



Aloe thraskii* and *Aloe arborescens

Aloe thraskii is the hallmark aloe of the subtropical coastline, making a stately feature and growing over 3 meters in height on its single stem. *Aloe arborescens* is a multistemmed spreading aloe, widespread in South Africa, and although not naturally found on the coast, it will thrive happily in sandy conditions.

Chrysanthemoides monilifera This is a great choice as it is an easy grower with yellow daisy flowers, but I use it with great discretion as it gets enormous and tends to dominate other plants. It also seeds profusely and pops up all over the place. Great for a quick large windbreak.

***Cliffortia ferruginea* 'Sandy Bay'** This is a flattish evergreen spreading plant with surprisingly smart glossy-green leaves, giving a lovely bright fresh look. It will happily spread over mounds or dangle out of containers and looks great all year round, from the Cape to the West Coast.

Cotyledon orbiculata This local succulent is very much the look of the moment with its great form, greyish colour and orangey flower spikes.



SANDS OF CHANGE

Landscape designer Franchesca Watson looks at the best plants for seafront dune gardens

DEVELOPING A GARDEN REALLY close to the sea is a daunting prospect. One is faced with pure sand, salt in both air and soil, and winds varying from breezy to galeforce. Plants are battling against dessication from relentless sun and wind, and often, as is the case on the West Coast, almost no rain to speak of. The further away from the actual sea, the easier it gets, but many beach properties in South Africa are literally behind the first dunes, something that is changing as planners become concerned about the negative effects such close development has on the environment. Having built gardens in these zones in Cape Town and up the West

and East Coasts, I have developed a palette of plants that will hardly ever let you down, provided you allow them to establish themselves with regular water and a bit of compost. Once established, one can wean them off the water and put your trust in Mother Nature, and you will probably lose only a small percentage. In winter-rainfall regions, this is problematic in itself because the plants will be dry and a bit stressed looking just when you want them to look their best – during the Christmas holidays – so you have to consult your conscience about whether to water a little bit or not.

■ *Franchesca Watson* ☎ 082 808 1287

PHOTOGRAPHS: INTERIOR ARCHIVE; FRITZ VAN DER SCHULENBERG; WATERWISE GARDENING IN SOUTH AFRICA BY ERNST VAN JAARSVELD (RANDOM HOUSE STRUIK-STRIJK LIFESTYLE); GARDEN WORLD IMAGES; ANNEKE KEARNEY

Dipogon lignosus This is a creeper which can often be seen scrambling around on top of coastal shrubs, very close to the ocean. It has heavenly fuschia-pink sweet-pea-like flowers.



Ecbium candicans - Pride of Madeira A large striking plant with well-shaped greyish leaves and long upright spikes of long-lasting blue flowers. I love it massed as it's big and beautiful and hard to mix into other plantings.

Euclea natalensis This is a lovely evergreen tree found along the coast from the Eastern Cape northwards. It's chunky rather than graceful, but has a great bulky texture and smart dark-green leaves

Euphorbia mauritanica Another great local, it has a sculptural form with a strange vertically linear effect and sprays of yellowish flowers in late winter and early spring.



Ficus burtt-daveyii A most useful and unusual member of the African fig family, which in coastal conditions with wind will remain low. It's a neat evergreen and infinitely clippable.



Gazania One of many kinds of African Daisy, *G rigens* is the best for coastal conditions. There are clump and spreading varieties, but all act as a low-flowering groundcover.

Lavender This plant also likes hot dry conditions (within reason) and will not faint at wind and salt.

Limonium perezii Also known as Statice, this plant is from the Canary Islands and flowers profusely, bearing papery blue flowers, but needs a good clean out once a year. *Limonium capensis* is the indigenous version from the Cape, with pink flowers, but has a shabby growth habit, so it's best grown amongst something else, like restios.



Metalasia muricata Stalwart of the Cape Coastal region and the West Coast, the ubiquitous 'Blombos' has very fine silvery-green foliage, can be clipped if you do it often enough, and is very reliable. Gets a bit woody with age though.

Phyllica ericoides This is a real favourite of mine for the Cape region. It's a neat fine buchu - like bush which I love for its lovely rounded shape, starry white blooms and year-round good looks.



Rosemary All kinds of culinary rosemary will withstand coastal conditions - my favourite is the little prostrate one, but the larger bushes are just as happy. Better for winter-rainfall regions as it originates in the Mediterranean.

Sideroxylon inerme and Mimusops caffra These are the milkwood trees, white and red respectively. *M caffra* is the East Coast more subtropical one, while *S inerme* grows all around our coasts. Keep in mind that they are protected and can't be removed once planted.

Tarchonanthus camphoratus and Brachylaena discolor The large shrubs of *Tarchonanthus camphoratus* and *Brachylaena discolor* make great backbone plants and can be trained as trees. They will also make great hedges when clipped.



Osteospermum fruticosum The Trailing African Daisy - a plant for sun or shade, with clear shiny-white daisy flowers. Happy in sandy conditions all around our coasts.

OTHER USEFUL PLANTS: *Myrica chordata*, *Scirpus nodosus*, *Didelta carnosus*, *Salvia africana-lutea*, *Nylandtia spinosa*, *Rhus natalensis*.