

Leucospermum: Botany and Horticulture*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Proteaceae embrace 82 genera, of which the most important cut flower genera are *Protea*, *Leucospermum*, *Leucadendron*, *Banksia* (Sedgley 1998), and *Grevillea* (Joyce et al. 1997), all of which also have species used as cut foliages (Parvin 1991a) and landscape material. The nut crop, *Macadamia*, is one of the other prized members of the Proteaceae. In this review, the noun *protea* (*proteaceous* when used as an adjective) is used in a general sense for the cut flower members of the family, while a genus name is used where it was clearly identified in a citation.

Venkata Rao (1971) noted, perhaps incorrectly, that the family Proteaceae contains very few plants of economic importance but that most are rich nectar producers and of value to apiarists. Indeed, it is the copious nectar production in some ornithophilous species of *Protea* that may lead to the black leaf disorder of the cut flower (Dai and Paull 1995; Jones et al. 1995). Many proteaceous species are adapted to pollination by birds, and the large solitary inflorescences of these have also attracted the interest of humans because of their ornamental qualities.

Brits et al. (1983) reviewed the development of proteas as cultivated crops in South Africa. In his introduction to the first newsletter of the International Protea Association, G. J. Brits (1984) noted that many South African flowering plants were developed as horticultural crops in Europe, but despite early attempts to cultivate proteas in Europe their specialized horticultural requirements prevented them from incurring