

# South African herbal teas: *Aspalathus linearis*, *Cyclopia* spp. and *Athrixia phylicoides*

## **abstract**

Rooibos (*Aspalathus linearis* (Brum.f) Dahlg.) and honeybush (*Cyclopia* Vent. species) are popular indigenous South African herbal teas enjoyed for their taste and aroma. Traditional medicinal uses of rooibos in South Africa include alleviation of infantile colic, allergies, asthma and dermatological problems, while a decoction of honeybush was used as a restorative and as an expectorant in chronic catarrh and pulmonary tuberculosis. Traditional medicinal uses of *Athrixia phylicoides* DC., or bush tea, another indigenous South African plant with very limited localised use as herbal tea, include treatment of boils, acne, infected wounds and infected throats. Currently rooibos and honeybush are produced for the herbal tea market, while bush tea has potential for commercialisation. A summary of the historical and modern uses, botany, distribution, industry and chemical composition of these herbal teas is presented. A comprehensive discussion of *in vitro*, *ex vivo* and *in vivo* biological properties, required to expand their applications as nutraceutical and cosmeceutical products, is included, with the main emphasis on rooibos. Future research needs include more comprehensive chemical characterisation of extracts, identification of marker compounds for extract standardisation and quality control, bioavailability and identification of bio-markers of dietary exposure, investigation of possible herb–drug interactions and plant improvement with regards to composition and bioactivity.