

Sustainable Wild Buchu Harvesting Guideline

In collaboration with the Buchu Association and Cape Nature



Agathosma Species (buchu)

Buchu is a treasured plant native to South Africa’s unique fynbos biome. There are two primary species, *Agathosma betulina* (featuring diosphenol and isomenthone chemotypes) and *Agathosma crenulata*. Both species are widely valued in medicinal, flavour, and fragrance industries.

Botanical Description

Buchu is a fragrant, multi-stemmed perennial shrub with finely serrated aromatic leaves containing oil glands that release a peppermint-like scent. During flowering, buchu displays numerous large, singular, 5 petaled star-shaped-flowers in white to pink/purplish colours.

Agathosma betulina



Agathosma crenulata



A. betulina, known as short-leaf buchu, features round, dark green leaves with distinct downward curved apex, while *A. crenulata* termed long-leaf buchu, displays narrow, light green leaves with a less defined downward curved apex.

The Botanical Differences

	<i>A. betulina</i>	<i>A. crenulata</i>
Common name	Round-leaf buchu, short buchu and Bergbuchu (found at higher, drier altitudes).	Oval-leaf buchu, Long-leaf buchu, Vleibuchu (found at lower, wetter altitudes), Boombuchu (tall plant structure displaying apical dominance).
Leaf shape	Distinctive broad, dark green leaves.	Narrow, light green, oval-shaped leaves.
Leaf apex	Well-defined, downwards-curved apex.	Less-defined, uniform- downwards curved apex.
Flower colour	Varying shades of pink, mauve and off-white colours.	Pure white flowers.
Height	Grows to 1-1.5m	Grows to 1.5-5m
Chemotypes	Diosphenol and Isomenthone.	None.
Vegetative growth colour	Diosphenol chemotype features dark red-growing tips while Isomenthone features light green growing tips.	Features light green growing tips.
Harvesting period	From December to end of April for optimal oil yield and quality. Use pruning shears/ secateurs rather than a sickle for a cleaner and therefore more sustainable cut.	



Harvesting Technique

A. betulina

Contains a lignotuber and is a robust resprouter. It can withstand hard cutbacks up to 15cm above ground.

A. crenulata and hybrid

Has no lignotuber and requires careful harvesting treatment. It may not survive hard cutbacks through its woody stem, unless critical leaf foliage is present under the cut mark. Harvest up to 40cm above the ground in a lollipop shape, protecting its central stem. For larger plants cut 2/3 of the plant leaving 1/3 unharvested- cut higher than previous harvest.

Always leave some stems unharvested on each plant for seed reproduction.

Rotational Harvesting

To ensure regrowth and seed production, leave areas untouched for 2-3 years where possible. Alternatively, leave every second or third plant unharvested to ensure future harvests.

Selective Harvesting

Harvest mature, multi-stemmed plants with high foliage-to-stem ratio only – let young plants mature for future harvests.

When Not To Conduct Wild Harvesting

During the flowering season (May-November) and seeding season (September-November), it enters its most vulnerable reproductive phase with highest pulegone levels. Avoid harvesting buchu with flowers and unopened seed pods to prevent reproductive disruption.

Indication of Poor Harvesting Skill

Material containing stones, sticks, very woody stems with limited leaves, presence of flowers, closed seedpods and non-buchu plants that could result in contamination.

Transport and Storage

Transport in woven bags to ensure sufficient ventilation. Store buchu in cool, shady area to preserve its volatile oils. Harvest material that is compacted would accelerate oxidation and the fermentation process, degrading the quality. Deliver harvested material within 24hrs to maintain quality.

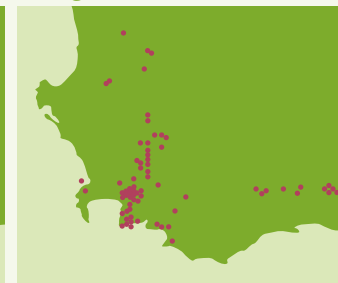


Distribution Range

Agathosma betulina



Agathosma crenulata



Source: GBIF

A. betulina is located from Clanwilliam-Tulbagh and *A. crenulata* from Tulbagh-Stanford. Hybrid buchu is found in the overlapping distribution range (Winterhoek and Witzenberg area).

Permit compliance with Cape Nature

Trading buchu requires a permit from Cape Nature, costing R250* per season.

*2024 rates

Cape Nature Paarl

27 Mill Street, Lemoenkloof, Paarl
Andrie Brink: 021- 871 1535
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Cape Nature Porterville

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Donny Malherbe: 022 - 931 2900 or 082 455 5569
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Poachers face fines or criminal charges for possession and trespassing. Report poaching to Cape Nature 022 931 2900.

buchu
ASSOCIATION

 **CapeNature**