

The heather

Erica scoparia.

Family: Ericaceae.

Origin: Europe, Turkey, and Africa, especially South Africa.

This species consists of more than 500, evergreen plants ranging in size from dwarf shrubs to small trees. The foliage comes in colors gold, silver, red, gray, and a range of greens. The plant bears delicate flowers in an array of colors from snow white to lavender to scarlet. These plants are commonly known as Heathers.

Light: A heather should be positioned in full sun, and if possible, sited south, as foliage heathers always show more flowers on their southern side. But be always very careful to keep the soil humid all the time.

Temperature and exposure: Heathers resists freezing temperature. Be sure to provide them plenty of moisture before the soil of the pot freezes in wintertime. The more light you can get, better for the growth.

Pruning and cleaning: After the flowering season, prune half of previous year's growth for to encourage bushy growth. Always care to trim off broken branches.

Repotting / Soil: Repot every year, as the growth of the roots is quite vigorous, eliminating one half parts of the fine roots and plant in a bigger pot. Be always sure to eliminate dry or rotten roots. Try to loosen the fine roots. I prefer blue colored pots with circular and semicircular forms. The mixture of Sand, pea grit, or perlite should be perfect for the most erica species, as they prefer poor grounds.

Wiring: It is quite difficult to wire heathers, as the wood can only be bent in its very early stage of life. After that, it splits very easily. The most of modeling is done by pruning.

Watering: Water abundantly in spring and summer and keep moist in winter. It is good to shower or vaporize the trees several times a day, but not in the flowering season.

Fertilizer: Organic solid fertilizer should be used. Appliance starting in march, reducing the dose during the hot summer days and stopping completely at the end of november.

Diseases: I have had aphids and red spider mite on my tree, which I both eliminated keeping the whole tree under water for two days.