

FABULOUS FUSION

A SUCCESSION OF SEASONAL COLOUR:

Lampranthus species, Cotyledon orbiculata subsp. orbiculata, Kalanchoe thyrsiflora, Dierama pendulum, Aristida junciformis, Euryops pectinatus

Succulents jostle with each other in this vibrant show softened by the inclusion of grasses. The drooping fronds of grasses and the grassland wildflower, *Dierama pendulum*, mingle with fat, static succulent leaves of varying shades of green, grey and red. These create contrasting elements that are wildly attractive. Round dollops of orange vygie and meter high mounds of yellow daisies connect the grasses and succulents to create an eye-catching mosaic.

Dierama pendulum, (fairy bell, hair-bell) is common in grasslands of the Eastern Cape, growing on both stony and marshy ground. Evergreen leaves are linear and erect, up to .9m high. Through spring and summer, pendulous flowers in shades of pink, open along thin, arching stems held way above the leaves. The Wandflower requires good summer rains, a dry winter, and as much bright sunlight as possible to ensure a good flowering display. Leave clumps undisturbed for at least five years, and never cut back the leaves as this will have a negative impact on flower development. Rather remove the dead outer leaves by tugging on them gently to remove from the clump. *Dierama pendulum* will cope with light frost.

Lampranthus spp. This 'Fanta orange' *Lampranthus* has smaller leaves and more compact growth habit than the spreading groundcover varieties, forming tight balls of show-stopping colour. Growing to 40cm clusters of orange wash over the ground between the grasses and larger *Cotyledon* succulents. Flowering displays can be seen throughout spring and into summer and flower heads require full sun to open fully.

Cotyledon orbiculata has varying leaf forms and colour; the varieties here have soft shades of grey and apple green with an edging trim of scarlet. Enclosed by drifts of shocking orange vygie this mini- combination within the bed dazzles!

Kalanchoe thyrsiflora: what better plant to add eye-catching maroon and grey globes to a garden bed than the White Lady. A bone-dry winter and early spring have spread the edging red flush to cover much of the leaf area. The wet season restricts the contrasting red to a luminous edging trim on the grey to apple-green leaves. During flowering season tall silver spires punctuate the landscape, but they retain their impact as low growing groundcovers through the year.

UNUSUAL CONTRASTS

Felicia amelloides, Portulacaria afra 'nana'

Try this unusual combination for dry soil and baking sun. *Portulacaria afra*, or Spekboom, so famous for its ability to absorb carbon, has a smaller sibling,

P. afra 'nana'! Here, Jenny has used it with the blue flowers and glossy green leaves of the Kingfisher Daisy to great effect. Yellow-gold leaves intermingle with plain greens to create a bright, mottled carpet around the low growing Kingfisher Daisy, and the colour mix is refreshing. The dwarf Spekboom is a robust groundcover with roots to stabilise soils on slopes and steep banks. All species of *Portulacaria* help to restore soil and are excellent choices where soil rehabilitation is required. This groundcover creeps quickly to cover bare soil, forming a flat, dense cover to create living mulch around shrubs. Leaves are just as juicy to nibble on as the older and much larger brother, and both are a must for every garden to filter carbon from the air.

SOFT AND SUBTLE:

Cotyledon orbiculata and Aristida junciformis

An exercise in opposites creates this eye-catching arrangement. Whether in its blond or green phase, the nGongoni grass melds softly and subtly with the apple green to grey leaves of this gorgeous Plakkie. Give both species sufficient room to spread. *Aristida* needs a metre round as older clumps can develop thick thatch able to smother surrounding plants, and the Pig's Ear needs good air movement to prevent stems from rotting. Although peach to russet bell-like flowers adds further beauty from June to August, the combination is striking enough to enjoy year round.

AN EXUBERANT SPREAD:

Salvia africana lutea, Pink Ice Plant

The Beach Salvia moves away from its usual aloe and soft shrub companions to share the limelight with the most iridescent vygie you're likely to see this season. The pink ice plant, part of the extensive MESEMBRYANTHEMUM family, comes as a surprise at the feet of the Beach Salvia, all shades of grey, rusty-orange and peach-browns. The small grey leaves create the perfect backdrop against which the vibrant colours glow. This ice plant variety is probably a hybrid form of *Lampranthus multiradiatus*; the familiar cultivated *Lampranthus* species were formerly named *L. roseus*, but are now incorporated into the *L. multiradiatus* species. Flowering takes place from spring to early summer and may continue on and off through the year. The ice plant thrives in full sun on well-drained slopes. Maximum height is 50 cm.