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## **NEXT MEETING**

**Mon, 4 April 2016 at 20:00** at The Athenaeum, Newlands.

R10 for members; R20 for visitors.

### **GOOD MORNING VIETNAM, HELLO SINGAPORE**

CHS member and journalist, **Marianne Alexander**, will take us on a whistle-stop tour introducing us to the plants, flowers, amazing vegetables, topiary, trees, weeds and landscapes from Halong Bay in the north to the Mekong delta in the south, followed by a wander-around the Botanical gardens in Singapore with its famous orchid garden and the new Gardens by the Bay.

## **EXTRA SPECIAL MEETING**

**This meeting will take place on TUESDAY, April 19<sup>th</sup> at 20:00 at Erin Hall, Erin Road, Rondebosch.**  
R10 for members; R20 for visitors.

(Erin Road is the little slip road off Camp Ground Road, before the Croquet Club; or off Belmont Road, first left after the lights at the Camp Ground Road/Liesbeek Parkway intersection. Legitimate car guards will be employed to protect our cars.)

### **A STROLL THROUGH THREE ALGARVIAN GARDENS**

**President of the Mediterranean Gardening Association of Portugal, Burford Hurry** (ex-South African), will be in Cape Town visiting family and has been persuaded to give us a talk. He was born in Johannesburg and began gardening at the tender age of seven when his mother put him in charge of a tiny rockery and has remained interested in gardening all his life. Burford arrived in historic Loule in 1986 and has been in his present garden for the past 14 years.

This talk will be an illustrated stroll through three MGAP member's gardens with a brief talk about our similar Mediterranean climates, our very different soils, as well as wind and fires.

For a sneak preview of his garden and a list of plants, have a look at the following link:

<http://portugalresident.com/my-mediterranean-garden-a-potted-version-0>

## **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

May: AGM followed by Adam Harrower – *The Remarkable Trees of Arderne Gardens*

June: Melanie and Rod Stewart – *New Plymouth gardens, New Zealand*

July: David Davidson – *Chelsea 2016*

*Subject to change without prior notice*

## **REPORT BACK**

### **March Plant Table:**

Jenny reports that if you're into spring bulbs you can start getting Lachenalia and Chasmanthe in now as they're responding to the change in temperature.

And, if you're watering your lawn, are you giving it fertilizer? She recommends Wonder Lawn and Leaf – slow release; 7:1:3.

Plants brought in by members:

*Hebe* – temperate but need quite a bit of water; come in blue, pink and white;

*Odontonema* – loved by sunbirds; *Polygala* "white feathers" – not as vigorous as the pink form; seen growing wild along a track beyond Worcester.

*Ophiopogon* (also Mondo grass) – Liliaceae family; nice ground cover; needs shade; shorter varieties can be used as alternative to grass – and doesn't need mowing.

*Orbea* (*Stapelia*) – from very arid areas

*Nerine*; *Vinca*; *Ruellia brittoniana* – Mexican Petunia; *Duvernoia adhatodoides*



*Zauschneria californica* (left, above) – tolerates sand or clay; good for hot, dry sandy soil, takes full sun

*Salvia clevelandii* (left, middle) – needs quite a lot of water

*Scadoxus membranaceus* (left, below) – even the stem has beautiful markings; makes lovely berries

*Hibiscus syriacus* (below, centre) – can be found at Stellenberg Gardens Nursery

*Hamelia* (below, right) – difficult to grow but putting a wet 'mat' below the pot under a cover helps to keep in the moisture without making the potting mix too wet. The tip cutting must be in a fairly dry mix and will rot if it gets too wet. Suggestion of a mix: Equal parts of peat, perlite and vermiculite as used for Fuchsias.



"Mystery" plant:

This plant (right) was propagated for, and bought at, our Plant Sale, but its name is not known.

Would the grower – or anyone else – please give us the name?

Plants brought to our March meeting and not shown here can be found on our Facebook page.

NB: Please use the pieces of paper provided at meetings to give your name, your suburb and your plant's name (if you know it), or the question you have about your plant. You could also do this at home to save time on your arrival. Place the note next to your "entry" to assist Jenny. These will also be used to compile this report back.



**SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL TIME**

54% of our membership has been renewed within the first month of our new financial year. Hopefully the other 46% will be paid up at our April meeting. In case you have mislaid the renewal form sent last month, another copy is enclosed (another separate e-mail attachment).

Please complete the renewal form and return it, with your payment, in whichever way is most convenient to you. Remember it is kinder on the Society's bank balance to bring cash or a cheque to a meeting or to put the cheque in the post. Individual ATM deposits (cash or cheque) incur unnecessary bank charges for the CHS.

Should a form not be completed correctly, or the surcharge paid, it will be assumed that you require an electronic newsletter.

Receipts and membership cards will be issued when both the form and payment have been received. Anyone not having renewed by the AGM in May will be removed from the membership database. And we really would not like to do that!

### **GARDENING THE PERMACULTURE WAY**

Ninon Carrington was part of the group who visited the Tokai garden of The Garden Coach, Saskia Schelling. Ninon gives us a brief synopsis of what we learnt:

- ✓ The whole garden has been laid out according to the permaculture principles that involve studying the direction of the wind and sun. Planting some plants on the southern boundary e.g. the fruit trees, was particularly because of this.
- ✓ When creating each bed one needs to dig down a metre and lay down cardboard, straw, woody bits, rock ash, green material, compost, newspaper, and manure in layers, but the vermi-compost was to be near the top. All this is then drenched with worm tea. Then one did not disturb the bed by digging ever again.
- ✓ Leaf litter is left to decay into compost.
- ✓ The pathways were laid out to give access to every bed without ever standing in the bed thereby preventing compaction of the soil.
- ✓ A small compost heap is easily accessible in the centre of the beds and creates planting room at the base to feed heavy feeders directly from the bottom of the structure.
- ✓ Veggies can also be groundcovers eg. butternuts, grown in the sun, but mealies are planted along a border where beans are also planted and allowed to grow up the stems.
- ✓ Other companion planting involved onions planted with anything; tomatoes with basil; potatoes with chillies and green peppers.
- ✓ Other trees on the property which were resistant to most bugs e.g. Tree tomatoes, Limes, Lemons, Cherry Guavas, Mulberries, Macadamias, Avocados and Custard apples did not need to be sprayed and are, therefore, more eco-friendly.
- ✓ Chickens were let out on occasion to help eat bugs but do not run free as they would polish off the veggies. Saskia, however, then has her own free range eggs.
- ✓ Saskia spoke about Heritage seed but has a very interesting concept of collecting her own seed by allowing a portion of the crop to go to seed and then storing those in her "seed bank".

As yet, the family pool has not been turned into an ecosystem but there are plans to do so in the near future, as that would be the final touch to be completely in tune with nature.

### **JOURNAL OF A HAPHAZARD GARDENER –MARCH/APRIL 2016**

So what do you think about as you water your garden with the hand hose? "Nothing much." was the first reply from one of a group of hiking friends. I confessed to counting to fifty as I watered each different section. There were one or two others who do the same. "After all, you must have some sort of system." "The counting also gets quicker as the hour proceeds." Ditto for me. One reply was that she was more aware of the state of her garden. My mind wanders off the counting to be replaced with: "Gosh are those weeds still there?" "Shame; look at the poor lawn." Another hiker found her lawn was happily invading her flower beds while withering in the actual lawn. "How is it possible for one short hose to get entangled with that pot, turn in the opposite direction to the one you want it to go and get knotted all at the same time?" The most irritating thing about the knotted hose is when the end of the hose jumps off the tap connection: water everywhere except where you want it. Another hiker said that she finds watering a peaceful, contemplative hour in her busy day. A neighbour, caught off-guard by the question, admitted that he was worrying about the unruly students at UCT and elsewhere.

The talk at the monthly meeting about the Stellenberg show garden left me gob smacked. I hadn't realized that South African gardens like Stellenberg are tourist attractions. It made me realize how much hard work goes in to the maintenance of such a garden: all that feeding, pruning of trees, shrubs and hedges, lawn mowing and deep watering. Not forgetting the dead heading – one of those tasks I always mean to do. I was also inspired to start a white garden by a visit to Sissinghurst. When we visited the garden it was only open in the afternoon, as the mornings were spent checking the quality of the plants, pulling out the faded ones and replacing them with a fresh batch. I was scornful about this – surely the visitors should take the garden as it is? Now I realize why they do. This is a show-piece garden.

In our white garden we don't have to 'lift the perennials' in April and plant new ones in August and pull them up again in January. It consists mainly of two shrubs *Carissa macrocarpa* (Num-num) and *Eriocephalus africanus* (Wild Rosemary). The *Polygala myrtifolia* 'White feathers' (below, left) is desperately trying to show its flowers at the moment. There are also a *Dietes grandiflora* (Wild iris) and a grass with attractive fluffy white flowers. The creeper

with, at the moment, its occasional scented white flowers is *Jasminum angulare*. The *Euphorbia Kilimanjaro* (below, right) given to me as a present, is a wonderful plant as it needs no attention and flowers for long periods. Groundcover is a fast growing *Lampranthus* with pretty small flowers with yellow centres.

One of the prettiest flowers in our garden is the indigenous *Streptocarpus* (Cape primrose). It forms part of the African violet family. Their striking tubular flowers come in shades of mauve, purple, pink, red and white. Some of them have streaks of deeper shades in the throat. They grow outdoors in pots in shady places. They need a well-drained, rich soil. This summer I have been watering them every 5 days or so, but I shall extend that time now that autumn is approaching because the soil stays moist for longer periods. They are easily propagated: I divide the plants when they are repotted. I have also managed to grow some from leaf cuttings. *Streptocarpus* is the perfect name for the plant as their seed capsules are long spirally twisted affairs and hence the name from the Greek *streptos*, twisted, and *karpos*, fruit. The genus has been extensively hybridized and many cultivars are available. We have *S. cyaneus*, which has dark purple flowers (below, left); *S. floribundus* which has lots of pale pink flowers; *S. formosus* with attractive mauve flowers and *S. roseo albus* (below, centre) with striking pale purple flowers with much darker stripes. At a Kirstenbosch plant sale I managed to find *S. baudertii*. 'Rarely available' with much smaller, less trumpet-like light purple flowers with dark purple lines and a white patch on the lower petal. There is also a pale pink flowering variety (below, right).



One of the questions asked at the end of the talk about Stellenberg was suggestions for flowering plants suitable for dry shade. One I could suggest is *Streptocarpus saxorum* planted in a hanging basket. It makes a display as the leaves will spill over the side with its plentiful small purple flowers and the many twisted seed pods. Another question was about snails; where are they? We were assured that they were there – killed off with an environment friendly snail bait.

That's it for this month – I'm off to say hello to the praying mantis as I water the garden.

#### Sources used:

Joffe, Pitta **Indigenous shrubs**; Kirstenbosch garden & plant fair handbook 2011; Pienaar, Kristo **The A to Z of garden flowers in South Africa**; van Jaarsveld, Ernst **Waterwise gardening in South Africa & Namibia**; [www.plantzafrica.com](http://www.plantzafrica.com)

#### ITEMS OF INTEREST

**Looking for a Gardener:** Hamilton, a Malawian, and recommended by member, Adrienne Rust, is available on Mondays. Call Hamilton on 073-879-2804 or Adrienne on 076-148-1392 / 021-712-5773.

**Rare Plant Fair:** Saturday, 9 April 2016 from 09h00 – 14h00 at Tokara Wine and Olive Estate, Stellenbosch; R20 entrance fee. Teas and refreshments on sale. For more information call Pietman Diener on 082 894 6405.

(Photos: Andrew Thorpe, Peter Henshall and Google Images)