

Pest and disease control

No serious pests and diseases have been recorded for *A. afra* in South Africa, therefore correct pest and disease guidelines should be followed.

Acknowledgements

We thank the members of SAEOPA and KARWIL consultancy for information provided.

Reference

VAN WYK, B.E. & WINK, M. 2004. *Medicinal plants of the world*. Briza Publications, Pretoria, South Africa.



Further information can be obtained from

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African wormwood

Artemisia afra
Family: Asteraceae



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Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Common names

Wildeals (Afrikaans); umhlonyane (Xhosa); mhlonyane (Zulu); lengana (Tswana); sengana (Southern Sotho)

Background

Essential oil crops are crops that have volatile, aromatic oils in certain parts of the plant. Essential oils are natural plant products which accumulate in specialised structures such as oil cells, glandular trichomes, and oil or resin vessels. The oil is extracted from the plant through steam distillation, chemical extraction or CO₂ extraction.

Artemisia afra is a highly aromatic plant, an erect multi-stemmed perennial shrub of up to 2 m in height.

Origin and distribution

Artemisia afra is a common species in South Africa with a wide distribution in all provinces of South Africa except the Northern Cape. It also grows wild

in Lesotho, Swaziland and northwards into tropical Africa.

Climatic and soil requirements

A. afra is planted in temperate and subtropical regions and can be cultivated successfully where rainfall is in excess of 650 mm per year. It flourishes in well-drained, sandy, sandy loam and loam soils with a pH between 5,0 and 7,5.

Uses

A. afra is one of the most widely used medicinal plants used effectively by people of all cultures in South Africa.

The roots, stems and leaves are used in many different ways, e.g., poultices, infusions, body washes and lotions. It can also be smoked, snuffed or drunk as a tea for a wide range of ailments such as diabetes, measles, coughs, colds, fever, loss of appetite, colic, headache, earache, enemas and intestinal worms to malaria.

Cultural practices

Planting

A plant spacing of 30 cm in the row with a 60 cm row width will give 55 000 plants per hectare. Seeding depth must be at 5 mm below the soil. Use of a roller will enhance emergence.

Propagation

A. afra can be propagated either by root or stem cuttings.

Fertilisation

Correct interpretation of soil analysis results according to soil type will provide guidance to shortages and excesses and the soil has to be adapted to the correct balance.

The plants react well to nitrogen phosphate and potash predrilled in bands below the plantlets. Organic compost supplied at 3 to 5 t/ha gave good results.

Irrigation

Flood, sprinkler and drip irrigation can be used. Irrigate regularly after transplanting, for the first 3 months, to get the plants established.

Weed control

There are currently no registered herbicides, therefore, hand-hoeing and mechanical weeding with a tractor-drawn cultivator is recommended for the control of weeds. High plant density and quick canopy formation will reduce the weed population.

