



CHS NEWS

JANUARY 2014

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MONTHLY MEETING

Mon, 3 February 2014 at 20:00 at The Athenaeum, Newlands
(R8 for members and R20 for visitors)

Dick Stroh is retired, having worked for many years at Anglo American as an Environmental Engineer involved mainly with the underground environment on Group mines.

He is a keen hiker, and enjoys photography. Since most of his hiking is in the mountains, the Fynbos has become a passion and he has taken to photographing its wonders. This show,

FIRE ON THE HELDERBERG and RENEWAL IN THE FYNBOS,

was undertaken as an opportunistic attempt at recording events following a large fire over the Helderberg mountain.

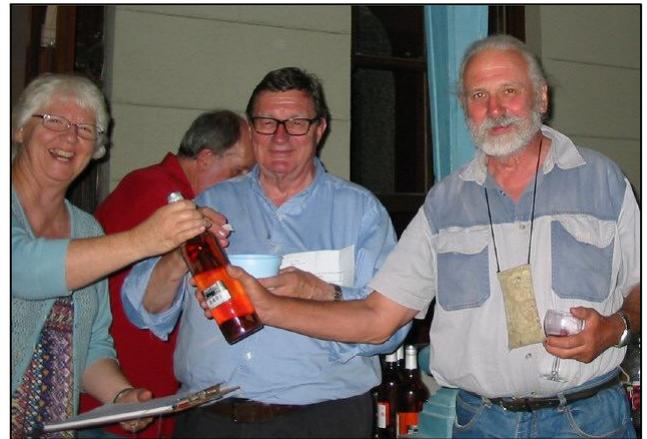
This superb audio-visual presentation – with music – is guaranteed to take your breath away.

NEXT OUTING

Mon, 24 Feb at 15:00: A visit to CHS member, Pat Gardiner's garden in Tokai, which is home to a family of chickens – and other animals. Limited to 12 members. RSVP to Glenda by 20 Feb.

REPORT BACK

December End-of-Year Party:



Above Left: Wendy, Elaine, Angela and John listening to something Ron has to say, while enjoying their meal.

Above right: Glenda hands Keith one of the bottles of wine (donated by Melanie and Rod) he won in the lucky draw, while Michael draws the number of the next lucky winner.

Left: Sisters, Lecia and Sjané, looking very bright and cheerful.

As always, a great time was had by all. Thanks to Melanie, and her helpers, in getting it all together, as well as to everyone for the delicious eats provided.

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WELCOME TO ...

... Margie Peacock and Bruce Eitzen who joined our ranks towards the end of 2013. We wish them many years of gardening pleasure.

WHAT TO DO THIS MONTH

[Extract from Stodels' January Newsletter – www.stodels.com]

Plant and sow:

- Sow the following herbs in containers this month: basil, chives, dill, Nasturtiums, parsley and watercress. Keep the soil moist until the first shoots appear. Pinch out new growth on the seedlings to encourage them to become compact and bushy.
- Plant heat-tolerant annuals like Alyssum, Celosia, Sunflowers, Marigolds, Petunias, Portulaca, red Salvias and Zinnias.
- Plant Irises in rich soil, to which superphosphate has been added. The rhizomes should be half exposed to the sun and the soil should be kept moist.

Feed:

- Feed lemon trees with 3:1:5 or 8:1:5 and water well. Surround the trees with a thick layer of organic mulch.
- Use grass and plant clippings (from pruning) as mulch in your garden beds.
- Mulch Azaleas and Japonicas and water three times a week.
- Fertilise Fuchsias with a high potassium fertiliser like 3:1:5.

Prune and trim:

- Deadhead annuals and perennials like lavender, daisy bushes, geraniums, candytuft, catmint, veronica and phlox.
- Deadheading directs the plant's resources away from seed production and allows vegetative growth, which improves the appearance of the plant.
- Cut back Wisteria to encourage good flowering next year.
- Clip your hedges neatly, ensuring that the base is slightly broader than the top, as this allows sunlight to reach all parts of the plant.
- Raise the blades on your lawn mower and mow more frequently (once a week) to ensure a lush, finely textured lawn.

Tidy up:

- Lightly prune roses to encourage the development of new flowers. Pull out any sucker shoots (light green, thornless shoots) growing from the base of bushes.
- Cut back Shasta daisies, lavender, angel wings, Diascias, and blue kingfisher daisies.
- Remove some of the smaller flower heads on dahlias plants. This will encourage the development of dinner plate-sized blooms.
- Cut back hydrangeas to a strong double bud. Feed with general fertiliser and water well.
- Stake tall-growing perennials and trees to protect them against the strong south-easterly winds.

[Extract from January newsletter of Starke Ayres – www.starkeayresgc.co.za]

A few more tips:

- Be sure to water adequately as the weather becomes hotter and the wind blows harder, adhering to guidelines and recommended watering times
- Watch out for Red Spider Mite in the dry weather
- Mulch to help prevent water loss
- Tidy up the garden after the December burst of colour and prepare to fill gaps with easy colour such as petunias or veggies such as lettuce, Swiss chard and tomatoes
- Plant small batches of vegetables to ensure a continued and manageable supply

- Consider planting lettuce in a cooler spot in your garden as the weather becomes warmer
- Refrain from spraying your garden with chemical insecticides, rather investigate the organic alternatives
- Spray fruit trees for fruit-fly and collect all the fruit that has fallen to the ground to prevent the spread of fruit-fly
- Mow your lawn as often as it needs, but not too short so as to protect the roots from the hot summer sun
- Keep on weeding
- Plan for autumn planting.

That's more than enough to keep you busy until next month!

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

As mentioned in the November issue (appeal repeated below), each month a member will tell you about the plant collection they have built up. We kick off with Wilma Tindall's interest in succulents.

"Every now and then I become particularly interested in one plant family. Sometimes it's a passing fancy; sometimes it becomes a continuing interest and sometimes a short term obsession! One year it was *Pelargoniums* – but they proved to be trickier than expected; another year it was *Plectranthus*. I still enjoy both of these but don't buy any new ones now.

The one that has continued to interest, beside the indigenous bulbs, is my succulent collection. I am fascinated by the infinite variety of leaf/plant shape and colour and the amazing flowers- some quite insignificant and the beauty is all in the plant, while others have the most amazing flowers and often quite unrelated to the plant size. The *Lithops* (stone plants), for example, have flowers that completely cover the surface of the plant. Some look like *Aloes* but are not; others don't look like *Aloes* but are; some are so well camouflaged that they are difficult to spot in the veld.

South Africa has no indigenous cacti – these are exotic plants. I get particularly irritated when nurseries label our plants as "cacti". The definition of a succulent plant is one that is full of juice or sap – ones that have fleshy stems or leaves that store water. Ours have adapted to little available water by having deep root systems, waxy or hairy leaf surfaces, small leaves, thick skin. Our succulent genera (families) cover a large range from the tree *Aloes* (like the Kokerboom) to the small *Lithops*. I really want to know what I'm buying. All other plants in a nursery are correctly labelled, why not the succulents?

I have quite a few large *Aloes* and some smaller ones – I particularly enjoy the grass *Aloes* (smaller in size and flower size) while most of my pot collection is mostly on a 3-tiered slatted bench under a slight overhang where they get morning sun till about 12.00. Surprisingly, while many of our succulents grow in hot and barren places with very low rainfall, many prefer to grow in semi-shade. All of them though don't like too much water. This bursts the cells and the plants collapse. So in the Western Cape one needs to find a really well drained spot and ensure each pot or planting position is well draining. Dr Eric Harley grows many of his in his south-facing vertical wall which certainly ensures good drainage.

Although I have some *Anacampseros*, *Haworthia* and *Gasteria*, my most favourite family is the *Stapeliad* tribe with magical names like *Orbea variegata* (below left), *Duvalia caespitosa* (below right), *Huernia zebrina* (next page), and while I prefer the indigenous succulents, I also like the very large and showy *Echeveria* family from Mexico and NW South America and the *Aeoniums* from the Canary Islands, Morocco and East Africa.



I have bought most of my collection from the Kirstenbosch Plant Sale (my first port of call), Frans Moller, Lonny Edge, and various nurseries (via Edwin Aslander of Selecta Succulents, I suspect). The great thing about succulents though, is that they grow very easily from leaves or stem cuttings pressed into sharp sand before potting up."

Having read this, you may want to rush out and buy some succulents, but be careful you are not sold a "Cactus" if you're wanting to go indigenous.

The following article gives you more tips on what to do with them.

CACTUS AND SUCCULENTS

[Extract from Stodels' January Newsletter – www.stodels.com]

While succulents are native to arid regions and generally thrive in poor soils, it does not mean one should not water them or provide nutrients.

How often should you water?

There is no answer that is universally correct. There is a direct relationship between water, light, temperature, soil conditions and humidity. The higher the light level and temperature and the less humid, the more often watering is required. Most cactus and succulents have an active period for about a third of the year. During this active period, watering and feeding can be frequent.

The most active time for most cacti is during the spring and early parts of summer. As this period passes, it is best to reduce the frequency of watering as winter approaches. They require very little water during the cold months. A good watering once a week in hot weather and once a month in the dormant period is a good point to start as you learn your plant's needs. Another approach is to water thoroughly when the soil is completely dry, then let it dry. If in doubt, don't water.

What about feeding?

Too much fertiliser can be worse than none at all. Use a low nitrogen fertiliser at about a half to a quarter of the recommended rate.

What is the best soil for cactus and other succulents?

Most commercial potting soils are too rich in fresh organic matter for these plants. The most important factor in choosing a planting medium is that it allows food, water and air to get to the roots and is porous enough to let water drain through. Many growers use a mix of a low peat planter mix and pumice (50/50). Sand, small pebbles and vermiculite are ingredients added by many successful growers and hobbyists.

Experiment with different combinations to discover the right combination for your conditions. A top dressing of crushed granite or pea gravel looks good and has benefits too. It keeps the topsoil from drying out faster than the rest of the soil in the pot, keeps the base of the plant dry and assists in the even distribution of water.

What type of light do they need?

Direct sun and light are not the same! Succulent plants need light, but they grow better if they don't cook in the midday sun. In the wild you will find young plants tucked under a bush, tree or something else that provides filtered light.

If new growth on your plant is pale green and elongated, it needs more light. If the side of your plant facing the light source is yellow, tan, red or indented, it is getting too much light. Succulents do not like stagnant air. Provide good air circulation for your plants.

There are many excellent books on the market that can help with culture and identification of these plants.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A RESEARCH PRODUCER?

Get involved in the exciting *Wild Encounters* documentary about seven of the mammal species living in and around Cape Town. This initiative aims to highlight their will to survive in the face of an ever increasing urban expansion.

To assist in the compilation of data, we are appealing to you, your family, friends and colleagues to join the project by letting us know if you have spotted any of the species. Whether you are golfing, hiking, walking, surfing, cycling or just having fun in the outdoors, let us know any information regarding the whereabouts and habits of the seven mammal species to be featured in the documentary programme.



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Wild Productions will be working in conjunction with NCC (Nature Conservation Corporation), SANPARKS, TMNP and the Mammal Mapping project currently being undertaken by the Animal Demography Unit at UCT. Members of the public who have an interest in the project will also be included as additional 'ears and eyes'.

This 56-minute documentary will focus on seven mammal species living on the Peninsula from Table Mountain to Cape Point. These include the Cape clawless otter, genet, porcupine, dassie, grey mongoose, caracal and the Cape fox. Their daily/nightly activities will be filmed and informative narration will complement the visuals. The programme will be distributed both locally and internationally and all income generated from the sale of the programme will be used to finance future environmental education documentary programmes. A separate 26-minute programme will be edited covering the aims, objectives and 'in the field activities' of the Mammal Mapping Project.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

The 7 mammal species:

- Cape clawless otter
- Genet
- Porcupine
- Dassie
- Grey mongoose
- Caracal
- Cape fox

Shots to be covered:

- Contact with humans

- Feeding
- Their predators e.g eagle view of a dassie
- Habits and antics
- Having fun
- Highlights regarding the smell, taste, sight and other attributes
- Their burrows, caves and dwellings
- Overhead & close up shots from camera fitted to a 'silent drone'
- Underwater footage of otters

For more information, click on the last link under Latest News on left-hand side of www.starkeyresgc.co.za.

SECOND TIME OF ASKING

Tea duty at meetings: We have a small team of people who see that the tea/coffee is ready at the end of the evening. A few more helping hands would be appreciated. Two people are needed each month, so why not team up with a friend and offer your services? You wouldn't have to do this more than twice a year if we could increase the number of helpers. Think about it and give Glenda a call if you are prepared to help.

New series: Starting in January, the CHS News will be running a series on members' collections. If you are not an exhibitor in the "Collector's Corner" at our annual flower show, then we are probably not aware of what plant group has you visiting every nursery and plant sale in Cape Town and surrounds in order to add to your collection. So, if you are a 'closet' collector of a particular group of plants, tell us about it. Speak to Glenda about what is required.

My favourite plant: If our monthly plant table is anything to go by, then our members must surely have quite a few favourite plants in their gardens. To help fill the newsletter with interesting information and to help new gardeners with the identification of plants they may not have seen before, send in the name and a photo of your favourite plant (if you're not a photographer, supply the correct botanical name so that it can be 'googled') – be it an indoor or outdoor plant. Include your name, the suburb in which it grows, how you care for it, the height etc to which it grows, and anything else of interest to others. Send this in by post, fax or e-mail (all details at the top of page 1). Let's live up to the aims of the CHS, which is "... to encourage and improve the knowledge of all things pertaining to horticulture" and extend our knowledge to others.

New ideas: Your newsletter editor, as you've read over the past few months, has had to purloin information from the newsletters of others in order to include more practical content for members. You may or may not enjoy this. Going into our 12th decade of the CHS, let us have your ideas for subject matter you would like to see in the CHS News. Perhaps you are able to provide an article or two of horticultural interest to our members? All contributions and/or suggestions will be taken into consideration. Again, the details for submission are on page 1 – or call Glenda to discuss your ideas.

And lastly, if you have ideas for speakers or outings – or would like to have us visit your garden – please let us know. All suggestions will be considered by the Committee.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

☼ *Two-tiered Agapanthus:*

Has anyone ever had an Agapanthus bloom like this (right)? Cheryl Mann picked it in her garden in Lakeside and wonders how unusual this is.

☼ *Chafer Beetle 'Cocoons':*

The Garden Fruit Chafer (*Pachnoda sinuata*) is commonly seen in most gardens, as are their larvae, which are mistakenly called 'cut worms'. The Thorpe's compost bin usually houses a few of these worms, but the bins were left untouched for the best part of last year. On emptying them earlier this month, the compost was full of the larvae, from minute to fat and juicy. They had had a long time to go the full cycle and the broken oval 'clay' cells (right, centre), beautifully moulded from the garden clippings, were found in the bin, with one still containing a beetle. Many of the beetles had not survived, but some managed to escape when the bin was opened.

Even the white-spotted Fruit Chafer (*Mausoleopsis amabilis*) was found amongst the compost, although the Mike Picker et al's Field Guide to Insects says the larvae develop in horse and goat dung!

The moral of the story: empty your compost bin on a regular basis.



☼ *Scadoxus pole-evansii:*

John van der Linde of Constantia, sent in this photo (right, below) of his "baby". He says it is shade loving and native to the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe. Some of you may be more familiar with the related species, *S. katharinae*.

A beautiful bloom like this must surely be grown in a greenhouse.

☼ *Hymenocallis:*

In July last year, Nicky Ross of Stanford, asked for the name of the Spider Lily that had popped up in her garden. It took four months for someone in Gauteng, via the Pacific Bulb Society's website, to identify it as *Hymenocallis narcissiflora*.



DATES TO DIARISE

- ❖ **Next CHS meeting – 3 March:** Prof Charles Stirton – *The Overberg Renosterveld – going, going, not quite gone yet.*
- ❖ **SARDA Open Garden:** Stellenberg will be open on Sat, 8 Feb from 09:30 to 17:30. The Nursery will be open. Entrance fee: R30; Teas: R20. Enquiries: 082-406-3434 / 021-712-7506.
- ❖ **Rare Plant Fair:** Sat, 15 Mar at Rustenberg Wines, Stellenbosch, from 09:30 to 14:30. Entrance fee: R10. Enquiries: 078-021-2101 / 021-844-0154.
- ❖ **BotSoc Kirstenbosch Garden Fair:** Sat, 12 Apr from 09:00 to 15:00 and Sun, 13 Apr from 09:00 to 13:00 at the Stone Cottages. More about this later.

