

## **New Zealand Tea Tree**

Leptospermum scoparium; Myrtaceae

**Planting Zone:** 14-24 (Sunset)

**Size of plant:** height 6-15 feet; spread 3-6 feet

**Bloom description and season:** ½-1" single or double showy flowers in red, pink or white petals surround a hard center cone that matures into a woody capsule that remains on tree long after petals drop. Profuse blooms in spring, some visible into summer.

**Exposure:** Full sun

**Pruning needs:** Minimal. Thin growth to shape while young; avoid pruning bare wood as new growth is unlikely. Older, bare-based or overgrown shrubs can be trimmed into small trees.

**Water needs:** Minimal once established, depending on soil, sun, wind conditions and winter rainfall. Water to a depth of two inches in summer for the first two years.

**Description:** Long-lived evergreen ornamental shrub originally from Australia and New Zealand, used by natives as a source of Vitamin C (brewed tea, beer), medicine, essential oils and honey. Thrives in coastal conditions; tolerates poor soil but well-drained soil that is slightly acidic. Feed annually with 12-12-12 fertilizer (half-strength to prevent root burn) in early spring before new growth appears; water in thoroughly. Add mulch to suppress weeds and decrease water evaporation. The Tea Tree works well in containers, coastal and rock gardens, and as a border, while considering the space needed for a full-grown tree. Bees, butterflies and birds are attracted to the slightly fragrant foliage, and it is deer resistant. Overall, the plant is pest-resistant, but may be susceptible to scale and thrips.

Polly Nelson UCCE Master Gardener