

## Ajuga australis – Austral Bugle

A small, perennial herb with a basal rosette of leaves and soft, erect stems and occurrence in the wild is widespread, occurring from Queensland south to Tasmania and west to South Australia. It takes a range of climatic conditions and is both frost and drought tolerant.

The leaves are velvety, toothed and decrease in size towards the flower spikes. The flowers are usually deep blue, or purple but pink and white forms are also known. They are around 15mm long, somewhat tubular in shape and have a short upper lip and a long, spreading lower lip. Flowers are seen mainly in spring and summer, with a peak from September to November.

Although not widely cultivated, *A. australis* is a useful small plant which deserves to be better known. Plants prefer semi shade but tolerate full sun and extended dry periods once established. It is also tolerant of at least moderate frosts. It will succeed in a range of soils except those which are poorly drained.

### Propagation

**WHEN TO SOW** - In warm areas or in a glasshouse at any time. In frost prone areas sow when danger of frost has passed.

**WHERE TO SOW** - full sun/part shade any soil garden or pot.

**SOWING** - sow in good quality seed-raising mix - these seeds require no pretreatment to promote germination. Sow seeds on top of the media and compress lightly then cover lightly. Keep moist. Cover with clear polythene until germination in 2-5 weeks.

Transplant to individual containers when large enough to handle. Keep well watered. Pot on or plant out as desired after the plant reaches 25cm plus. Water in well and water regularly until established and then when required in dry weather. Use a light application of low phosphate organic fertiliser. Protect from slugs and snails.