

Lagunaria patersonii – Norfolk Island Hibiscus

The Norfolk Island Hibiscus is a small to medium pyramidal tree growing in the wild to 13m tall. The leaves are grey/green and elliptical growing to 10cm and make a pleasing feature offsetting the pink open flowers that occur in the Spring and early Summer. The blooms are well displayed, up to 6cm in diameter and are profuse in number.

This is not a Hibiscus requiring a tropical climate, its native range being Queensland, Lord Howe Island off the mid New South Wales coast and Norfolk Island. It has been cultivated in the colder frosty atmosphere of Canberra in the National Botanic Gardens and is used as a street tree in the seaside suburbs of Melbourne. One advantage of this tree is its strong resistance to salt spray which makes it suitable for coastal sites. It prefers a moist well-drained site in full sun and is easily propagated from seed without the need of any pretreatment. Notwithstanding this siting/soil preference, this tree exhibits a high level of drought resistance and can happily grow and thrive in arid areas with rainfall as low as 250mm without losing any of its attractive features.

Propagation

The cultivation of the Lagunaria is easy and uncomplicated. Sow in any good quality light potting mix. Seeds should be planted to the same depth as their size, keep moist but not wet. Germination in 15 to 21 days.

Pot on at the point that the seedling is large enough to handle and plant out when the seedling is no less than 10cm in height. This plant can live happily in a pot for the first year or two of its life. Plant out in its final position after the danger of frost has passed, water in well and then as needed.