

We're anticipating Summer with these 2 Gorgeous Wildflowers

Gladiolus papilio:

Butterfly Gladiolus. Moederkappie; Butterfly Sword Lily

The Butterfly Gladiolus is a beautiful, unusual member of this well-loved family, unknown to many South Africans, but cultivated in the UK since 1866. *Gladiolus papilio* is a deciduous, clump-forming perennial that grows from a small roundish corm. 50 cm high grey-green leaves are blade-shaped and narrow growing a fan from the base. From August to February, beautiful funnel-shaped flowers with downcast heads hang on slender, arching 1m high stems. Young buds are flushed cream and purple, and the backs of petals retain this colouring as they open up. Inside colour ranges from creamy –yellow with a dark blotch at the base of the lower tepals (outer parts of a flower where there is no differentiation between sepals and petals), to pale to dark purple-mauve, and all can be either with or without a yellow flare.

Growers familiar with this species suggest clumps increase in size generously and fairly quickly, though plants can take 2 – 5 years to reach full height. In the wild, this Glad grow in colonies in marshes and damp grasslands but thrives quite readily in gardens with moderate amounts of water. *Gladiolus papilio* prefers some protection from strong winds.

Provincial distribution: Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West

Hibiscus meyeri:

Dainty White Wild Hibiscus; Lebombo Hibiscus

The Dainty White Wild Hibiscus is a twiggy, branching shrublet or perennial herb that grows up to 2 m high. Solitary white flowers cluster at the ends of slender stalks 2 – 3 cm long, turning pink or purple as they age. Flower size is about 10 mm in diameter with an extended pistil. Flowering is from December to April. All parts of this slender perennial carry abundant russet-brown bristles. Plants can be single-stemmed and sparse, or, when pruned can thicken into more substantial clumps. Leaves are most attractive, small and shallowly 3-lobed with toothed margins, 3 – 5 veins from the base, and 10 – 30 x 8 – 25 mm in size. In the wild, growing where herbivores are common plants often retreat to the protective canopies beneath trees.

Habitat: In valleys, in thicket on the edge of floodplains.

Distribution range: *H. meyeri* subsp. *meyeri* - KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga - this species has a wide but rather patchy distribution range across sub-Saharan Africa. *H. meyeri* subsp.

transvaalensis – Limpopo, Mpumalanga