African Boxwood

Myrsine africana

Height: 8 feet

Spread: 5 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: 9

Other Names: Cape Myrtle, Thakisa

Description:

A tough, slow growing evergreen shrub with dense, upright stems bearing tightly overlapping, dark green round leaves that are finely toothed; new leaves and stems are dark red; flowers are inconspicuous, berries on females only; great as a hedge



African Boxwood
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Ornamental Features

African Boxwood is primarily grown for its highly ornamental fruit. It features an abundance of magnificent plum purple berries with burgundy overtones from mid fall to early winter. It has attractive dark green evergreen foliage which emerges red in spring. The small glossy round leaves are highly ornamental and remain dark green throughout the winter. The smooth dark brown bark and dark red branches add an interesting dimension to the landscape.



African Boxwood foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Landscape Attributes

African Boxwood is a dense multi-stemmed evergreen shrub with an upright spreading habit of growth. It lends an extremely fine and delicate texture to the landscape composition which can make it a great accent feature on this basis alone.

This is a relatively low maintenance shrub, and is best pruned in late winter once the threat of extreme cold has passed. It is a good choice for attracting birds to your yard. It has no significant negative characteristics.

African Boxwood is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- Hedges/Screening
- General Garden Use
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

African Boxwood will grow to be about 8 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 5 feet. It has a low canopy, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 40 years or more. This is a dioecious species, meaning that individual plants are either male or female. Only the females will produce fruit, and a male variety of the same species is required nearby as a pollinator.

This shrub does best in full sun to partial shade. It is very adaptable to both dry and moist growing conditions, but will not tolerate any standing water. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. This plant should not require much in the way of fertilizing once established, although it may appreciate a shot of general-purpose fertilizer from time to time early in the growing season. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America.

African Boxwood makes a fine choice for the outdoor landscape, but it is also well-suited for use in outdoor pots and containers. With its upright habit of growth, it is best suited for use as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when grown in a container, it may not perform exactly as indicated on the tag - this is to be expected. Also note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.