one inch layer of bark or leaf mulch around the plants to keep soil moisture more even and keep the soil temperature from heating up too high in the summer. Just watch your water. Protea will grow in our heavy soils as long as they are not over watered. Deep but infrequent watering during the warm season is best. Of course this only applies to established plants. Newly transplanted specimens need more frequent, light watering for the first few months. Lastly, a light application of soil sulfur in the late winter each year will help reduce the pH of the soil and to release iron and other micro-nutrients. This will help in bud formation and blooming.

Tip pruning or light pruning when young is also recommended for Proteaceae plants. It helps to prolong the life of most in this group, and it increases plant vigor and promotes better shape. However, don't cut back more than one-third of the growth, as this may lead to poor re-growth.

Growing Proteas can be highly rewarding. They are among the most ornate and showiest of all plants when in bloom. They make excellent cut flowers and have few if any natural pests or diseases. Just the addition of one Protea would make a great focal point of great interest in your garden.



Should you have any questions, feel free to contact one of our Nursery Professionals here at McShane's Nursery and Landscape Supply!