



CHS NEWS

MAY 2015

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NEXT MEETING

Mon, 1 June 2015 at 20:00 at The Athenaeum, Newlands
NB: R10 for members and R20 for visitors

NEXT OUTING

Sat, 6 June 2015 at 10:30: Visit the Namib Garden, a Nursery on the R27 (West Coast Road) about 30-40 minutes from Cape Town.

This fascinating nursery specialises in constructing cactus & succulent gardens for local and international corporate and residential clients. They source rare and unusual desert plants from around the world to complement their garden designs. There is a farm stall should you wish to partake of tea or lunch.

Let Glenda have your name as soon as possible, but not later than 4 June.

REPORT BACK

May Plant Table:

In the absence of Jenny Scarr, members gave the names of the plants they brought in.

Below, left to right

- Grown in Pinelands: *Hypoestes* and *Fuchsia* (does well in a sheltered spot)
- Grown in Constantia: *Mina lobata*

Following page, left to right

- In a Lakeside garden: *Hibiscus tiliaceus* (indigenous, flowers change from yellow to orange to the red in the photo), *Thunbergia grandiflora* (a climber), *Salvia oxiflora* (bright pink) and *Salvia microphylla* (blue, from Peru; does not like wind)
- From a Milnerton hot house: Bls Village Chief North 'Green Genius' (Sc Village Chief Cuba x Mem. Helen Brown) and the colour is Splash Petal

Also brought in (following page, bottom row):

- A plant that turned out to be something other than what it was meant to be. Do you have a name for it?
- *Salvia microphylla* "hot lips"

Members also asked if anyone had:

- Star of Bethlehem – white *Campanula isophylla*
- *Strobilanthes* – purple and silver leaves

Can you help? Let Glenda know.



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You may have noticed that some of the flowers brought to meetings are reported on in full, while others are not. The reason for this is that your Newsletter Editor is not a horticulturist and has to search for the information. This can only be done if full names (where possible) are given as this helps to narrow down the search on Google Images.

In future we are asking members to write their name, the name of the flower they are putting on display, as well as something about the plant – where it grows, how tall it gets, watering and feeding regimen etc – on the pieces of paper provided. Of course, if you'd prefer, you can write it out at home, as some members already do. Please place this piece of paper next to each of your plants. Jenny will use these



when she describes the plants at the meeting and will pass them on for the report-back in CHS News. We are, after all, trying to teach those who want to learn.

110th AGM:

Here follows the two reports presented at our AGM held on 4 May 2015 with 58 members and 6 visitors in attendance.

Our Chair's report:

We had a series of very interesting talks in 2014 beginning with Dick Stroh, a retired Environmental Engineer involved mainly with the underground environment on Group mines, on "Fire on the Helderberg" and consequent renewal on the fynbos.

The Overberg Renosterveld is a unique ecosystem found within the Fynbos Biome of South Africa, but is now a critically endangered habitat, on the brink of extinction. It contains the highest diversity of bulbous plants on earth, as well as hundreds of plants that are found nowhere else on the globe. Professor Charles Stirton made us aware of the diversity of the plant life in the area in a talk entitled "The Overberg Renosterveld – GOING, GOING NOT QUITE GONE YET."

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In April, Nazeer Sunday of Save the Phillipi Horticultural Area talked about concern that is felt over the City wanting to commandeer 570 hectares of the best agricultural land for a housing development when there is other land available that would be more suitable.

At last year's AGM John van der Linde told us of the time "when Marianne met Katharine," the story of two remarkable Victorian ladies, both botanical artists, and of their 1883 meeting, far away from their native land, on a sugar estate on the North Coast of colonial Natal.

John also wrote a tribute to John Winter who died in April 2014 which was published in our Newsletter. John Winter was Curator of the Gardens at Kirstenbosch and Deputy Director of the National Botanical Institute; and his place in botanical world will live on as he was honoured by having had an *Aloe*, an *Erica* and a *Leucospermum* named after him.

Morné Faulhamer, of Super Plants, gave us a talk on a topic we tend to leave to professionals – the "History, maintenance and construction of water features."

David Davidson was at his entertaining and insightful best regaling us with his view of "Chelsea 2014 and a few special English gardens."

Professor Eugene Moll was fascinating on Fairy Rings, and James Fisk, a qualified horticulturist, told us about the Hotel Verde, which has an eco-pool, a living wall and a green roof, in a talk entitled "Landscaping the greenest hotel in Africa."

This was followed up by a visit to the Hotel later in the year.

Dr Jackie King is an aquatic ecologist with 40 years' experience of ecological research, who was appointed as scientific advisor to the Government of Pakistan in a dispute with India over a dam in the Himalayas. Her talk, "From the high Himalayas to the Hague – the story of a beautiful river owned by two countries," covered the river, the people of Kashmir, and the court case at the Peace Palace in The Hague.

The last talk in the year was entitled "Islands on the edge – a botanical ramble on the islands of the United Kingdom given by David Davidson.

Our annual Flower and Garden Show took place on 6/7 September 2014 – Alphen Centre, Constantia organised for the first time by Rod Stewart, to whom we owe a great thank you for taking on the job.

As Rod says, it is an extremely important event on our calendar as it gives us a chance to exhibit and show the public what can be achieved in our gardens.

The Outings, apart from the Hotel Verde garden already mentioned we visited Pat Gardiner's garden in Tokai, the gardens of Cherry and Peter Mann, as well as that of Anne Langley, in Lakeside, and that of Jane and Gerald Robertson in Constantia.

Visits were also made to the Delaire Graff Estate in Stellenbosch, the Vineyard Hotel garden and the gardens of Abalimi Bezekhaya and the Vera School for Autistic Learners. The Centenary *Boomslang* walk over the tree canopy was also visited at Kirstenbosch. The visitors to the Arderne Gardens with Des Lazar were rewarded with the sight of the tree we planted in honour of Margherita Blaser's 100th birthday in 2004, a *Nothofagus moorei*, still flourishing 10 years on.

The CHS Book Prizes presented in 2014 went to Megan Blatchford (2nd year), Isabella Hayden (3rd Year) and Rebecca Wengrowe (BTech).

Our 'baby', FOTAG, turned 10 in 2014 and we took part in the Kirstenbosch Plant Fair

Now it is time for more thank yous. So on your behalf I have to thank the hard working committee who meet for heavy discussion and lots of laughter once a month.

Thanks, therefore, to Anne Bean for her continued Presidency of the Society; to Henry Diesveld who ably looks after our budget and the books; and to Bill Elder, aided by Rod Stewart, for looking after our technical needs; to Jenny Scarr who runs the Speaker Portfolio and puts her vast professional knowledge at members' feet at the Plant Table. Thanks also to Melanie Stewart who organises the Plant Sale and the Christmas Party.

Cherise Viljoen contributes vigorously with excellent ideas for outings; and our grateful thanks must go to Guy Carter for placing his vast accounting experience at our disposal as auditor.

Grateful thanks also to Glenda Thorpe, our organizational wizard who prepares agendas, writes letters, and keeps the Minute Book.

I offer sincere thanks to all members who give their time, hard work, inspiration and perspiration in propagating plants for The Nursery, who are willing helpers at the Plant Sale and ungrudgingly assist at The Spring Show. We now have a team of 10 ladies who take turns to organise the tea at meetings (Myra, Wilma, Judi, Angela, Janet, Jackie, Elwyn, Jenny, Anne and Vicki) so to them, many many thanks.

Cherry Mann and Jane Robertson now curate the CHS Nursery with plants that so many members bring to the sale table every Monday.

And so I finish with Voltaire's injunction through the mouth of Candide - "...go and work in the garden."

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Our Treasurer's Report:

"The Audited Financial Statements for the year ending 28 February 2015 have already been circulated and I will therefore only refer you to some of the key figures shown in these Statements.

INCOME STATEMENT

Total Income increased by 5% (R2 300), due to a 19% (R1 200) increase in admissions to monthly meetings and a 500% (R4 000) increase in donations – these were offset by a 14% (R3 100) decrease in subscriptions.

Total Expenses increased by 53% (R26 600), due to a R20 000 donation to the Harold Porter NBG and R8 600 for the purchase of a laptop. If these "abnormal" items are excluded, expenses actually reduced by 1%. A R5 000 reduction in the loss suffered at the spring show helped offset other normal expense increases.

The Net Result is that the Society showed a deficit of R29 124 (R1 759 excluding the abnormal items) vs a deficit of R4 784 the previous year.

BALANCE SHEET

The financial position of the Society however remains healthy with Accumulated Funds of R102 078. There is R5315 in the Society's Arderne Gardens Project account.

The Society's investments consist of a unit trusts portfolio. (48% in each of the Allan Gray's Balanced fund and in the Coronation's Strategic Income Fund with the balance in the AG money market fund.)

BUDGET 2015 - 2016

A budget has been drawn up based on the expected income and expenditure, which shows an expected loss of R 6100 for the next financial year. This indicates that we will have to either increase subs – normally not popular, or increase membership. Refer to the membership table, which indicates a steady decrease in membership in recent years– so get out there and get your friends, children and grandchildren signed up. The cost of printing and posting the monthly newsletters is presently about R68 per annum and in all likelihood, those members using snail mail will have to pay extra in future.

In closing, I would like thank, firstly all those members who either refrained from banking their subs directly into the CHS account, or who made an allowance for the bank charges in their renewals, thereby saving on bank charges to CHS's account, secondly those members who added a donation to cover the snail mail costs, and last but not least, to Guy Carter for auditing the Society's accounts and for his assistance and guidance in preparing the financial statements.

As a token of the Society's appreciation for the hours he devotes to this audit each year, we ask Guy to accept this small gift."

A few questions were put to the Treasurer:

Q1 Shouldn't the membership fees be increased?

A1 The new committee will discuss this and revert back to members. It is a fine balancing act because of members who are on fixed incomes and who may resign if the fee is too excessive.

Q2 How will the R29 000 shortfall be recovered?

A2 As the shortfall came from accumulated funds, no recovery will be necessary.

Melanie Stewart pointed out that the annual Flower Show and Plant Sale are both opportunities to bring in extra income.

The Treasurer also stated that the show is getting to a stage where expenses are increasing a lot faster than income, so he has budgeted for a R3000 loss. A solution would be to increase the entrance fee but this could keep people from attending if it were too high.

ELECTIONS

The current Committee Members were all prepared to stand, were nominated and unanimously elected to serve for another year. They are: Henry Diesveld, Bill Elder, Vicki Hitzeroth, Jane Robertons, Errol Scarr, Jenny Scarr, Melanie Stewart, Rod Stewart, Glenda Thorpe, Michael Tuffin and Cherise Viljoen. Office Bearers will be appointed by the elected Committee and if there are any changes to the portfolios, you will be advised.

Anne Bean was also unanimously re-elected as Honorary President of the Society.

Our Honorary Auditor, Guy Carter, was prepared to stand for another year and was duly elected.

MEET OUR BOOK PRIZE WINNERS:

First up is Joshua Butcher (Best B-Tech graduate in 2014):

"I am a 27 year old Horticultural student, currently doing my M-Tech through CPUT and working as a teacher's assistant.

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I came to horticulture through a series of fateful interchanges. To summarize, I started by working as a labourer for Longman's Landscaping in 2008. I spent 6 months with them picking up great exposure to the trade, and picking up useful gardening and landscaping skills, after which I began the Landscape Technology course at CPUT, doing little freelance garden projects in my free time. About 2 months into the course I realized that Horticulture was really the course for me and was luckily able to switch over without having any major catching up to do. Doing the 2nd semester propagation project got me hooked on growing plants – I began collecting all kinds, but succulents and bonsai were my first loves.

I spent my first internship or work in-service learning stint with Duncan Henderson at Fairholme Plants in Grabouw, and my last prac with Mandy Fick at New Plant Nursery in George. After finishing my diploma I stood in on contract for 9 months as the nursery manager/technician of the CPUT Cape Town campus.

During this time I qualified as an irrigation technician with the LIA. I was then able to travel to India as I had been practicing yoga for some time and was interested in doing some WWOOFing (World Wide Opportunities in Organic Farming) there. I spent 6 months in India from November 2012 to April 2013 wwoofing and doing yoga courses. Much of the work I did on the various farms revolved around irrigation and water management. I realized then that water and efficient irrigation practices were very misunderstood by many of these farmers and I wondered how this was reflected globally. This spurred me to continue my studies and conduct research based around water and how we utilize it in the agri-horticultural sector.

In 2014 I completed my B-tech and am now enrolled for the M-tech programme. My thesis title is 'The effects of structured water and self-organizing flow technology on the growth of *Pelargonium tomentosum*.' If you are interested in the research or need clarification as to what is involved I am happy to engage with you on this."



JOURNAL OF A HAPHAZARD GARDENER

From the batch of returned questionnaires, in which ideas were asked for, only one person came forward with an idea for the CHS News – and was even prepared to provide the articles! Peter Henshall will be writing monthly reports about the goings-on in his (lower) Claremont garden and anything else that takes his fancy.

"When I suggested to Glenda that I write up a journal about what happens in my garden and surrounds each month, I told her that originally I had thought I would name it *The Journal of a Lackadaisical Gardener*. I looked up the word and the definition of lackadaisical is 'lacking enthusiasm and thoroughness'. Not quite what I meant.

Glenda suggested some other headings like *Haphazard Gardening* and *Life in a Lower Claremont Garden* – which I liked. *Henshall's Horticultural Hints* was another. More like horticultural horrors – I'm no expert, so that heading had to go. Glenda also provided a synonym for lackadaisical – 'laid-back'. That's it – relaxed, calm and together. But, no, I've come to my senses – *The Journal of a Haphazard Gardener* it will have to be.

The plan is to write about the seasonal changes in my garden; plantings, successes and failures. It is a small plot that I have been pottering around in for thirty years. The soil is sandy with that 'oily' top layer reluctant to absorb any water. There will be comments about books and web sites that I have found useful. The many visitors to the garden will get a look in. I'm fascinated by the vicissitudes of the 'fynbos gardener', weeds and what grows in shady spots.

I'll begin with April/May. This means the Kirstenbosch Plant Fair. My idea this year was to concentrate on growing local bulbs. Top of the list was *Ixia viridiflora*, because I'm a masochist. (I had tried to grow these wonderful turquoise coloured bulbs years ago, with miserable results: they came up all spindly with tiny bedraggled flowers).

I realized that if I was going to find these bulbs still available, I would have to queue early. I was rewarded with the last packet. As I commented on my previous feeble results a guy standing nearby suggested that I plant them in a terracotta pot rather than a plastic one, which he had done with excellent results.

Kirstenbosch is not generous with their bulb packets: R30 for 5 bulbs. I decided therefore, to make certain that the potting medium was correct. Growing South African bulbous plants (1996) by Graham Duncan was dusted off. The 'more sand...the better' and the soil must drain easily. Duncan recommends 'equal parts river sand and industrial sand'. Our garden is full of sand and so I used that. To get the water to drain more easily I use lots of mulch. We now wait upon results. Two weeks later – nothing is showing above the ground.



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Three years ago I planted *Gladiolus carneus* (painted lady). 'Easily cultivated' according to Duncan and so they have proved to be; no feeding and left to themselves all summer (above).

The Graham Duncan book has been incorporated into *Grow Fynbos plants* by Neville Brown and Graham Duncan. It is part of the Kirstenbosch gardening series published by SANBI. I find the book a wonderful comprehensive guide to the Fynbos plants that I would like to plant. The pictures are an added bonus as they are a great help in the identification of the plants.

One of the most welcome visitors to our garden is the olive thrush. The males are looking very handsome at the moment. The 'wheet' sound, as he settles in the hawthorn tree to eat the berries, is magical. Unfortunately he also has the habit of searching for cutworms and other grubs, causing havoc in the containers. (I think he must be able to smell them over many metres). A friend has just had her newly planted *Moraea* bulbs thrown to the four winds by a visiting thrush. The parent of the cutworm larvae is the nocturnal owl moth which can lay up to 1 500 eggs at a time (lifeisagarden.co.za).

When discussing cutworms with fellow gardeners they seem to come in different shapes and sizes. The dark larvae are the 'real' cutworm while the white variety are the larvae of chafers and Christmas beetles. A website I found had a fascinating discussion by Tony Rebelo on Christmas beetles (ispotnature.org).

The hawthorn tree has also had visits from the Cape Robin, several White-eyes and Red-winged Starlings.



Disturbing the soil when preparing the containers for the bulbs has meant that they are also bulging with unwanted plants. The main weed of the moment is a spreading groundcover (left) with pretty bright blue flowers. I used the internet to try to discover its name, with no success. After good detective work, Glenda has tracked the beast down – its name is *Tradescantia*.

I once overheard a conversation in which a guy was talking about a fascinating book called *Weeds*. The author had worked in a London office and out of his window he noticed the many different weeds growing in every nook and cranny in the streets. He undertook some research and the fact that surprised him most was the remarkable survival strategies that they had developed over the centuries. I haven't been able to get rid of the little blue flower in the last 25 years.

When looking for the name of this weed in *The complete gardening book*, my eye caught the heading 'knee-pad' (pg. 110). I have a pair, given to me as a present by one of our daughters. They are wonderful. Kneeling to work on the ground has become a pleasure – well almost. They give with the weight of my body. I can move around more easily without having to creak up and down as I move around. (*The complete gardening book* by Sima Eliovson, 4th edition 1966)



I will leave you there until next time: on my knees, pulling out the weeds in the bulb containers.

My Plant of the Month

This is the *Streptocarpus saxorum* given to me as a cutting by a friend. It hangs on our west facing front stoep where it gets no direct sunlight but plenty of light. It has been there for three years and this is the first time it has flowered so well and for so long – over a month. It was planted in well composted soil with annual additions of compost and is watered regularly.



ITEMS OF INTEREST

Ikebana and Bonsai exhibition to be held from 1 – 4 July at the UCT Irma Stern Museum, situated in Cecil Road, Rosebank.

This is open from Tuesday to Friday from 10am-5pm and Saturday from 10am-2pm. Gated parking is available in Chapel Road. Further details will be available in June on the website: www.irmasternmuseum.org.za. For more details phone Mary van Blommestein on 021-685-5686.

(Photos provided by Andrew Thorpe, Google Images, Glenda Thorpe, Peter Henshall)