



## File 8 - Harvesting *Artemisia afra*

### 1. Harvesting conditions

It is very difficult to estimate *Artemisia afra* yield but one plant should provide curative and preventive treatments for several people!

One plant can produce 500g - 1.5kg dry leaf material per year with 3 to 4 cuts each year.

*Artemisia afra*, just like *Artemisia annua*, develops branches and grows better after cutting. Pruning and coppicing therefore provides branches to be dried for herbal tea and encourages ramification which leads to increased biomass production.

IMPORTANT: Do not use flowering branches for the production of herbal tea.

IMPORTANT: Leave the finest and most productive plants to flower to collect their seeds! (See File - [Seed Production](#)).

WHO strongly advises against harvesting in the rainy season because excess moisture promotes microbial fermentation and mould growth! [1]

*Artemisia afra* can be harvested throughout the year. Yields are higher in the rainy season.

The harvest should be carried out in the driest possible conditions (ideally in the middle of the day) and plant material should be dried immediately. [1]

All hygiene rules must be strictly observed!

**2. Harvesting:** once *Artemisia afra* is **over 50 cm high**, plants can be **pruned very lightly** for the first time. Plants may reach this height in the first month after transplanting, but sometimes it is necessary to wait over 3 months depending on growing conditions. The first harvest is small but will encourage ramification of the plant which will ensure a much higher production later on. Once established, this perennial plant will be more hardy and provide greater yields.

- In the dry season, if there is a lot of dust and soil on the plants, rinse plants in the morning of the day before harvest by watering abundantly with clean water!
- Cut off the year's growth with clean, dry secateurs.

*Artemisia afra* can withstand cutting if the tools are properly sharpened and do not damage the woody stems [2].

IMPORTANT: Do not cut lower than 50 cm or the *Artemisia afra* will die!

**Keep low hanging branches for layering!** (See file [Layering](#))

- Add 2 large handfuls of compost around the base of the plant to promote the recovery of development after each cutting.



Figure 1: pruning Artemisia plants (Agathe Cornet-Vernet)



**New growth can be pruned** as soon as the plants reach a good size again and the climate is suitable for correct drying.

Care should be taken to ensure that no foreign matter, weeds or toxic plants are mixed with the harvested medicinal plant material.

Harvested material that is damaged or decomposed should be retrieved and disposed of during and after harvesting to avoid microbial contamination and loss of product quality. [1]

**Harvested plant material must not be piled up on the ground.** Contact with soil should be avoided to minimise the microbial load of harvested medicinal plant materials. If necessary, large pieces of clean cloth can be laid on the ground to protect the crop. [1]

Harvested plant material must be collected in containers such as bags, baskets, wheelbarrows or trailers that are clean and dry. Residual moisture and possible contamination by soil or other materials must also be avoided. [1]

Equipment should be stored in a dry, pest-free place out of the reach of livestock and pets [1].

Mechanical damage or compaction of raw medicinal plant materials, such as from overfilling or stacking of bags, which may lead to spoilage or other loss of quality, should be avoided. [1]

### **Bibliography:**

1. World Health Organization. WHO guidelines on good agricultural and collection practices (GACP) for medicinal plants. 2003.

Available at: <https://www.who.int/medicines/publications/traditional/gacp2004/en/>

2. Anonymous. African wormwood production: Essential oil crops Production guidelines for African wormwood. Plant Production, Agriculture, forestry & fisheries department, RSA. 2009.

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