

Burchardia congesta syn B. umbellata – Milkmaids

Burchardia umbellata, commonly known as Milkmaids, is one of those delightful small plants that were once common in the wild but that are seldom seen now because of habitat destruction. A small plant with an erect stem to 30 to 40cm, they have rather insignificant grassy leaves that reduces to a tuberous rootstock in the late spring. In late Winter and Spring it produces delightful white flowers with purple anthers as illustrated in clusters. Milkmaids are found in the wild throughout Australia with the exception of the Northern Territory

They can take frost, poor, degraded soil and poorly drained soil and make an attractive and useful subject for a rockery provided they receive plenty of water in late winter and spring and less in their summer dormant period.

This species likes a peat and loam mix with plenty of moisture in the growing season, although notes from the Australian National Botanic Gardens say most conditions are suitable with plenty of water in the late winter and spring and less in the summer dormant period when the plant reduces to a tuberous rootstock capable of division.

Propagation

Seed germination is unremarkable and requires no pretreatment. Germination in 21 to 35 days.

Sow and cover lightly in a well-draining mixture of one part peat to one part coarse builders sand or similar coarse gravelly river sand. Propagation can be in trays with seedlings transplanted as soon as they are large enough to handle or in small tubes with the whole of the media transplanted into the final site.

In the wild this species is an understory species in open eucalyptus forest with an open understory. Site in full sun to light dappled shade.