*Leptospermum scoparium sp.* (Tea Bushes)

Brilliant, bright and bold – Leptospermum is a plant that will perform spectacularly in gardens throughout South Africa.

*Leptospermums* are indigenous to both Australia and New Zealand where they are commonly called ‘Tea Tree’ and in the latter, ‘Manuka’.

The common name ‘Tea Tree’ is derived from the practice of early Australian settlers who soaked Leptospermum leaves in boiling water to brew a herbal tea rich in Vitamin C. It is further suggested that this tea was used by Captain Cook himself, to prevent scurvy amongst his crew.

In New Zealand, Leptospermum has health benefits more closely associated with Manuka Honey which is produced from bees feeding on the Leptospermum flowers. This honey has strong antibacterial and antifungal properties.

Leptospermums are a vast and diverse species, with several varieties making superb garden plants with low maintenance and hardy properties.

Leptospermum ‘Cherry Brandy’ is a popular dwarf cultivar that grows to a height of around 0.5m. This compact evergreen variety produces a mass of ‘cherry red’ flowers during flowering, resulting in a blaze of brilliant colour that will transform any flower bed! The small leaves are aromatic and dark green in colour with wine red tinges. New foliage growth is brilliant red in colour and as such Leptospermum ‘Cherry Brandy’ is almost always in some form of colour in the garden.

Leptospermums should be transplanted with care but once established are easy to grow requiring low maintenance. They perform well in full sun positions and prefer sandy, well composted soils with good drainage being essential. They also make excellent container plants!

Leptospermums are hardy, drought and wind tolerant plants that perform well in sandy coastal conditions and tolerate salt spray. As they thrive in dry conditions they are an excellent water-wise plant that can be grown successfully in most parts of the country.

Leptospermum ‘Cherry Brandy’ is at its best during August and September but buds can start to develop as early as May giving it a very long flowering season. Stunning specimens will be readily available through retailers throughout the country at this time.