



The honeybush industry generates locally important income for processors, farmers and harvesters in the mountainous areas of the Eastern and Western Cape Langkloof and beyond. Remarkably, 85% of the annual crop of about 350 tons of tea comes from wild harvested honeybush plants, mostly *Cyclopia intermedia* or Bergtee. Concern around the sustainability of wild harvesting has led to a call for guidelines for sustainable wild harvesting through Best Practice.



Wild honeybush plants are a remarkable resource for a farm— the crop grows in the wild mostly on mountain lands which are generally unsuitable for any other agricultural production. It needs no input of fertilisers, pesticides or herbicides and no fencing or irrigation. Being a local fynbos plant, honeybush thrives after a fire and can cope with drought. If managed sustainably it can yield a good cash income each year.



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The Wild Honeybush Harvesting Field Guide
<https://www.westerncape.gov.za/eadp/your-resource-library>

SUSTAINABLE HARVESTING OF WILD HONEYBUSH



**Western Cape
Government**

Environmental Affairs and
Development Planning

BETTER TOGETHER.

Best practice for wild honeybush harvesting

FARMERS

- Plan to manage your honeybush for the long term;
- Map and assess what honeybush you have;
- Decide on the best harvest interval to work with;
- Use an experienced/reputable harvest team;
- Make sure all permits are in order— Eastern Cape harvest permit, Western Cape transport permit (you will need to keep up to date with regulations);
- Always consider local weather patterns and fire history and adjust your plans accordingly;
- Get out in the field and monitor what the harvest team is doing.



HARVESTERS

- Get permission from a landowner to harvest on their land;
- Have an up-to-date harvest permit;
- Consult with the landowner about harvest interval and state of crop;
- Know the land boundaries of your harvest area and NEVER harvest in a protected area;
- Make sure your team knows what the plan is.



BERGTEE HARVESTING



- Choose mature plants with about four years growth with yellow, orange or brown stems;
- Don't cut young green stems – they don't make good tea!
- Cut close to the plant base for best regrowth with a sharp clean sickle or secateurs;
- For a two year harvest interval: cut 50% of the plants, cut one, leave one;
- For a four year harvest interval: cut 80% of the plants, cut four, leave one.

VLEITEE HARVESTING



- Harvesting of Vleitee should be seen as “pruning.” Take care to select and cut only some of the branches on a plant to avoid killing the plant.
- Choose tall, healthy plants with many branches for harvesting;
- Cut older side branches;
- Leave young branches to regrow;
- Only prune 50% of the branches;
- Always leave the main trunk uncut.



RESPECT FOR THE VELD

- All litter should be removed including water bottles, bundling twine, cigarette wrappers, food wrappers.
- If a cooking fire is made set it in a safe site, out of the wind, and put it out completely after use.
- Take care not to stand on honeybush seedlings or damage other plant species.
- Wire slides should be removed between seasons so that animals are not snared.
- Access roads should be adequately constructed to prevent erosion.