

Beaufortia species

Beaufortia purpurea – Purple Beaufortia

Beaufortia squarrosa– Sand Bottlebrush

Beaufortia sparsa – Swamp Bottlebrush

Beaufortia is a genus of some eighteen small to medium sized woody heath-like shrubs originating in the southwest of Western Australia, closely allied to the Melaleuca family.

Beaufortia purpurea, or the purple Beaufortia is a tiny rounded shrub rarely exceeding three feet and usually smaller. It has small greyish-green leaves to about half an inch. The flowers, which are produced in the spring and summer (October to January in Australia) come in globular flower heads at the end of the branches to about three quarters of an inch in diameter. Upon opening the blooms are at first a deep red, changing over time to a deep mauve-purple.

The natural habitat of this species is the low rainfall rocky slopes of the Darling Ranges in poor sandy and gravelly soils but it is equally at home in well-drained soil in a warm sunny position. This species is well suited to drier inland areas and does not do well in areas of high humidity. It is commonly seen in gardens in Melbourne. This is a delightful small plant suited to rockeries or pots or tubs on a patio and one that can be used indoors for short periods. This species is frost hardy, particularly once established, but this must be related to Australian terms where it is hardy to about -7°C. Propagation is easy from seed or cuttings without the need of pretreatment.

Propagation

WHEN TO PLANT – In warmer areas or in a greenhouse at any time. In frost prone areas after the danger of frost.

WHERE TO PLANT – Beaufortias prefer full sun to part shade and well drained soils and do best when fertilised with a specialist native plant fertiliser. Do not feed with fertilizers having a high phosphorus content. Prune lightly after flowering and tip prune throughout the growing season. In areas of higher humidity site in a part shade position (such as under eaves) and reduce summer watering.

GERMINATION – is easy with this species. Propagate in a medium of light loam mixed with sand in one part to three. The medium should be kept moist but damp and not permitted to dry out. Do not water from above but place the propagating container in a tray of water to about one inch in depth. Good hygiene is required as young seedlings can be very subject to damping off.