

**Sutherlandia frutescens**

Sutherlandia frutescens is an indigenous shrub known as the Cancer Bush, Balloon Pea, Blaasbossie or Hoenderbelletjie. It occurs naturally throughout the dry parts of South Africa.

This evergreen shrub has greyish-green leaflets which give the bush a silvery appearance. The leaves have a bitter taste.

Sutherlandia is a fast growing shrub which enjoys the full sun and tolerates all soil types. It needs average water and is tough, hardy and drought tolerant.

Orange-red, pea-like flowers appear on the tips of the branches from spring to mid-summer. Sunbirds pollinate these bright flowers.

The fruit is a large, bladder-like, papery, inflated pod which is almost transparent. This dries well and can be used to create interest in dried flower arrangements. The lightweight papery inflated pods enable the seed to be easily dispersed by wind. Although Sutherlandia does not have a long lifespan it easily re seeds itself in a garden.

The Cancer Bush is a multi-purpose medicinal plant. The parts of the plant most commonly used are the dried twigs and leaves. It is said to improve appetite and weight gain in cancer patients and is an immune booster in the treatment of HIV/AIDS. It is also said to be a gentle tranquiliser that decreases anxiety and irritability. As a good general medicinal plant it is used to help stomach ailments, diabetes, rheumatism, eye infections and much more.

Do plant a Sutherlandia, it is an attractive shrub in the garden and its contrasting bright orange flowers make an eye catching point of interest.