

Clip 'n' Save – Grevillea

Grevillea: Native to rainforests and the open ranges of Australia, New Guinea and Indonesia, the Grevillea is an evergreen flowering plant with over 360 species in the Proteaceae family. These can roughly be divided into two groups – those with spiral flowers resembling brightly colored spiders and those with petals all on one side looking not unlike a toothbrush. The leaves of the “spider flowers” are always simple and resemble pine needles while the “toothbrush” varieties have compound leaves which can take many forms. Flowers grow in clusters and may be red, orange, yellow, pink, cream or white, many with contrasting cream or white centers. Common names are spider flower, sea spray, silky oak and bottle brush.



Size: Grevilleas range from tiny rock crevice plants to giant trees over 100 feet tall; today’s landscaping shrubs range in height from 2 to 6 feet with a spread of up to ten feet or more. Their arching, dense foliage makes them an especially good choice to soften borders along paths and walkways and provides a colorful privacy hedge by a pool or patio. Smaller varieties are useful in preventing erosion by anchoring soil on banks and hillsides.

Exposure: Grevilleas need full sun to bloom although broader leaf varieties can tolerate light shade.

Planting/Soil: Grevilleas require no soil amendments as their specialized root systems are perfectly designed to draw out nutrients from poorer soils. Good drainage is a must. Forego the

mulch and manure as well, as it can burn the plant.

Water needs: Minimal, in fact water-logged soil is a no-no.

Fertilizing: No fertilization necessary but if you must, absolutely none with phosphorous which can be fatal.

Pruning: After their flowers have passed, Grevilleas can be trimmed back to shape or remove any dead or crossed branches.

Pests: Most gardeners report very few with the exception of the occasional mealy bug or scale. Disease is usually a direct result of overwatering.



Snapshot: The virtues of Grevilleas are many, especially for those who prefer a low maintenance garden. Fast growing, hardy and deer-resistant, they thrive happily in poor soil and windy conditions, tolerating drought and reflected heat common to backyard patios, gravel paths and paved driveways. They are evergreen with attractive foliage and have spectacularly showy flowers rich in nectar, attracting hummingbirds in droves. Many flower over a long period and often throughout the winter, adding color when most garden blooms have passed. No sissy plant, the Grevillea is a perfect choice for foothills gardeners seeking toughness without sacrificing beauty and style.

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