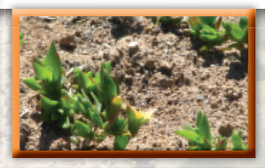
HARVESTING METHODS

The plants are harvested in October and the plant materials are crushed between two rocks.

USES

The plants are used for medicinal purposes for the treatment of colic in infants. Added to a teaspoon of breastmilk, it uplifts the mood, depression, decreases anxiety, stress and tension. It is also used as an analgesic for toothache and stomach pains, as replacement therapy for alcoholics and it gives energy. It can be used as a relief of hunger and a thirst suppressant. It can also be used as a snuff and as a sedative in the form of a tea or a tincture. Drinking the plant as tea helps recovering alcoholics avoid withdrawal symptoms. It can be chewed by the local people for mood elevation. It has also become commonly known for its energy-boosting effects and its ability to suppress the appetites of those who take it.



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Van Wyk, B-E and Wink M. 2004. Medicinal plants of the world, Pretoria: Briza Publications.

www.sceletium.org

www.plantzafrica.com

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Kougoed

agriculture, forestry & fisheries

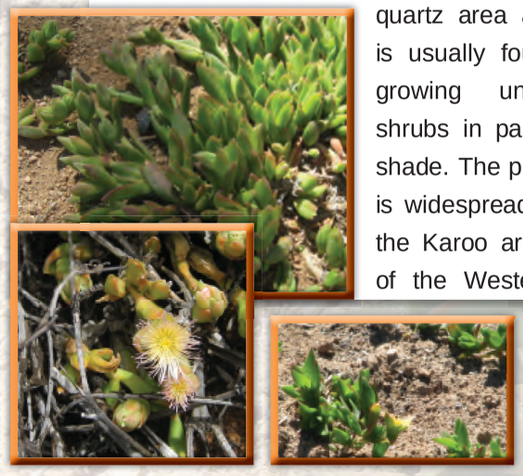
Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Scientific name: *Sceletium tortuosum*

Common names: Kanna or Kauwgoed, Kougoed (Afrikaans), 'Tortuose fig marigold' and Canna (English)

BACKGROUND

Sceletium tortuosum is a small groundcover, insect pollinated plant and it is climbing or creeping. It is also a low-growing plant. The leaves are oblong in shape, about 50 mm long and 20 mm wide. The flowers are very shortly pedicellate (almost sessile) and of medium size. The Afrikaans common name kougoed means something to chew. *Sceletium tortuosum* belongs to the family Aizoaceae. The plant is a shrub or small multi-branched tree, usually around 5 m in height. The plant originates in South Africa (Southwestern parts of the Cape and Namaqualand) and it occurs in quartz area and is usually found growing under shrubs in partial shade. The plant is widespread to the Karoo areas of the Western, Eastern and Northern Cape Provinces in South Africa. It is an opportunistic species with a lifespan of approximately 3 to 5 years.



CLIMATIC AND SOIL REQUIREMENTS

Sceletium tortuosum requires a minimum temperature of 16^{0}C and is tolerant to mild frost and cooler conditions. The plant thrives best in permeable, loamy soil. It prefers a well-drained, sandy soil, which should be watered when it has dried out.

PRODUCTION PRACTICE

Propagation

Propagation is by cuttings and seed. Cuttings germinate readily in sand whereas seeds do not always germinate easily.

Planting

Sceletium tortuosum can be planted in autumn, winter and spring, with a rest period during summer when the plants should not be watered.

Irrigation

Plants should only be irrigated sparingly in their initial stages, until shoot and root growth are well established. Irrigation can be increased thereafter, and should only be repeated once the soil has dried. Plants will require little irrigation and attention during their 9-month period of inactivity each year. Over-irrigation results in rotting.

Fertilization

The plants can be fertilised occasionally using a cactus soil or a mixture of compost, but does not particularly require it. Naturally it is cultivated without the use of any fertilisers.

Pest control

The major insects identified in *Sceletium tortuosum* are aphids, slugs, snails and red spider mites. In spring, newly emerging shoots should be sprayed for aphids, though aphids are not often a problem with grown plants. Young plants should be protected from slugs and snails. Slugs and snails cause damage resembling a row of holes. Red spider mite can occasionally infest indoor plants. The symptoms are dry-looking leaves which turn uniformly brown. Registered insecticides can be used.

Diseases control

Sceletium tortuosum virus disease is recognised by pale coloured spots and streaks on the leaves, and by distorted or "crinkly" leaves. Badly affected plants show dead rust-coloured streaks on the leaves, throughout the plant, and the growth is highly stunted. The flowers may have a distorted shape with white patches. There is no cure for virus disease and plants that are obviously diseased should be dug up and destroyed.