

DELIGHTFUL DIERAMAS

In recent years Prenplants has increased the range of hardy Dieramas that it offers. These South African natives offer an attractive and unusual addition to gardens.

Dieramas, are a member of the Iris family, also known as Angels' Fishing Rods, Fairy Wands, African Hairbells, Wedding Bells and Wandflowers, they are endemic to Africa, with 45 species found from the Ethiopian Highlands to The Cape. The name Dierama derives from the Greek for funnel, which relates to the shape of the flower.

The hardy varieties originate from high in the Drakensberg Mountains of South Africa where they have to endure frost and snow during the winter months which makes them quite at home in an English winter, some varieties are known to survive temperatures down to -15 degrees centigrade. These hardy evergreen perennials bear graceful pendulous bell shaped flowers on long arching stems.



Dierama Species

D. dracomontanum. This plant is known as the Dragon Mountain Wandflower or Drakensberg Hairbell. It grows to 60 cm. tall with rose pink flowers produced in summer. This plant dominates the mountain slopes of the Drakensberg Mountains between 1500 and 2800 metres above sea level from the Orange Free State to the Eastern Cape and is known to cover compete hillsides. The plants prefer a well-drained humus rich soil in full sun. It is ideal for small gardens or rockeries and will tolerate temperatures down to -12 degrees C. Its name refers to the mountains in which it is found.



D. erectum was first collected in 1977 in Ngome Distict of the Ntendeka National Forest in northern Natal. It is found only in this district. This late flowering variety reaches 1 metre in height and has erect fluorescent pink flowers. It is so named because of its erect flowers



D. igneum is known as the Fairy Wandflower and widely distributed from Natal to the Eastern Cape. This plant grows in grassland from sea level to 1500 metres. It has tomato red flowers from July to September and grows to be 60 – 75 cm. tall. The plants prefer moist, well-drained soil in full sun. The plant's name comes from the Latin for its fiery red flowers.



D. mossii is found in damp ground in south east Transvaal and Natal. This species is one of the earliest flowering of the Dieramas with claret red bells from June to August. The plants grow to 75 cm. tall and prefer moist or wet soils in full sun.

The plant is named after Professor Charles Edward Moss (1870 – 1930), first professor of botany at Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg. Moss was born at Hyde and gained an M.Sc. from Manchester in 1898 and a D.Sc. from Cambridge in 1907 where he was curator of the herbarium. In 1916 he moved to South Africa to take up the post of Professor of Botany at the South African School of Mines and Technology, which became Witwatersrand University in 1922. A specimen of *D. mossii*, collected by Moss at the Premier Mine, Transvaal in 1917, resides in the herbarium at Kew.



D. pulcherrimum Slieve Donard Hybrids. This strain of Wandflower or Angel's Fishing Rod was raised at the Slieve Donard Nursery in County Down, Northern Ireland. This is a vigorous plant growing up to 1.2m in

height with pendulous wands of pink, claret or red flowers from June until August. It is particularly hardy but does not like a hot dry position in full sun preferring a moist humus rich soil in partial shade.

The Slieve Donard Nursery was founded in 1904 by Thomas Ryan, but it was not until it was owned by Leslie and Ruby Slinger that it achieved international fame by introducing a vast array of new cultivars that bear the nursery's name. The nursery has since closed.



D. reynoldsii is found in high altitude grassland in Natal and the Eastern Cape where it tolerates high summer rainfall and winter temperatures as low as -15 degrees C. This plant is one of the most stunning of the hardy Dieramas with silver bracts that contrast with the pendulous, deep wine red, bell shaped flowers which are produced from June to August on 1.5m tall stems. The flower spike is up to 15 cm long with up to 12 large

merlot red flowers crowded towards the tip. These plants prefer humus rich, moist soil.

This species is named after Dr. Gilbert Westacott Reynolds (1895 - 1967) an optician and distinguished amateur botanist who collected and cultivated indigenous South African plants.



D. trichorhizum is one of the smallest of hardy Dieramas reaching only 45 cm. in height. It is found in the moist and marshy places in the mountains of Eastern Transvaal, Lesotho and Natal where it can be found up to 2700 metres above sea level. In June and August the plants produce pale mauve flowers. Trichorhizum means “hairy root” and refers to the fibrous coat that surrounds the corm

