

Combined mechanical and chemical control: This involves cutting the stems as close to the ground as possible and treating the stumps with a registered systemic herbicide. The entire severed stem should be treated as the plant woods very easily.

Chemical control: This involves spraying the entire plant with a suitable selective broad-leaf herbicide.

Harvesting maturity

Leaves are harvested during the summer or autumn. Fruits are harvested when the colour turns from green to dark brown. Harvesting time is best at onset of natural dispersion.

Utilisation

The plant is well known medicinally to many African tribes and avid herbalists and herb gardeners. Different parts (the leaves, twigs and occasionally the roots) of the plant are used for different reasons. The Xhosa people are known to drink it as a weak infusion, as a tea substitute and in a stronger infusion for the treatment of coughs, colds and bronchial problems. The tea can also be used as an anti-inflammatory to soothe sore muscles. In addition the Xhosa people also use fever tea to disinfect meat from animals that have been infected with anthrax.

This herb is also affective against fever, especially in cases of malaria, influenza, measles, and as a prophylactic against lung infections.

The smoke from the tea has proven to be effective when inhaled, against asthma, chronic coughs and pleurisy. Skin disorders, such as heat rash and other rashes, as well as scratches, stings and bites can also be treated. The tea can be applied like a lotion. Even lice and scabies can be treated with it.

Apart from its medicinal uses fever tea is also used ritually in a cleansing ceremony when someone has been in contact with a corpse and apparently for protection against dogs, crocodiles and lightning. The Masai make a red ointment from it, which is used to decorate their bodies.

For those gardeners who are potpourri lovers and are looking for a good cupboard freshener then fever tea is the perfect addition to your bouquet. In horticulture the fever tea is a prized landscape or herb garden plant. Some people even use it to make perfume.

The lemon bush is rich in volatile oils including Myrcene, Caryophyllene, Linalool, Cymene and Ipsdienone and is farmed commercially in South Africa and Kenya for essential oil production for the perfume industry.

References

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Fever Tea



Scientific name:

Lippia Javanica

Common name:

Fever tea/ Lemon bush/
Wild tea(English); Koorsbossie,
Beukesbossie/ Lemoenbossie,
Maagbossie (Afrikaans); Musutane,
Mutswane, umSutane (Swati);
inZinziNiba, UmzinziNibe (iSiXhosa);
umSuzwane, umSwazi (iSiZulu);
musukudu, bokhukhwane
(Setswana)

Background

Fever tea is a strongly fragrant, medicinal plant indigenous to southern and tropical parts of Africa. The plant belongs to the Verbenaceae family. There are six indigenous species of Lippia in South Africa. These plants are widespread throughout large parts of South Africa (Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West), with the exception of the Western Cape. Fever tea grows from the Eastern Cape northwards extending into tropical Africa including Botswana, Swaziland, Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Kenya. It grows in open veld, in the bush, as well as on forest margins. The fever tea is widespread in the wild and locally abundant in some areas.

Description

Fever tea is a woody shrub which stands erect and is a multi-stemmed plant that can grow up to two metres within three years under ideal conditions.

Considerably branched from ground level with yellowish cream to light brown longitudinally fissured stems, it is said to be one of the most aromatic of South Africa's indigenous shrubs. It is a hardy, drought-resistant plant that grows easily from seed in a variety of soil types.



Leaves

The leaves can reach lengths of between three and four centimetres (cm) and are hairy on both sides. They have dentate, lightly toothed margins, and are rough to the feel with deeply sunken veins from above. The leaves grow opposite each other, often in whorls of up to four and have a characteristic lemon scent when crushed.

Flower

The small creamy white flowers are clustered together in a dense round spike at the apex of the stem. The flowers can be found on the shrub from summer to autumn (between February and May) in some areas and are produced all year round in others. These flowers are arranged in dense, rounded flower heads. The plant can produce a flower of about 1 cm in diameter.

Stem

The stems have a square appearance when looked at in cross-section.

Fruits

The fruits are inconspicuous, small and dry and are borne at the base of flower clusters. They are 1.5 mm long, 1mm wide and densely young outside.

Seed

Seeds appear as small nuts and are brown in colour.

Climatic requirements

It grows in full sun or partial shade with high temperatures towards the rainy season.

Soil requirements

The plant tolerates a wide variety of soil types. It prefers a well-drained loam soil.

Cultural practice

Soil preparation

Preferably the beds should be weed-free with loose soil and light watering.

Propagation

Fever tea can be grown from seed, but also grows easily from cuttings, sown in seed trays or any other suitable properly draining container. The seed can also be sown directly in prepared beds.

Planting

The seeds can be sown in trays in early spring (August) or directly into the beds in early summer (December).

Irrigation

The cuttings of fever tea should be irrigated three times a day, until the plants are ready for transplanting.

Pest control

No pests have been identified. It is possible that the aromatic leaves protect this plant as animals do not browse it except under extraordinary circumstances.

Weed control

The lemon bush is widespread in the wild and locally abundant in some areas. Despite the fact that it is indigenous it is considered to be an invasive weed. Due to its invasive properties, it is difficult to control in the veld. The only available methods of controlling it are labor-intensive and expensive.

Mechanical control: This involves physically uprooting and removing the plant. Plants should not be left to dry and rot in the veld as they produce seed throughout the year.