

Plant of the Week

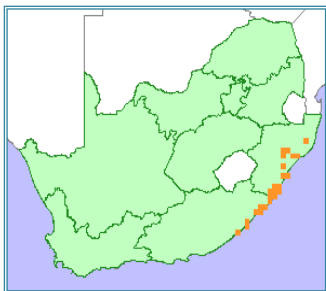
Plectranthus

'Mona Lavender'



Plectranthus 'Mona Lavender' is a popular garden plant but was only recently bred by Roger Jacques from two species of *Plectranthus* in Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, Cape Town, South Africa. When we think of South African flora, Proteaceae species such as *Protea*, *Leucodendron* and *Leucospermum* and cycads, such as *Encephelartos* and *Stangeria* immediately come to mind. However southern Africa is also a centre of diversity of *Plectranthus*, a genus in the family Lamiaceae, a widespread (cosmopolitan) family, with ~ 7000 species in ~ 235 genera², including many herbs with fragrant leaves, such as thyme, rosemary, oregano, mint, sage, basil, majorum and lavender and also the Australian mint bushes (*Prostanthera*) and coastal rosemary (*Westringia*). Australia has 22 endemic species of *Plectranthus*, one of which, *P. parvifolius*, is common in Sydney bushland gullies³.

Plectranthus 'Mona Lavender' is an *interspecific hybrid* between *Plectranthus saccatus* (female parent) and *P. hilliardiae* (male parent) and was the result of a very prolonged breeding program in the late 1990s⁴, made even more difficult because *P. saccatus* blooms during the **summer** while *P. hilliardiae* flowers in **winter**⁵!



Left:
Plectranthus saccatus
Right:
Plectranthus hilliardiae



¹ South African National Biodiversity Institute: <http://www.plantzafrica.com/plantnop/plectranmonlav.htm>

² Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plectranthus>

³ Plantnet: <http://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/NSWfl.pl?page=nswfl&lvl=gn&name=Plectranthus>

⁴ Missouri Botanical Garden: <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/gardens-gardening/your-garden/plant-finder/plant-details/kc/j560/plectranthus-mona-lavender.aspx>

⁵ Florida Friendly Plants: <http://floridafriendlyplants.com/Blog/post/2010/04/03/Plectranthus-Mona-Lavender-Excels-in-Florida.aspx>

Maps: Modified from Red List of South African Plants: <http://redlist.sanbi.org/species.php?species=1671-77>
<http://redlist.sanbi.org/species.php?species=1671-41>