



President: David Davidson, **Chairman:** Errol Scarr, **Hon Treasurer:** Henry Diesveld, **Secretary:** Glenda Thorpe
Honorary Members: Laurie Powis, Colin Cook, Marianne Alexander, Barbara Hey, Mary Smith, Anne Bean, Adam Harrower, Michael Tuffin

NEXT MEETING

Monday, 5 February 2018 at 20:00 at The Athenaeum, Newlands.

Rosalind Spears is delighted to be back in Cape Town and will be speaking to us about another beautiful Devon property,

Dartington Hall – the English Experiment

This Medieval hall and farm were bought in 1925 by Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst. With his knowledge of agriculture and her huge fortune they created a sort of utopia. A progressive school, new methods of farming and horticulture, a sanctuary for artists escaping the Nazis all achieved with great care of the workers. The 11 acres of gardens are outstanding.



REPORT BACK

Seed Box

If you are interested in obtaining some of the many seeds, please bring a packet of seed with which to swop; or you can buy the packets of seed (if you have nothing to swop). Speak to Jane.

Library

Don't forget to return the books you borrowed at the end of last year. Peter will be on hand to help. He'll also be chasing up borrowers who have sat on their books for a while.

Monthly Plant Table

You may recall that all specimens brought to the Plant Table at meetings received one point. The indigenous and exotic plants chosen by Jenny were each awarded an extra point. All these points were recorded from March to November 2017 – and we have a winner!

Nicola Anthony obtained 25 points. Congratulations. She will receive her prize at the February meeting. The Scarrs were not far behind with 22 and Wilma Tindall came in a close third with 19 points, 3 of which were gained as "Jenny's Choice". Our thanks to the 30 members who participated over this time which helped to fill the Plant Table – very often to breaking point.

Going forward, the system of awarding points to specimens brought in to meetings will be as follows:

- Every specimen (with a member's name on the slip giving information about the plant) will receive 1 point
- The "Jenny's Choice" winners will each be awarded an extra point.
- Added to this, if there is one particular plant that can be regarded as being "the most difficult to grow", an extra 5 points will be awarded. This will not necessarily happen every month.

Don't forget to place your plant in a vase on the table (there are both exotic and indigenous 'sides') and attach your paper slip giving your name, the plant name and anything else of interest. No slip, no point.

Water restrictions

Have you found ways to manage your water usage? This has been a topic of conversation for so long but never more so than now when we're told that we have just 2 months to the day the taps will run dry. I hope that you, as good citizens, have learnt to curb not only your use of municipal water but also your groundwater. According to the article in this past weekend's Argus, this is what you will be able to do on a daily basis with the 50 litres of water allocated to you:

Dog bowl: 1 litre

Drinking water: 2 litres

Cooking: 2 litres

Daily hygiene: 3 litres

1 toilet flush: 9 litres

90 second shower: 15 litres

Dishes and laundry: 18 litres

I'm sure many of us are managing on much less, with all the systems we've put in place. Well done!

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COMMITTEE

It is Jane Robertson's turn this month.

"I was born and grew up in England, where my mother's love of gardening and local wild flowers, together with an uncle who introduced me to exotic, glass-house plants (I particularly loved the delicate blue flowers of a shrub from South Africa, whose name evoked for me as a child at once a familiar fruit and a common back complaint), and also our unique, horse-shoe shaped garden my father laid out with us children in mind, ensured that gardening became part of my existence.

After academic studies in England and completing my doctorate after six months in Paris, I began my first adult, professional life, by coming to Cape Town with my Capetonian husband, both of us appointed as lecturers at UCT, where I spent almost thirty years with French as my working language, teaching language and literature from medieval to modern, at all levels except beginners. We brought up three daughters. During this my other life, my interests included sewing, cooking and food, but more particularly drawing and painting (I attended evening classes for many years in life-drawing and other disciplines), and enduring pleasures in books, the visual arts, classical music and opera, and ancient civilisations including Egypt.

My mother-in-law had introduced me to the local plant life and on walks in the mountains I discovered with delight many of the carefully-nurtured (often indoor) plants of my childhood growing in the wild. Hiking has been an ongoing, revivifying pleasure. Had I known that the Fates would decree I was to spend most of my adult life in Cape Town, I would have chosen to study a subject of local interest, like botany, rather than languages. Hence my indigenous gardening is mostly self-taught.

Our first Cape property was an established, English garden of 1 000m² in Rondebosch: a sandy desert in summer and a morass in winter. My second life began after 26 years, when our situation changed and we moved to our present house in Constantia, which had belonged to my parents-in-law. 1999 was a good year to retire (early) from lecturing as there was a good deal of other work to be done on our 11 000m² of steeply-sloping, pathless, alien-infested jungle of land. By 2005, and after considerable research on my part, much of the garden had been cleared and planted with whatever I thought would grow; and it won a Pam Golding "Gardens of Pride" award. This encouraged me to go further. So over a period of several years, while working for an NGO providing housing for the indigent elderly, I started to restore and make gardens in areas like Woodstock, Rondebosch East and Khayelitsha: a challenging but rewarding experience.

Throughout this my second life, some of my major pleasures, besides the ever-demanding garden, have included arranging flowers for party and wedding venues, learning (and forgetting) a smattering of half a dozen languages, and travel (we are fortunate to have had many opportunities to travel, even to spend extended periods of time in places like France, both in connection with work and to visit scattered friends and relatives). Most important at this stage of my second life are family, with our four grandchildren between 2 and 6.

Gerald looks upon my gardening efforts with an indulgent eye and gives a willing hand in the more technical aspects involved. I joined the CHS at the behest of a gate-lady at one of the Spring Shows, and, unlike many who do this, stayed – how many years, Glenda? I still do not know why I was invited to join the Committee; but I enjoy being part of the Society's long tradition (evoked by the engravings on our numerous trophies, now, sadly, stored away), our get-togethers to organise the programme, the wonderful Monday meetings and the company of other members, and the outings: I am very proud to be one of the 'Horties'!"



Jane signed up as a member in October 2002 and in July 2014 attended a meeting "with a view to joining the committee". The rest, as they say, is history.

JOURNAL OF A HAPHAZARD GARDENER – JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018

2018 in our garden is going to be challenging. We can take courage from this weed which has grown out of an electricity meter (1): plants are adaptable, they are tough. The bulb *Hymenocallis narcissiflora x hybrida* Spider lily (2) also pops up every summer.

The drought has taught me that I don't need to water the garden nearly as often as I had done in the past. (66% of the water in our dams is used for domestic purposes). I was also astonished to discover that we use 5 liters of grey water every time we flush the toilet.

We have been using only rain water in the garden. I use it for the pot plants and for some specials like the ferns. I have been experimenting with cuttings that I took from plants on Rondebosch Common and succulents that I bought from the Kirstenbosch volunteer's stall at their monthly market. The cuttings I treated with rooting hormone powder, potted them and placed a glass jar over each one. A surprising number have taken. I now have to find out their names. Here you can see these pots nestling in two old paddling pools (3) that have sat in our garage for ever. One of the succulents, a *Euphorbia* "Medusa's Head" (4), has thrived.

We have been lucky so far this summer in that some rain has fallen on average once a week and this has been sufficient to keep the rest of the garden going.

Our grand dog has been to stay and so we have walked the neighbourhood to see how our neighbours were coping with the drought. 90% of them have decided to let their gardens fend for themselves: very few boreholes to be seen. I liked this solution where these succulents have been planted in cement containers (5). This *Vinca rosea* "Madagascar Periwinkle" (6) can also be seen in abundance and seems to thrive in the drought. Another plant thriving in our garden is this squash (7) which arrived with the compost. It has produced many yellow flowers but no fruit.

I spent time during the spring mulching and composting the garden. In the winter for the first time ever I collected leaves, put them in plastic bags with some fertiliser. This mulch has definitely enabled the plants to survive the drought.

Before writing this journal, I thought I would re-visit my 'to-do' list of 4 items for 2016. (We were away in January 2017). It could have been worse: 50% have been accomplished. While deciding what to do I found this motto on a mug: "My goal for 2018 is to accomplish the goals of 2017 which I should have done in 2016 because I promised them in 2015". So I make no resolutions for this year.

At the End of Year party my wife won this creeper *Ipomoea fistulosa* Morning glory (8) in the raffle. It has a fleshy root system that makes it drought-tolerant. The plant is growing well but so far there have only been a few red flowers. Another creeper (9) in our garden which is surviving well in the drought is covered with these pretty flowers. It is deciduous. The creeper is, however, nameless. Can anyone help out?





ITEMS OF INTEREST

Flex your gardening muscles

Giving yourself a good workout in the privacy of your own backyard is much nicer than going to a gym and you don't have to force your 'love handles' into unbecoming lycra!

While you are getting fitter and trimmer with pruning, weeding, composting, raking, digging, planting and mowing, your garden will reward your time and spent perspiration with lush growth and great harvests of flowers and edibles. Another advantage is that garden gym, which means spending time outside in the sunshine and fresh air, has a positive influence on your psychological health as well – it relieves stress and helps with depression. Regular hours spent in the garden will work out the muscles in your legs, back, stomach and will also give you a healthy cardiovascular buzz while the calories slowly melt away.

Before starting your garden gym session, warm up those cold muscles by stretching a bit – it gives you time to decide what you are going to tackle first. Vary your garden workout with different actions like pruning, raking, mowing, digging and weeding, and spend about 15 minutes on each activity to work out different muscles. Do some stretching and releasing exercises before moving on to the next action. If you stick to this regime regularly, everything which needs to be done in the garden will be done, and you will become trim and fit!

Jobs to do this month:

- Prune low branches of trees to allow in more sunlight.
- Tame overgrown shrubs, except those which will flower and produce berries in winter and spring.
- Thin out deciduous climbers like wisterias, Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*) and ornamental vines (*Vitis coignetiae*).
- Espaliering or training the long branches of climbing roses will encourage flowering.
- Rotate indoor and shady patio plants, as well as hanging baskets, regularly towards the light to ensure even leaf growth.
- Pull out the old flowering stems of Inca lilies with a firm tug.
- Cut long lavender stalks, tie into bunches and hang upside down to dry. Place them in your linen cupboard.
- Cut spent flowers of lilies, leaving the leafy stems to produce enough food to the bulbs for next season. Keep well-watered [Ed: with non-potable water, we hope] and well-fed until they die down.

[Excerpt from *Life is a Garden* – <https://gosouth.co.za/january-in-the-garden/>]

Bee Pollination

Having just had a hive removed from our garden, the beekeeper waxed lyrical on the subject of pollination and the dying industry in this country. From his article published in the Cape Times on 3 June 2014, he says: "Self-sufficiency is an empowered state of being and in the case of beekeeping, with the right conditions and availability of fodder, it is uncomplicated and achievable. ... Biodiversity and commercial crop pollination are largely dependent on bee farmers and their honey bees for pollination services. ... Thirty percent of our daily food is also dependent on the honey bee for its role in pollinating and helping to create good quality fruits, vegetables and the seeds we need to grow them again next season." He advocates that if just 1% of the hundreds of thousands of commercial, emerging and traditional farmers, as well as farm workers, became bee farmers, they would be working with "reliable, productive, co-operative and hardworking partners who labour from dawn to dusk without complaint". Makes you think, doesn't it?

Glenda and Andrew