*Withania somnifera*

Ashwagandha / Indian Ginseng

This tough garden shrub is grown for its incredible resilience to all weather conditions and suits water wise gardens perfectly.

It generally grows in dry regions in Indian, Africa, Arabia and Southern Chine where it will cope with temperatures from 40 ◦ to 10◦ or flourish in gardens at sea level or up to 1500m above sea level.

As a medicinal plant Withania has played a huge part in ancient Chinese, African and Indian medicines. Its roots are still used today in the form of a powder or its leaves as a tea or poultice. Universities worldwide are currently studying its ability to help with cancers, cholesterol, diabetes and anxiety. It is said to boost antioxidants in the body and regulates the immune system.

The Indian word Ashwagandha means ‘horse sweat’ and refers to the strong odour of the roots. The National Herbarium in Pretoria also makes mention of the strong smell when it gives reference to the traditional uses of Withania somnifera in South Africa (B. Maguire 2215, Namibia, 1953) 'the fruits and flowers are used by Bushmen for 'charm' purposes in lion hunting.'  (W. Giess 9733, Namibia, 1967) 'Bushmen burn the roots in a fire to keep lions away.'...maybe it can be used to help keep pets out of certain parts of the garden?

Withania in a garden becomes a tall deciduous shrub which develops long canes that become covered in attractive red berries. These are loved by birds! Flowering time in South Africa is generally October to June with the fruit appearing in the early summer months.

In its natural environment it will grow in the sun in shallow rocky soil, however for best results use a well mulched soil and regular water to establish, once established it is water wise!

The plant can be left to trail along the ground or staked to create a 1, 5 - 2m high shrub. This makes it excellent for hedging and screening.