

## Plant Cultivation Notes.

### Aloe Polyphylla



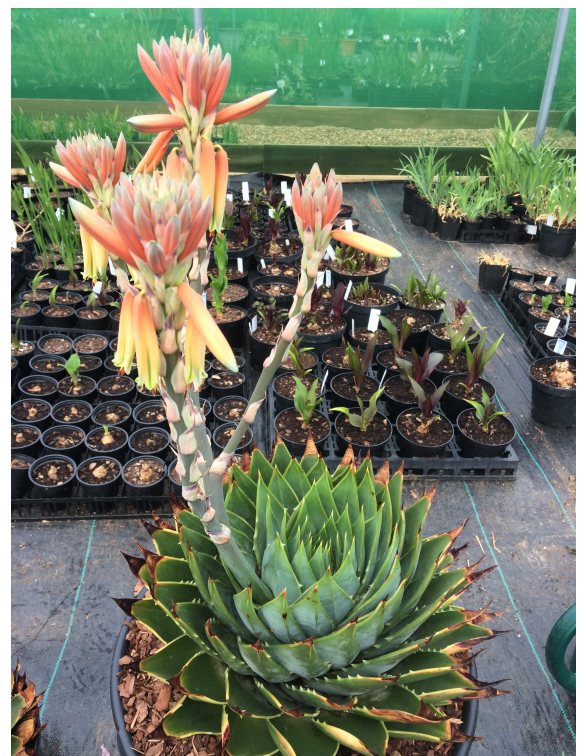
Aloe polyphylla is the most stunning of all of the South African Aloes. The spiral arrangement of the leaves is unique to this Aloe and develops on three to four year old plants. We produce our A. polyphylla by both our own seed and tissue culture.

Aloe polyphylla is very rare in cultivation, particularly in the UK. It is difficult to raise from seed, but once established, growth is relatively quick. Aloe polyphylla can reach a height of 40/50 cm and a spread up to 60-80cm. This aloe is capable of taking freezing temperatures and is often covered with snow in the wild. Cultivation in the UK is most practical in pots (however we have grown A. polyphylla successfully in

the ground in our own garden). Grow this Aloe eventually in very large tubs, outside and protect with fleece when young. Containerised plants can be moved under unheated glass over winter, but they will need plenty of ventilation. Only pot up into a pot slightly bigger than the diameter of the plant and ensure that there is plenty of drainage holes. Aloe polyphylla have a very high oxygen requirement around their roots and like orchids, the roots have a tendency to rot if they are either drowned or suffocated in a potting mix that is not loose enough.

Cultivation outside in Europe is only possible in areas with winter minimum temperatures of  $-7^{\circ}\text{C}$  and above. Plant in a raised bed or slope, in a free draining soil and in full sun, facing south. Aloe polyphylla seems to like the damp climate we have in coastal Europe, but its roots must be in a free draining soil. We recommend adding 60% gravel/ pumice or Hydroleca to the back fill when planting.

For container growing, planting mix must be very free draining. We use a mix of 50% Pumice grit or Hydroleca, 25% coir compost, 25% John Innes number 2. We add to this a very small amount of biochar/ charcoal and volcanic rock dust. We also add a layer of extra drainage to the bottom of the pot. Use a container with loads of drainage holes!





Watering container grown plants should only be necessary when there has been no rain for a week or so. In Autumn / Winter only water this Aloe when the temperatures are above freezing and likely to remain so for a week or two. During late spring and summer we drench our Aloe polyphylla early in the morning every 7 days. Apply a soluble cactus and succulent fertiliser every couple of weeks from May to September.

Flowering on A. polyphylla in Europe is usually in early summer. Flowers are salmon pink to ruby red and are held on branched racemes up to 80cm high. Viable seed is only produced by cross pollination. Plants in the wild do not produce suckers, however we have noticed a number that tissue culture plants will sucker. These should be removed in order to encourage a single rosette of spiralling leaves.

### **Summary of Cultivation Requirements:**

- ★ Full Sun when mature. Semi shade when young.
- ★ Extremely well drained, open compost.
- ★ Water and feed in Spring and Summer
- ★ Greatly reduce water in Winter/ cold periods (October- March).
- ★ Plenty of fresh air.
- ★ Protect from slugs and snails when young with organic slug pellets.

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