



photo: C. Miller

Dianella longifolia



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Daniella longifolia is a tufted perennial herb with fleshy-fibrous or tuberous roots [12]. Common names are Spreading Flax Lily [2], Pale Flax Lily [13], Smooth Flax Lily [10], Smooth-leaved Flax Lily and Greater Blueberry Lily [6].

Population map:

www.ala.org.au/explore/species-maps/

Natural Populations

Daniella longifolia occurs in all Australian states. It prefers a protected position in moist, well-drained soil and semi-shade [6] and is found in sclerophyll forests, woodlands [2], grasslands [11] and mallee [10].

There are 5 varieties: *D. longifolia* var. *stenophylla*, *D. longifolia* var. *longifolia*, *D. longifolia* var. *grandis*, *D. longifolia* var. *stupata*, *D. longifolia* var. *surculosa*. [14].

Flowering and Seeds

The whitish to dark blue or blue-green flowers are found mostly from October to December [11].

The fruit is a fleshy berry to 7 mm diameter containing about 5 seeds. The fruits turn purple and soft with the seeds inside becoming shiny black and hard when mature, usually from late October to January.

Collect ripe fruits by hand into plastic bags [1, 3]. The fruit is consumed and seeds possibly dispersed by birds [11].

Cultivation and Uses

D. longifolia is grown from seed, although results can be erratic for some varieties [4]. Clean fresh fruit from the seed with sieves (soak in water to soften) and then soak in soapy water (velvet soap is recommended [4]) for 24 hours before sowing to improve germination [3]. Light scarification of the seed with sandpaper has also been recommended [2, 4].

Seed retains viability for 6-12 months, although fresh seed is recommended [4, 6]. Seed may take 4 months to germinate [3]. Smoke treatment significantly increased results for *D. revoluta* and may enhance results with other *Dianella* species [4].

Propagation by division is easier than by seed [10]. Plants are easily divided in winter when the ground is moist [2]. It also can be propagated from aerial growths [6].

D. longifolia is widely used in revegetation work. It is also an attractive drought-tolerant and frost-tolerant plant for the garden, long-lived once established [6, 8].

Adverse impacts include fertiliser and grazing. The species resprouts after fire [11] and persists regardless of mowing and slashing [13].

D. longifolia var. *grandis* is believed to have medicinal properties. Root extracts have demonstrated antiviral activity [7]. The leaf fibres were used, fruits eaten raw and the roots pounded and cooked on hot rocks by indigenous people [7]. The long leaves of *D. longifolia* have strong silky fibres and are suitable for baskets [2] and cord [6].





To source seeds or plants:
www.grassywoodlands.org.au

References

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- [2] Walker, K., Burrows, G., and McMahon, L. (2001). *Bidgee Bush, An identification guide to common native plants species of the South Western Slopes of New South Wales*. Greening Australia, South West Slopes.
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- [9] Duncan, D. (2003). Pollination of Black-anther Flax Lily (*Dianella revoluta*) in Fragmented New South Wakes Mallee. *A report to the Australian Flora Foundation*. School of Botany and Zoology, Australian National University, Canberra. Online: http://www.aff.org.au/Duncan_Dianella_final.pdf

Internet links

- [7] Department of Environment and Natural Resources: http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/pdfs/regional_recovery/flora/dianella-longifolia-var-grandis.pdf
- [8] Victorian Flora: <http://www.victorianflora.wmcn.org.au/plantDetail.php?plantno=127.00000>
- [10] Australian National Botanic Gardens & Australian National Herbarium, Harden Species List: <http://www.anbg.gov.au/greening-grainbelt/harden-species-list.xls>
- [11] The Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust: http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/science/Evolutionary_Ecology_Research/Ecology_of_Cumberland_Plain_Woodland/woodland_plants/dianella_longifolia
- [12] PlantNET National Herbarium of New South Wales: <http://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/NSWfl.pl?page=nswfl&lvl=sp&name=Dianella~longifolia>
- [13] Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, Threatened Flora of Tasmania: [http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter-nst/Attachments/LJEM-74ZUTS/\\$FILE/Dianella%20longifolia%20var.%20longifolia.pdf](http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter-nst/Attachments/LJEM-74ZUTS/$FILE/Dianella%20longifolia%20var.%20longifolia.pdf)
- [14] Australian National Botanic Gardens & Australian National Herbarium, Australian Plant Census <http://www.anbg.gov.au/cgi-bin/apclist>