Olearia - Care Guide

Caring For Olearia

*Daisy bush, New Zealand daisy bush*

This is another genus of plants which have widely different uses in the garden and widely different growth habits and ultimate sizes. The Olearias have therefore been divided in this article into separate categories which may be common sense but are not necessarily botanically correct!

The things which all species of Olearia have in common is that they and are all evergreen; mainly originate from New Zealand, and are grown for their daisy-like flower heads with the flowers being borne singly or in corymbs or panicles in spring or summer. They prefer to be grown outdoors in full sun in well-drained soil and will tolerate hard pruning from which they regenerate well. However not all species are suitable for growing outdoors in colder parts of the country. All can be rooted from semi-ripe new growth cuttings in summer.

1. Fully hardy Olearias suitable as hedging plants or windbreaks especially in coastal areas

O. macrodonta is a vigorous upright shrub which will grow to 20ft with a similar spread. It has sharply toothed, holly-like, glossy dark green leaves with silver-white felting underneath. In summer the bush or small tree is adorned with 6in corymbs of scented daisy-like white flowers.

O. x haastii is a naturally occurring hybrid from New Zealand which makes a rather smaller and denser hedge or windbreak and is particularly useful in coastal situations or in exposed borders around car parks. It grows to around 6ft in height eventually and has oval dark green leaves with felted undersides. The flowers are in dense 3in corymbs of daisy-like yellow centred white flowers.
O. traversii has an upright habit and is one of the principal hedging plants grown around fields in the Isles of Scilly. It is however tough enough to grow in other western and southern coastal districts and can grow to 15ft or more. It has long oblong leaves which are glossy green above and white felted underneath. The flowers are relatively inconspicuous, daisy-like and grey-white. The flower panicles lack the ray florets found in other species. There is also an attractive variegated form with striking pale green leaves splashed yellow, but this is more tender.

2. Hardy taller growing Olearia species as specimen or freestanding plants in a shrub border or woodland context

O. arborescens ‘Moondance’ is an attractive variegated species with white and yellow edges to its green leaves sometimes tinged pink. It has small daisy-like flowers in summer but is really a foliage shrub or small tree which has, so far, grown with us to 4-6ft. It needs shelter from cold winds.

O. nummularifolia is one of the hardiest species growing to around 6ft with a similar spread. It has small rounded leathery leaves. These are light green when young, turning darker and woolly yellow below. The fragrant white flower heads have cream or pale yellow centres either singly or in clusters.

O. virgata ‘Dartonii’ has narrow needle like leaves and is readily identifiable. It grows eventually to around 15ft with a similar spread. The leaves are white felted underneath and the small flowers are fragrant and yellowish-white. They are borne in profusion in clusters along the branches.

O. solandri ‘Aurea’ is a very dense, upright, tall growing shrub which grows with us to 10-15ft in height with a similar spread. It has tiny golden leaves on greenish new growth with yellow felting underneath the leaves. The pale yellow flowers are solitary and daisy like but cover the bush in profusion. This plant will withstand many salt laden gales without turning a hair. The old fluffy seed heads set against the new growth is attractive too.

3. Smaller growing ornamental species of Olearia which are better grown in the greenhouse in colder parts of the country
O. x scilloniensis is perhaps the most popular and widely grown of all the Olearias. It is a dense shrub growing, over time, to about 6ft with a similar spread. It starts off as an upright small shrub and gets bushier much later. It has wavy-marginated, long, pale green-grey leaves which are densely white felted underneath. It flowers in profusion in late spring with corymbs of daisy like white flower heads with yellow centres. With a little pinching out of new shoots it can be persuaded to produce further crops of newer flowers through the season.

‘Master Michael’ has larger grey-green foliage and larger purple-blue flower heads but is a bit more tender and a less vigorous form of O. scilloniensis.

O. phlogopappa ‘Comber’s Blue’, the Tasmanian daisy bush, grows to a similar height eventually but is slightly less vigorous and also does well in a pot in the greenhouse. The leaves are grey green above and grey-woolly beneath. The florets are purple-blue around yellow centred flowers carried in erect panicles above the leaves. This is an Australian species.

O. phlogopappa ‘Comber’s Pink’ has pink ray florets and has seemed, with us, a little hardier and easier to grow than the blue flowered form.

Summer Pruning Olearia Scilloniensis - VideoTip

View this video on Youtube here [https://www.youtube.com/MoR-rrWecVg](https://www.youtube.com/MoR-rrWecVg)

Summer Propagation - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here [https://www.youtube.com/9pbj1yg5Prk](https://www.youtube.com/9pbj1yg5Prk)