

Scientific Name:

Crocoshia aurea

Common Names:

falling stars, valentine flower, montbretia (Eng); sterretjies, valentynsblom (Afr); umlungu, udwendweni (isiZulu)



Photo credit: Kerileigh Lobban

Conservation Status

DD	LC	NT	VU	EN	CR	EW
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Least Concern (LC)

Plant Type / Size Deciduous, perennial bulb / Medium

A member of the Iridaceae (or Iris) family. A fast growing, clump forming and very attractive garden plant that produces bright star shaped orange or yellow flowers in a branched inflorescence at the end of a flower stalk. The tall stalks are stunning as cut flowers in a vase. Flowers produce leathery orange capsules, which contain shiny, purplish, black, rounded seeds. It is a hardy, deciduous, perennial bulb that is often found in large colonies in forests or forest margins. Leaves have a distinct midvein that forms a stem at the base.

Flowering Season:

February to May

Spring	Summer	Autumn	Winter
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Drought Tolerance

Low	Moderate	High
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Gardening Skill Needed

Low	Moderate	High	Expert
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Very hardy plants

Pot Plant Potential

Poor	Moderate	Good	Excellent
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Use clay or concrete pots because the roots are sharp and strong and can easily damage weaker pots.

Water Regime

Water well in summer.



Soil Type

Loam

Ideal Position

Semi-shaded areas.

Natural: in moist habitats e.g. stream banks, wooded kloofs, and forest margins.



How to Propagate

Seeds: A vigorous self seeder if left. Hand sow seeds in a compost-based growing medium and keep moist. Keep in a warm environment until the plant is established. Will take two years before the first flowers appear.

Splitting Corms: Corms will multiply rapidly if left undisturbed. Corms can be split – best in August and September. Plant corms about 4 cm deep in well-mulched compost.

Uses

Ornamental: Excellent filler and container plant. Fruits are orange red with shiny black seeds and are beautiful in dry arrangements as they keep their colour for a long time.



Medicinal: To treat dysentery.



Animal Interaction / Ecology

Seeds are eaten by birds. Bush pigs feed on the corms. Flowers attract bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects including moths in the early evenings.



Fun Fact

The genus name is derived from the Greek words *krokos* and *osme* translated as “saffron odour” - because when dried flowers are placed in warm water they emit a strong smell of saffron. “*aurea*” means “golden” and refers to the glorious vibrancy of the orange flowers.