

# Plant Cultivation Notes

## **Protea and Leucadendron Compost mix and fertilisers.**

We get often get asked about Proteaceae compost mix and fertilisers. All members of the family Proteaceae like a well drained, poor and Phosphate free compost. The problem is that most commercial composts have added NPK fertilisers, even the ericaceous composts contain Phosphates which will 'burn' the fine roots of most Proteaceae. We have come up with a mix that works for these wonderful South African plants.

**3 parts Coir** - This is available online and is derived from coconut fibre and is slightly acidic PH making it ideal for Proteaceae.

**3 parts sterilised Kettering Loam**- Sometimes called 'Boughton Kettering Loam'. This is a clay based loam and has no added NPK. It's 'friable' nature makes it the perfect addition to the mix.

**1 part Fine Potting Pine Bark**- Melcourt is probably the best. We sift this through a 10mm sieve.

**2 part potting grit**- We use Melcourt Horticultural Cornish grit. This adds drainage.

**1/2 part Biochar**- This helps keep the compost mix 'Sweet'. We buy our biochar from soilfixer.

**Added Slow release Protea fertiliser**- We have developed a slow release granular fertiliser which is free of Phosphates. It contains added trace elements and is added at an appropriate rate of 3.5 grams per litre of compost. (<https://www.bluenurseries.com/product-page/protea-slow-release-fertiliser>)

**Fertiliser during growth**- This can be added using a soluble phosphate free fertiliser. We have developed this in the form of water soluble crystals which are applied from April to August at a rate of 5 grams per 5 litres of (Rain) water. Level teaspoon is approximately 5 grams. (Our soluble protea fertiliser is available here: <https://www.bluenurseries.com/product-page/protea-soluble-fertiliser>)

**Pots used** should have plenty of large drainage holes and a good layer of crocks should be used at the base of the pot. We use Leca, which is a lightweight, expanded, fired clay product. This product can be added as well to compost mixes to help aerate the mix.

**Top dress** potted Proteaceae with fine bark chips, this helps retain some moisture at the surface and protects the plants fine 'feeder' roots which can frequently be just below the surface.

**Watering** should preferably be done with rain water, but when this is not possible condition tap water by filling a bucket and standing it in the sun for 48 hours or longer.