

## Hakea species

Hakea is a member of the Proteaceae family and its close relatives include Banksia, Grevillea, Dryandra, Isopogon and Telopea (the Waratah).

One of the great features of Hakeas in gardens is that many attract honey-eating birds which act as pollinators for the plants.

### Propagation

Most Hakeas are propagated by seed but vegetative propagation (eg. cuttings) is also possible.

### Seed

Seed usually germinates well by conventional sowing methods in seed raising mixes although seedlings may be subject to "damping off". To minimize this possibility, keep seeds moist but not wet. Germination should occur in 14 to 60 days, depending on the species.

Pre-germination of seed by sowing into a closed container containing moist vermiculite or a similar material is also a useful method of germinating seeds, particularly for winter sowing when outdoor temperatures may be unsuitable. Germination usually occurs in 4 to 6 weeks using this method and when the root has reached about a centimetre or so in length, the seedling can be placed into a pot of seed raising mix. Seedlings should be pricked out as soon as possible, as they soon develop a long root system which may be damaged in transplanting. Potting into long tubes seems to ensure good root development. Care needs to be taken to ensure that your mixture has been sterilised and that there is plenty of ventilation as seedlings are susceptible to damping off and other fungal diseases.

### Cultivation

Hakeas are excellent garden plants although some of the species native to Western Australia may be difficult to maintain for any length of time in areas of high summer humidity and rainfall (such as the eastern coastal strip of Australia). However, experience indicates that the western hakeas are more adaptable than western banksias and Grevilleas in humid areas. In fact, Hakea is generally regarded as the hardiest genus of the Australian Proteaceae. Hakeas are useful for many purposes in the garden and the larger species in particular, are excellent for screening. In addition, the flowers of all hakeas produce nectar and are excellent for attracting birds.

Like most members of the Proteaceae family, Hakeas have a distinctive root system ("Proteoid roots") consisting of tight groupings of many small "rootlets". These are believed to enable the plants to efficiently take up nutrients from the nutrient-deficient soils where many of the species occur naturally. In cultivation this means that the plants can be adversely affected by fertilizers, particularly phosphorus. It is generally

recommended that Hakeas and other Proteaceae be fertilised only with low-phosphorus, slow-release fertilisers or not be fertilised at all.

Hakeas perform best in well-drained soils and generally resent continually wet soils. Shallow clay soils can present problems but if garden beds are built up to 300-600mm, greater success is experienced. Hakeas are generally at their best in open, sunny positions although the plants will tolerate some shade but probably with reduced flowering.

Hakeas respond well to regular, annual pruning where about one-third of the plant is removed. This promotes branching and produces a plant with a bushy shape. Some plants can be cut back severely if they develop a "straggly" shape but others will not tolerate this treatment. If in doubt, always leave some green foliage on the plant.

There are few serious pests that attack Hakeas.

