

Metrosideros - Growing Guide

Growing *Metrosideros*

Visitors to Tresco Gardens in the Scilly Isles will have been overwhelmed by the splendid red flowers on these common summer flowering New Zealand trees which self seed abundantly wherever there is bare ground. There used to be a 30ft tall tree of *Metrosideros robusta* growing beside a hot south facing wall at Caerhays. Sadly it succumbed in a cold winter some 25 years ago. There are few, if any, mature *metrosideros* trees growing in Cornwall because these trees (*M. exelsa* and *M. robusta* in particular) have one unusual feature. Seedlings and young plants of one to five years old have very fleshy stems. Until they can develop a woody stem they are extremely tender even at temperatures below +5°C. It is a tadpole and frog like existence. If you can get to the frog stage you have a faint chance of growing this tree outside in the very mildest frost free coastal situations. We have tried and failed at the tadpole stage many times!

Sadly, one has to accept that these beautiful semi tropical plants can only be grown in the greenhouse. However, there is no reason to despair, as cutting grown plants (unlike seedlings) will readily flower away even as small plants in small pots. Thus they can therefore make a real impact in a heated and entirely frost free greenhouse or conservatory.

Metrosideros all grow aerial roots in maturity so do not be surprised at this feature which derives from the subtropical rainforest habitats that these plants inhabit. Often they grow epiphytically in the wild attached to and growing from other canopy plants.

Under glass use a loam based potting compost and water freely with added liquid fertiliser in summer. Water sparingly in winter.

Semi ripe new growth cuttings can be rooted with bottom heat in summer.

In a year or two they will produce copious clusters of red to crimson flowers in terminal clusters in mid summer. Different species flower at slightly different times.

We offer a variety of different species and cultivars of metrosideros. Their glossy green or blue green leaves are attractive in themselves. We find that *M. umbellata* varieties are the most reliable flowerers at a young age.



Metrosideros excelsa



Metrosideros excelsa 'Maori Princess'



Metrosideros kermadecensis
'Radiance'



Metrosideros robusta



Metrosideros 'Twisty'



Metrosideros umbellata

Burncoose Nurseries: Gwennap, Redruth, Cornwall TR16 6BJ

Telephone: +44 (0) 1209 860316 Fax: +44 (0) 1209 860011 Email: info@burncoose.co.uk

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