

### HARVESTING METHOD

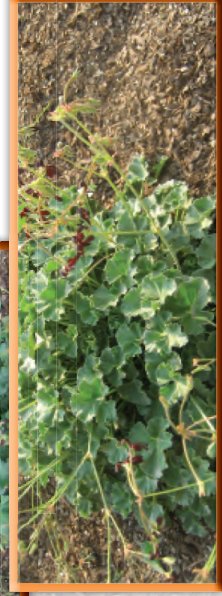
Leaves should be removed by cutting rather than pulling. After three years uproot the entire plant to harvest the roots.

### USES

It is traditionally used for coughs, flu, cold and chest troubles and is effective for bronchitis in children and adults. It can be used for the treatment of infections such as fever, sore throat, fatigue and weakness. Infusions of the tuber are used to treat dysentery and diarrhoea. The pulverised root is administered orally with fresh milk to treat coughs and tuberculosis as a traditional Xhosa medicine.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Members of Agri-Africa/Karwil Consultancy are herewith acknowledged for the information provided.



### REFERENCES

Margaret Roberts. 2000. A-Z Herbs: Identifying herbs, how to grow herbs, the uses of herbs. Struik Publishers. [www.plantzafrica.com](http://www.plantzafrica.com)

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# Pelargonium sidoides



agriculture,  
forestry & fisheries

Department:  
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Scientific name:** *Pelargonium*

*sidoides*

Kalwerbossie,

Rabassamin, Rooi

rabas (Afrikaans);

Umckaloabo (isiZulu)

### BACKGROUND

*Pelargonium sidoides* is a tender evergreen perennial herb that belongs to the family Geraniaceae. It is a medicinal plant native to South Africa. *Pelargonium sidoides* forms a rosette-like plant with long-stalked leaves that are mildly aromatic, heart-shaped and velvety. It has distinctive dark, reddish-purple (almost black) flowers. It occurs in Eastern Cape, Free State and Gauteng.

### CLIMATIC AND SOIL REQUIREMENTS

The plant usually grows in short grassland, shrubs and trees on stony soil varying from sand to clay-loam, shale or basalt. The plant grows well in average soil that is well drained. It likes a sunny exposure, but in very hot areas it benefits from partial shade. It grows in neutral to alkaline soil, with a pH requirement of 7.6 to 7.8. The plant prefers temperatures of 10 to 15°C at night and 17 to 22°C during the day.

### PRODUCTION PRACTICE

#### Soil preparation

The soil should be prepared several months before planting, to begin giving the added organic matter time to blend in and break down. If it is clay soil, the structure will be loosened while the sandy soil will start to form a structure that will hold water.

#### Propagation

The plant is propagated from seed or by means of basal cuttings. The plants grow easily from seed, but take a long time to produce. It takes about 710 days to germinate. Cuttings can be taken any time of the year, except during the coldest months. The cuttings should be prepared and the base be dipped in a rooting hormone and laced in a container with coarse river sand prewatered with a fungicide.

#### Planting

Planting should be done in autumn. The plants must be 90 cm apart in rows as the rose-scented varieties grow very quickly. The cuttings should be 10 to 15 cm and be planted with two thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) of their length under the soil. They will root in approximately three weeks. The lower leaves should be removed before the cuttings are pressed into wet sand. Keep protected and damp until rooted.

#### Fertilisation

Every two weeks during growth fertilisation is necessary.

#### Irrigation

Irrigation should be done moderately in winter and be increased at the beginning of summer (November to March).

#### Pest and disease control

To avoid problems it is better to obtain cuttings that are insect and disease free. Diseases are rare on cultivated plants. Overwatering can lead to root rot; to avoid it, regulate watering and use soil or a planting medium with good drainage. The major insects and pests identified include spider mites, thrips, mealybugs, caterpillars, mildew, grey mould, black leg, flower break virus, *Xanthomonas* blight and edema.

Mealybugs can be a problem. They produce large colonies of insects on the roots, especially tuberous roots that can seriously damage plants. Above ground they are easy to identify as they appear as white cottony masses.

Aphids can become a problem but they can be easily removed by washing with a strong stream of water.

The caterpillar larvae of some butterflies and moths do damage the plants but they are easily controlled with any of the biological sprays or dusts that contain the bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis*.