

smoke of kooigoed is stimulating and helpful for insomnia. The Khoikhoi used the leaves and flowers as bedding, hence the name "kooigoed", translated as "bedding stuff". A pleasant and effective insect repellent against flies and mosquitoes can be made by burning a mixture of *Helichrysum odoratissimum* and *Artemesia afra* leaves.

References

- Van Wyk, B.-E., Van Oudtshoorn, B. & Gericke, N. 1997. *Medicinal plants of South Africa*. First edition, Pretoria: Briza Publications.
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- Van Wyk, B.-E., & Wain, M. 2004. *Medicinal plants of the world*. Pretoria: Briza Publications.

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Kooigoed



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Department:
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Scientific name: *Helichrysum odoratissimum*.

Common names: Everlasting (English); Kooigoed (Afrikaans); Imphepho (isiXhosa, isiZulu)

Background

Kooigoed is a strong aromatic perennial herb or shrublets. About 245 species of *Helichrysum* occur in South Africa, of which the best known and commonly used medicinal plants are *H. cymosum*, *H. odoratissimum*, *H. petiolare* and *H. nudifolium*. The Afrikaans name kooigoed reflects the traditional use as bedding material. The plant belongs to the family Asteraceae. Kooigoed originated in South Africa and is distributed from the Soutpansberg in Limpopo, highlands of the Mpumalanga, midlands of KwaZulu-Natal, the North-Eastern Free State, the Cape Drakensberg mountains and the coastal areas of Eastern Cape and across the Cape folds mountains of the Cedarberg, Jonkershoek, Gifberg in Vanrhynsdorp as far as the Peninsula in the Western Cape.

Description

The plant can grow about 25 cm high.

Leaves

The dense, aromatic foliage consists of roundish or oval-shaped leaves which are covered with silvery-grey hairs.

Flowers

The flowers are very shortly pedicellate (almost sessile), of medium size (20 to 30 mm diameter) and bright yellow in colour. The plant flowers in spring (September–November) or summer (December–February). Tiny creamy-white flowers make up abun-

dant flower heads on long stalks which add to the decorative effect of this plant in mid-summer. The small flower heads are about 3 mm long, each comprising up to 15 small florets.

Stem

The plant has greyish-white, densely leafy stems.

Fruit

The fruit has a barrel-shaped, 5-ribbed, glabrous achene and is \pm 1 mm long.

Climatic and soil requirements

Kooigoed is best planted in full sun in well-drained, moist, rich, loamy soil and is tolerant of poor soils. It prefers a temperature of 50–55 °C.

Cultural practices

Planting

Kooigoed should be planted in autumn (March).

Propagation

Kooigoed is propagated by seed and stem cuttings.

Fertilisation

The plants can be fertilised with lots of compost, but do not particularly require it. Naturally it is cultivated without the use of any fertilisers.

Irrigation

The plant should be moderately irrigated, especially in winter as it tends to become infected with fungus and more regular watering may be needed in hot, dry, inland regions. Kooigoed requires occasional to infrequent irrigation and seems to thrive during periods of lack of care.

Weed control

No herbicides are currently registered for the control of weeds in this plant. Manual weeding is the only proven safe method of weed control that can be applied at present. Mulch is successful in reducing invasions of broad-leaved weeds, but grasses and sedges remain problematic.

Disease control

The plants can be infected with fungus diseases and die-back in a plot of land. Registered chemical control can be used when the disease is severe. Good sanitary practices are the best way to control dieback because the fungus lives inside the plant and cannot be completely controlled by fungicide spray.

Pest control

The plant is susceptible to root rot in poorly drained soils. The rotten plants should be removed. Application of registered fungicides is recommended.

Harvesting methods

Fresh leaves may be picked as soon as the plant has enough foliage to maintain growth. The leaves or seeds should be picked after the dew has disappeared, but before the sun becomes too hot.

Uses

Kooigoed is a popular medicinal plant used to treat ailments such as coughs, colds, infections, menstrual pain and headaches. The leaves are used by Rastafarians to make an infusion to treat asthma, chest problems and high blood pressure. Kooigoed is also inhaled as a protective cleanser and as a pain reliever. It is also used as a facial cream for pimples, as a perfume, as a repellent for parasites and insects and as incense to raise the goodwill of the ancestors. The