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Gerbera



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Department:
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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Classification

| | |
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| Kingdom: | Plantae |
| Family: | Asteraceae |
| Subfamily: | Mutisioidae |
| Genus: | Gerbera |
| Species: | Jamesonii |
| Common names: | African daisy, Transvaal daisy, Barberton daisy, or Gerbera daisy and, in the Eastern Cape, "Iyeza lamazi" |
| Origin: | South Africa (and possibly other parts of Africa, Madagascar, tropical Asia and South America) |

Climatic and soil requirements

Temperature

The optimum temperatures for good-quality *Gerbera* are 15 °C to 18 °C at night and 24 °C during the day. The plants cannot tolerate high temperatures of 32 °C, and low temperatures of 15 °C will increase crops.

Moisture

The plants are usually watered in the early morning to allow them to dry off before the cool night to inhibit diseases and pathogen growth. To discourage soil-borne diseases, the plants should be allowed to dry off after being watered.

Humidity

During winter, and in dark and cool periods with high humidity in the greenhouse, *Botrytis* can be a serious problem for these plants. The humidity must be kept below 70% during the day and below 85% at night.

Light

Light shade is important to reduce excessive greenhouse temperatures during summer. In terms of photoperiod, flowering is delayed during long days and speeded up during short days. To get more vegetal growth before flowering the photoperiod can be increased with supplemental lights.

Soil requirements and fertilisation

Gerberas prefer sandy and well-drained soils amended with organic matter for nutrient and water retention. Pre-planting application of dolomitic limestone at a rate of 1,5 kg/10 m² with 2,5 cm to 5,1 cm of peat or other organic material can also be added to improve fertility and the texture of the soil. Shallow and compacted soils are not preferred. The pH should be adjusted to around 6,0.

Ensure that the medium pH is monitored on a weekly basis to see that it does not rise above 6,2 or drop below 5,5 because many of the fertility problems encountered with the plants are pH-related. During winter, warm soil temperatures of between 18 °C and 20 °C are essential to establish the plants after potting.

Importance and uses

Medicinal uses

The smoke of *G. viridifolia* is inhaled by the Southern Sotho to treat head colds. In South Africa, pounded leaf infusions of *G. ambigua* are used in Zulu traditional medicine for tapeworm and stomachache and root infusions are taken orally for coughs. In Zimbabwe, root infusions are used for heart pain and for abdominal pain in babies.

Ornamental uses

Cut flowers can be used in bouquets. The plants can be sold as pot plants or for special occasions/traditional events. They can be sold as dried flowers and used in artistic combinations.