

PLANT OF THE MONTH

LANDSCAPING DEPARTMENT

CAPE THATCHING REED



Elegia tectorum

Cape Thatching Reed/Dekriet

PLANT TYPE: RESTIO

SA DISTRIBUTION: EASTERN CAPE, WESTERN CAPE

SOIL TYPE: SANDY, LOAM

FLOWERING SEASON: AUTUMN

PH: ACID, NEUTRAL

FLOWER COLOUR: BROWN

ASPECT: FULL SUN

As autumn settles over the Garden Route, softer light and cooler evenings remind us of the quiet strength of the Cape landscape. This month we celebrate *Elegia tectorum*, commonly known as Cape Thatching Reed – a graceful and architectural indigenous plant that brings movement, texture, and heritage into our gardens. Subtle yet striking, this reed is deeply rooted in the natural identity of the Western Cape.

DEKRIET



Characteristics

Elegia tectorum is a tall, clump-forming restio that can reach heights of **1.5 to 2 metres**. Unlike grasses, restios have jointed, leafless stems that perform photosynthesis, giving the plant its elegant, upright appearance. The stems are deep green, slender, and slightly arching, creating soft movement in the breeze — an effect that adds life and rhythm to the landscape.

In **late summer** and **autumn**, the plant produces small brown flower spikelets at the tips of the stems. While not showy in a traditional sense, they add subtle seasonal interest and texture.

This species thrives in **full sun** and prefers **well-drained, sandy soils**. It is well adapted to winter rainfall regions and, once established, requires minimal supplemental watering. Like many fynbos species, it does not respond well to heavy fertilising and prefers soils that are low in nutrients.

CAPE THATCHING REED



Why The Cape Thatching Reed?

Elegia tectorum is an excellent Plant of the Month choice, combining natural beauty with impressive resilience. As an indigenous fynbos species, it is **perfectly adapted to the Western Cape climate**, thriving in sandy soils and requiring minimal water once established.

Its fine, reed-like stems introduce a soft, architectural texture, adding movement and contrast without overpowering surrounding plants. It is especially effective in modern, **waterwise landscapes** and **rehabilitation areas**, where a natural and low-maintenance aesthetic is preferred.

Beyond its visual appeal, it **supports local biodiversity** by providing habitat for small insects and birds. It also reflects the region's ecological heritage, making it a meaningful addition to gardens that aim to celebrate indigenous planting and long-term environmental sustainability and overall landscape harmony.