



NEXT MEETING

Monday, 6 March 2017 at 20:00 at The Athenaeum, Newlands.

R10 for members; R20 for visitors.

BEAUTIES AND BEASTS

Cherise Viljoen, senior horticulturist at Kirstenbosch, shares her experience and opinions of some of our wonderful indigenous plants' characters and personalities. Come and see for yourself to decide if there is truly some beauty in every beast!

NB: The ladies of the CHS Nursery (the sale of plants) have requested that you do not bring any plants to sell until summer is over. They are not able to look after the left-over plants, as well as their own, at this time.

NEXT OUTING

Thursday, 30 March at 10:00: Visit Welbeloond in Constantia.

Welbeloond is a 100 year old farmhouse which is the 'sister' house to the Uitsig farmhouse, each having been given to one of the young Lategan brothers when they got married. Whilst Uitsig remained a working farm, Welbeloond has been subdivided and the remaining portion of the farm has belonged to Leigh De Decker for the last 30 years. It has extensive gardens including a large vegetable garden, an orchard, numerous springs and a stream running through and also hosts an abundant wetland which is home to breeding spoonbills, lynx, water mongoose, porcupines, genet cats, owls and numerous other species. It is also the breeding ground of the Western Leopard toads which are prolific residents and breeders.

In addition to being a much loved family home, it is also the premises of the business, BrightHouse Solar. This is what BrightHouse Solar is all about:

Our residential and subsequent commercial solar initiatives were launched with the installation of our own solar PV rooftop, being the first residents in South Africa to legally generate solar PV and export any excess for credit, under contract to a utility (City of Cape Town), in October 2014. The subsequent interest in this long awaited model has seen us design and install over 50% of the Grid tied solar systems which have been approved by CoCT and we are considered to be the authorities on all aspects of engineering, policy and compliance in this regard. Our business model is underpinned by a passionate commitment to a sustainable future, a smaller footprint and conservation of our planet's resources. To this end we have established a "Solar Institute" at our premises and home in Constantia where we have experimental solar racks on display and for testing purposes. We have Solar Open Days for public participation and have hosted several school tours, garden clubs and other interested parties to introduce them to a "hands on" solar experience. This also includes an introduction to permaculture vegetable gardening, residential beekeeping and recycling of all resources. Our ground mounted structures, called "solar cubes", can be modified to become vertical gardens, with the interior space utilised for a potting shed, children's playhouse or storage shed.

Limited to 24 members. Let Glenda have your name by no later than 27 March.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

And, just what you've been waiting for. A subscription renewal form for the forthcoming year is attached.

Payment can be made via EFT or in cash at forthcoming meetings.

PLEASE include your renewal form as proof of payment. It is the only way to ensure you remain on the membership database/e-mail mailing list. It is also needed to keep track of any changes in your contact details, to have a record of whether you would be willing to be called upon when help is needed or whether you would like to purchase a name badge.

Once payment, together with your form, has been received, you will be issued with a receipt and membership 'card'.

We look forward to welcoming back all our members for another year!

REPORT BACK

February Plant Table:

Jenny's report: Look at the flowers that are blooming in this time of drought. It really is amazing if you look around your garden and see what is surviving. I think we need to build up a list of what survives Cape Town's drought.

Some things are looking sick like some of the variegated Pittosporums, which come from New Zealand where it's always wet and cold and miserable, but Coprosmas, which also come from down there, are looking fine. So there's no rhyme nor reason about what will do well or not. We need the info so please fill in the little slips on the table and jot down your name, your suburb, the name of your plant and how much water your plant gets. In this way we will be able to find out which plants do best with very little water.

Specimens brought in by members:

Cyrtanthus sanguineus – Kei lily – is a most rewarding species to grow, bearing large bright red or orange flowers in spring to late summer. A well drained, compost enriched medium and semi shade position is preferred. Once planted, do not disturb the bulbs again.

It must be kept dry in winter otherwise it will not flower. It is well suited to planting on a rockery.

Variegated *Gaura*: flowers are white with pink edging; much more restrained than its cousins, because variegated plants grow, percentage-wise, that much more slowly because there's so much white and variegation in the leaf; more manageable and a more attractive foliage. Found at Tokai Super Plants.

Cosmos: double pink

(Below from left to right)

Anisodontea julii: been in flower for ages; flowers are smaller this year;

Impatiens hochstetteri: seeds itself all over the place;

Antigonon leptopus – Coral creeper, Honolulu vine: lovely flowering creeper;

A Gesneriad, *Kohleria* or *Isoloma*: has a rhizomatous root; from tropical America.



Ruellia brittoniana – Mexican Petunia: there is a range of these, tall and short, often with very prettily marked leaves but does need a lot of water

Brillantaisia subulugurica: comes from up in Africa

Nivenia corymbosa (right): a shrubby, woody Irid; growing taller than 1,5m; named after James Niven.

"George Hibbert (13 January 1757 – 8 October 1837) was an eminent English merchant, politician, slave- and ship-owner, amateur botanist and book collector. Hibbert funded various botanical expeditions, notably that of James Niven, an avid gardener and collector of plants, who was sent to the Cape region of South Africa in 1798. He remained for five years, sending home a 'valuable herbarium of native specimens' and new plants, including five new species of proteas – Hibbert's passion. Niven collected seeds of *Nivenia corymbosa* which were sent back and grown at Hibbert's Clapham estate in London. Hibbert's gardener, Joseph Knight, was reputedly one of the first people to propagate Proteaceae in England; the genus *Hibbertia* is named after Hibbert. Hibbert was also one of the first people to grow Hostas in Europe."



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Hibbert

Podranea brycei and *ricasoliana*: Port St John's Creeper or Zimbabwe Creeper?

Nicola Anthony found the following on PlantZAfrica's website:

Podranea ricasoliana is a member of the Bignoniaceae, a family of ± 109 genera, mainly trees, lianas and shrubs from mostly tropical regions particularly in South America. There are 8 southern African genera, plus 2 that have become naturalised. The member of this family most well known to South Africans is the jacaranda, *Jacaranda mimosifolia*. This tree is not indigenous to Africa, it comes from South America, but it has become naturalised in the warmer parts of South Africa. Indigenous species include the Cape honeysuckle, *Tecomaria capensis* and the sausage tree, *Kigelia africana*.

The genus *Podranea* contains one or two species: *Podranea ricasoliana* that is found at the mouth of the Mzimvubu River at Port St Johns, roughly half way between East London and Durban on the Eastern Cape coast; and *Podranea brycei*, the Zimbabwe creeper which has been collected from the ruins of Great Zimbabwe near Musvingo in Zimbabwe, and from the surroundings of Nova Sofala, on the Mozambique coast south of Beira. These two species differ only in the hairiness of the flowers and the size of the leaves. As it is virtually impossible to tell them apart when seen growing together many botanists regard them as the same species. The name *Podranea* is an anagram of *Pandorea*, a closely related Australian genus, in which *Podranea* was first classified. Pandora means all-gifted. She was the first woman of Greek mythology and was given the box that contained all man's ills. When she opened it, they all flew out.

Many South African botanists suspect that this climber may not be indigenous to southern Africa and that it was introduced here by slave traders. All the sites where both *Podranea ricasoliana* and *Podranea brycei* are found have ancient connections with slave traders, who frequented the eastern coast of Africa long before the 1600s. It has become such a widely grown garden plant in all the warmer parts of the world that it may prove difficult to find its real origin.

.....*Podranea ricasoliana* is fast-growing and easy in cultivation. An established plant is tolerant of heat, strong sunlight, wind and periods of drought....Pruning will also improve flowering.

Pitta Joffe has the following to say in her book *The Gardener's Guide to South African Plants*:

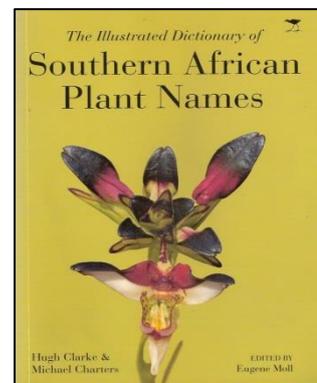
"*Podranea brycei* (Zimbabwe creeper) is very similar to *P.ricasoliana*. Its leaves, however, differ from those of the Port St Johns creeper in that they are a lighter green and do not have scalloped margins. The flowers are slightly smaller, are a deeper pink-mauve in colour and have more white hairs in the throat than those of the Port St Johns creeper."

She also says that the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California has *Podranea ricasoliana* on its bewaterwise.com site. All agree it has a long flowering period too.

Nicky suggests that you bring your *Podranea* specimens to the next meeting so we can see whether we have *P ricasoliana* or *P brycei*.

Asarina: lovely pinks and lavenders, but does anyone have a white form for Nicola Anthony?

Jenny sang the praises of a brand new book, *The Illustrated Dictionary of Southern African Plant Names*. As mentioned above, if you want to know where the names *Nivenia* and *Hibbertia* originated, this book would tell you. It's one way of learning a bit of history and it definitely sounds like an interesting book to have.



Left to right: *Podranea*, *Asarina*, new plant dictionary

Other plants brought to the Plant Table can be seen on our Facebook page.

Coleton Fishacre gardens:



Rosalind Spears took us on a tour of the South Devon garden at Coleton Fishacre, which was once the home of Rupert D'Oyly Carte, built in the 1920s.

Rosalind's presentation was interspersed with snippets from the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, as well as a wonderful rendition of Top Hat, White Tie and Tails, all reminiscent of days gone by. She even donned her mother-in-law, Dorothea Spears' evening dress, bought at Pearne's in Adderley Street, and a fur (bottom right) to set the mood.

Bridget D'Oyly Carte sold the house in 1948, after her father's death, to Roland and Freda Smith. This was bought by the National Trust in 1982 after Freda's death.

A view of the estate (left) with the house at the top of the picture and the gardens running downhill to the sea.

One of the "hot" plantings in a bed below the house (below, left).



Cherise thanking Rosalind.



***Kirstenbosch Plant Fair
Saturday and Sunday, March 18 and 19, 2017***

We're delighted to have a stand at the Kirstenbosch Plant Fair – it's an ideal opportunity to showcase the CHS and all it offers its members. Our display board will be covered with information about the society, with photographs of our members at the gardens we've visited, as well as some of the glorious flowers and plants we've seen along the way!

A number of members have already volunteered for duty at the Fair, but, if you're able to help, do let me know and I'll get back to you. Volunteers will be seated at the tables.

Shift times are:

Saturday: 9h00 to 11h00 / 11h00 to 12h45 / 12h45 to 14h30 / 14h30 to 16h00

Sunday: 9h00 to 11h00 / 11h00 to 12h30 / 12h30 to 14h00

We do need indigenous bulbs or seed to sell at our stand, so please bring whatever you have to the next meeting on **Monday, March 6**, or telephone Jane or Melanie to make arrangements to collect these from you.

Don't worry about packaging, we will have that – just ensure that all bulbs and seeds are clearly marked, please!

Jane Robertson
072 630 6332 / 021 794 0208
janerobertson.mail@gmail.com

Contact for shift duties at the Fair:

Melanie Stewart
082 550 2618 / 021 788 2840
rsp@telkomsa.net

Melanie Stewart

JOURNAL OF A HAPHAZARD GARDENER – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2017

The haphazard gardener is nearly bucketed out. I hadn't realized there were so many plants in the garden that needed my individual attention. The lawn will have to go: what to put in its place?

Can you believe that I have taken part in conversations where we have lamented that grey water has killed off some of our pot plants while the garden plants are thriving; boasted about taking a shower with a bucket, and showering in a cupful of water? (I made the last one up).

My positive story is about watering our garden while we were away at the beginning of summer. It is about good neighbourliness. We were going on a ten week holiday in England to visit our daughter and family. I arranged for a neighbour's gardener to do the watering. Off we went. The gardener was unable to water the garden because he hurt his back and so the neighbour took on the task (as well as her own garden) and so, much of our garden survives.

Before we went away, as a precaution, I mulched the garden with a mixture of compost, rooibos tea compost, bark, wood chips, nut shells and pine needles which are all relatively inexpensive. The mulching has worked well. Since our return, the dead plants have been cut up and added to the mixture.

The drought has also shown me that you do not need to water the garden so often. Once a week 'spot watering' seems to do the trick.

Some plants have thrived well in the dry conditions. The two plants in our garden that bear fruit, the *Carissa macrocarpa* (Num num) [top, left] and the *Acokanthera oppositifolia* (Bushmen's poison tree) [top, right], have done their drought thing by producing lots of fruit as can be seen in the pictures. The *Plumbago auriculata* [below, left] has also done very well. I have discovered that Plumbago means lead – it is supposed to cure lead poisoning. Since we returned in mid January, it has been flowering more profusely than it has ever done before. Obviously I was watering it too much. The Plumbago has an extremely deep root system and this is what enables it to survive without water.



The only water it has received was during the good downfall in January. Another plant with a strong root system that has survived well has been the Agapanthus which has a succulent root system which is used for water storage. The hedge *Rhoicissus digitata* (Baboon grape) [above, right] on our ugly vibracrete wall in the back garden has also thrived in the heat. Our *Jasminium angulare* also seems to be surviving well and produced many fragrant flowers at

the beginning of summer. Another survivor is our *Strelitzia reginae* (crane flower) which has a 'strong internal structure'.

This week, on a walk in the mountains, I discovered another way in which local plants survive the dry summer. I grabbed hold of a *Watsonia* and my hand came away wet. Water is stored in the leaves on its stem.

A plant that I expected to survive the drought was the *Plectranthus*; but, apart from *Plectranthus neochilus* and its cousins, they have unfortunately suffered badly.

In a Jack Reacher book by Lee Child that I am reading at the moment, I found the following passage appropriate for our future gardening practices. The scene is a gated community in Arizona in the United States:

'Reacher said, 'The landscaping is nice, though.'

And it was. There were no lawns. There was nothing that needed water. There were artful rivers of stone, with cactus leaves slashing through the blades, and mists of pale red flowers, and steel sculptures, still bright and uncorroded in the bone-dry air.'

I used the following books when writing this journal:

- Child, Lee *Make me*
- www.plantzafrica.com/plantnop/plumbago.htm
- *Water-wise gardening for winter-rainfall regions* which I bought at the Kirstenbosch Book Shop.

Until next time, back to the buckets.

GARDENING TIPS

Excerpt from <http://atlanticfertilisers.co.za/retail/#tips1>

Reuse your empty eggshells by planting seeds in them. There are various reasons why eggshells are the perfect pot for this, but the three main reasons are that they are cheap (technically free), they are easy to plant in the garden when ready with the shell on because - which is also the third reason - they are full of calcium to give your seedlings that extra boost.

Feed your garden

You should now use slow releasing soil and plant fertilisers which contain composted seaweed, fishmeal, humic acid and poultry manure - all natural minerals and growth stimulants to maximise and sustain summer growth, but which will also increase the water holding capacity of the soil. Feed and compost shrubs and climbers, which will start flowering in late winter. Perennial salvias thrive in the heat and will soon make a spectacular autumn display. Make sure they are fed to give their best.

Bug watch - red spider

Look out for red spider mites which are problematic in periods of drought and very hot weather - use the correct insecticides to control this pest properly on plants like fruit trees, roses and shrubs, but destroy annuals like tomatoes, if too heavily infested

Mulching is priority!

Mulch around all plants and veggies using a light 5-10cm mulch (dried leaves, straw, bark, coarse compost or peach pips) that allows the water to penetrate easily. [Ed: *What do you do when an Olive Thrush insists on scratching the mulch out of the bed?*]

Advantage: Watering requirements can be cut down dramatically, and weeds are smothered and discouraged.

CONSERVING OUR LIFE-GIVING RESOURCE

How are you managing to water your garden if you don't have a grey water system or borehole? Are you just watching your plants slowly curl up and die? Or has the money you've saved by carrying buckets backwards and forwards twice a week gone on doctor's and physio appointments to fix your broken back??

No-one has sent in any new ideas to get grey water to their plants. There is still time to help those who are struggling, so let's hear from you. We will need to have these ideas on record for the next time more stringent restrictions are imposed on us. Our Haphazard Gardener seems to have the right garden for less watering.

(Photos: Andrew and Glenda Thorpe, Rosalind and Johnny Spears, Peter Henshall)