



# CHS NEWS

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MARCH 2014

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## MONTHLY MEETING

**Mon, 7 April 2014 at 20:00** at The Athenaeum, Newlands  
(R8 for members and R20 for visitors)

### YOUR VEGETABLE SUPPLY IS UNDER THREAT!

Almost half of Cape Town's fresh vegetables come from the Phillipi Horticultural Area – currently under threat from developers. Nazeem Sondag, spokesperson for the PHA, will give us an illustrated talk on the history and importance of this area.

## NEXT MONTH

In May each year the AGM of the CHS is held. As always, new members are needed to fill the vacant positions on the Committee. If you know of a suitable person who would agree to be nominated, a Nomination Form can be found on page 6. Perhaps you would like to offer *your* services? Completed Nomination Forms, signed by the Nominee, must be received by the Secretary (by hand, post, fax or e-mail) 14 days before the AGM, ie. no later than 21 April.

All Nomination Forms for the current Committee, who are willing to stand for election for another year, will be available at the April meeting to await your proposing and seconding.

## NEXT OUTING

**Sat, 26 April at 10:00:** Guided tour of the Arderne Garden with Des Lazar. Limited to 20 members. RSVP to Glenda by 23 April.

**Wed, 14 May:** Visit the gardens at the Vineyard Hotel. More details next month.

## REPORT BACK

### Plant Table:

*Vireya* (right, top): a tropical form of Rhododendron family; comes in a variety of colours.

*Zauschneria californica* (below, right) – California Fuchsia: flowers throughout summer

*Alternanthera dentata* Ruby – from West Indies to Brazil: ground cover

*Antigonon* (below, centre) – Coral creeper – from Mexico

### Indigenous:

*Aparagus sprengeri* (below, left) – tiny white flowers, followed by berries; useful for flower arrangements; can help to remove harmful chemicals from the air.



# CHS NEWS

MARCH 2014

2

*Bauhinia galpinii* – Pride of de Kaap (derived from De Kaap valley near Barberton): used for landscaping.

*Plectranthus*: makes a lovely show for Autumn.

*Crocsmia*: there is a national collection on the Isle of Wight.

*Nerine filifolia*: needs water during summer.

*Natural hanging basket liner* (right): Wilma decided to remove a pot from her pond, only to find that the roots had grown to such an extent that the pot had “disappeared”. She had to cut away the root mass to remove the pot and was left with a thick mat of roots which was filtering the water very successfully.



## **Annual Book Prize Presentation:**

CPUT's (Cape Peninsula University of Technology) top Horticulture students in 2013 were:

*Megan Blatchford* (2<sup>nd</sup> year):

“Last year I did my in-service training at Harold Porter Botanical Gardens which was the most wonderful experience ever! I was allowed the opportunity to practice the grafting of *Mimetes* sp. onto *Leucospermum* rootstocks with Mr Thomas as my mentor (Botanical artist Vicki Thomas's husband – and CHS member!). I also worked under the supervision of Jane Forrester who is most admirable.

After 3 months in Betty's Bay I worked for Guillaume Nel, Environmental Consultants in Hermanus, doing a Fynbos Rehabilitation project along the current upgrading of Hemel en Aarde Road.

Since then I have been back at varsity, which has been a little bit stressful since our faculty has now moved to Bellville campus and am trying to work hard, maintain good marks and enjoy the semester of theory, as well as think of where I'd like to work next semester for my next 6 months of in-service training.”

*Isabella Hayden* (3<sup>rd</sup>/final year):

“I'd been working as a goldsmith for around 30 years, most of that time working on my own from home. Even though it had been interesting and creative work, it was starting to lose its appeal for me, and I started thinking of finding a new way to make a living. I had developed an interest in plants and birds through many years of hiking, often with individuals and groups of people who knew a lot about the fynbos species we saw. Their influence also led me to join a couple of hack groups (Friends of Vlakkenberg and Friends of Silvermine) after the big fires of the year 2000.

Initially I thought I would just take one or two subjects, out of interest, but studying soon took hold of me and I knew this was the direction I wanted to take. Some of the subjects were fascinating – we touched on everything from environmental studies to financial management to geographical information systems. The volume of work was quite large but the intellectual stimulation was very welcome.

I had to continue making jewellery to support myself while I studied, so the 3-year diploma took me 5 years to complete. I am now working at Kirstenbosch Garden Centre as one of their horticulturists, and this year I will continue studying with Unisa for my BTech (equivalent to a degree).”

Isabella has been a member of the CHS since May 2009.

*Rebecca Wengrowe* (BTech):

“I studied horticulture for a variety of reasons; one - I did not know what to do after school, two - I value plants highly and Horticulture seemed a suitable match for my temperament, and lastly - I truly enjoy the creativity that working with plants allows. Entire spaces can be improved with the smart placement of plants and outdoor features. I am inspired by the natural world and continue to be awed by it in choosing horticulture as a pastime, hobby and, hopefully, as a career. My future therein remains for the moment uncertain as I am yet to find a particular niche of interest and am recovering from four years of studying. I do plan to study Landscaping part-time while continually playing with plants and furthering my skills.”



CHS Chair, Michael Tuffin, with Isabella, Megan and Rebecca

# CHS NEWS

MARCH 2014

3

## REMINDER TO PAY YOUR ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

The question of raising subscriptions was discussed at the last committee meeting as a loss was predicted for the 2013/14 financial year. This was caused by the approximately R6300 loss at the annual Spring Show (poor attendance due to the foul weather). The committee decided that the loss would be covered by the Society's accumulated funds and that subscriptions would not be raised for 2014/15.

As costs are increasing all the time, an increase is a distinct possibility for 2015/16.

There are, however, a number of ways that members can help reduce these increased costs. A major unnecessary cost is the printing and posting of the monthly newsletters to members who have e-mail facilities. Each printed and posted newsletter costs R5.80 per member, or R64 a year. There are about 48 members who have the newsletter delivered by snail-mail, costing nearly R3000 a year. Of those 48 members, a substantial number do have e-mail facilities and the committee appeals to them to use this resource.

Members can also help the Society reduce its banking charges by paying their subscriptions directly by EFT or by cash/cheque handed in at the monthly meeting and to avoid banking cash or cheques directly into the Society's account. The latter two options cost the Society R4 and R14 in additional bank charges.

For your interest, the cost to CHS for collecting R120 subs is as follows, from lowest to highest.

1. Direct banking by EFT = R0.00
2. Cheques handed in at a monthly meeting or received by post and bulk banked by Treasurer = R1.20
3. Cash handed in at monthly meetings and bulk banked by Treasurer = R1.76
4. Cash banked directly by an individual member into CHS account = R5.76
5. Cheque banked directly by an individual member into CHS account = R15.00

In order to reduce unnecessary bank charges, members are requested to keep the above in mind and to avoid options 4 and 5. If that is unavoidable, it would be appreciated if you would please add R4.00 to your amount banked for option 4 and R14.00 to your amount banked for option 5.

Henry Diesveld – Treasurer

That said, your Subscription Renewal form for the 2014/15 year is enclosed (if you have not yet renewed). Please remember that this form needs to be completed, whether your personal details have changed or not, and returned with your cash/cheque payment. If you do an EFT, please see that the form is either faxed or e-mailed to the Membership Secretary (details on page 1). EFT payments without a reference cannot be correctly allocated.

## COLLECTOR'S CORNER

The third in this series comes from Georgina Charlesworth who is an avid collector of Pelargoniums.

"The very first *Pelargonium* I ever owned back in 1998 was the popular Rose scented *Pelargonium graveolens*. I saw this one grow into an enormous bush dotted with lovely pink flowers. The scented leaves were gorgeous and prompted me to find more of these plants with fragrant leaves.

Thus started my fascination with this group of plants. I soon learned how to identify the leaf shapes and every nursery I visited was searched for *Pelargoniums*. *P. fragrans* (nutmeg scented), *P. tomentosum* (peppermint scented) and *P. citronellum* (lemon scented) were soon added to my garden. The combination of the scented leaves and attractive flowers fascinated me enough to start researching more about this amazing group of plants. Once my children had finished school I had a bit more time to develop this interest into a hobby, which progressed to collecting every variation I could lay my hands on – begging for cuttings, I got a *P. sidoides*, with grateful thanks to our Chairman Michael Tuffin who generously donated this specimen. Various nurseries, CHS Garden Shows and friends were all invaluable sources of different plants.

The disparity of leaf forms within this species is amazing – from soft and feathery on *P. tomentosum* to hard and prickly on the *P. crithmifolium*. Some of them, such as *P. tetragonum*, the square stemmed pelargonium, do not even look like *Pelargoniums*.



*P. sidoides*

# CHS NEWS

MARCH 2014

4

A couple of years ago I entered a few of my *Pelargoniums* in the CHS Garden Show for the very first time, as a "collector". I was very proud when my collection was rewarded with a prize and, subsequently, a much coveted cup.

I was extremely fortunate 4 years ago to acquire the 3-book set *Pelargoniums of Southern Africa* by J J Van der Walt, which has been an invaluable source of reference for me. The SANBI website, Plantzafrica, is also very informative for identifying and describing growing conditions for *Pelargoniums*.

*Pelargoniums* are native to southern Africa and most of the cultivated European and North American specimens have their origins in South Africa. The first species of *Pelargonium* known to be cultivated was



Top left to right:  
*P. tomentosum*, *P. crithmifolium*,  
*P. tetragonum*  
Bottom left to right:  
*P. triste*, *P. fulgidum*

*P. triste*. This one has soft feathery, carrot like leaves and a lovely pale, night scented flower. It was probably brought to the Botanical Garden at Leiden, before

1600, on ships which stopped at the Cape of Good Hope. In 1631 the English gardener, John Tradescant, introduced the plant to England.

The genus *Pelargonium* derives its name from the resemblance of the fruit to the beak of a stork – *pelargos* in Greek.

*Pelargoniums* require very little maintenance. In fact the more they are ignored it seems the better they do to try and gather your attention. Most of the garden varieties thrive in dry, hot conditions. Care only needs to be taken with the desert specimens, eg *P. crithmifolium*, to ensure they do not become too wet.

Some of them, like *P. fulgidum* are deciduous and shed their leaves, making you believe that the plant has died (not an uncommon occurrence in my garden!) only for it to regenerate itself in the Autumn.

To date I have collected over 30 different types of pelargoniums – and I am still looking for more!"

## **PLANTING SPRING BULBS**

[Extract from <http://gosouthonline.co.za/april-gardening/>]

### **Time to get Spring Bulbs in the ground**

April means cool nights, lower soil temperatures and shorter days – the ideal conditions for growing spring-flowering bulbs. Exotic bulbs (which hail from the Northern Hemisphere) include Ranunculus, Anemone, Hyacinths and Tulips. Examples of indigenous bulbs (which hail mainly from the Western Cape) are Freesias, Ixias, Sparaxis, Tritonias, Babianas, Cape cowslip and Chinchinchee.

## Tips to get your bulbs off to a good start:

Choose a sunny area of the garden with well-draining soil. The sun's strength is less intense during autumn and winter, so your bulbs will need plenty of sunlight to ensure healthy growth.

Indigenous bulbs grow well in our local sandy soils. Exotics will grow best if you enrich the soil with plenty of compost, or grow them in a pot filled with rich potting soil.

It's very important to plant bulbs at the correct depth. If they are planted too deep, they won't come up, and if they are too shallow, the roots will not be able to support the growing plant. Look at the bulb pack for instructions on how deep each specific bulb should be planted. Measure the depth from the base of the bulb to the surface of the soil.

## DIVIDING PERENNIALS

[Extract from <http://gosouthonline.co.za/>]

### Divide and Multiply

Autumn is the best season to divide and replant perennials to ensure lush growth during spring and summer. Most perennials need to be divided every 4-5 years to prevent overcrowding and to encourage optimum flowering and growth. Examples of perennials that should be divided are Agapanthus, Campanula, Yarrow, Alstroemeria, Dietes, Gazanias, Salvia, Shasta daisies and Lamb's ear.

### Dividing your perennials:

- A perennial plant is generally ready to be divided after it has finished flowering.
- Water the soil well beforehand so that it is easier to lift the plant from the ground. Use a garden fork to gently lift it from the soil, taking care not to damage the roots.
- Rinse the soil from the root ball by placing it in a bucket of water.
- Cut off all stems to about 15cm above the root mass. This helps to conserve water and reduce stress to the new plants.

## CLEVER TIPS

[Extract from *Stodels March Newsletter* – [www.stodels.co.za](http://www.stodels.co.za)]

### Clever Gardening Hints and Ideas:

- ✓ Before using your garden tools, spray them with a thin layer of cooking spray. This prevents the soil from sticking to the tools and makes them much easier to clean afterwards.
- ✓ Dig your fingernails into a cake of soap before you start working with the soil. The layer of soap will stop dirt from caking under your fingernails and make them such easier to wash afterwards.
- ✓ Mark out centimetre measurements on the handle of a small garden fork. This will allow you to use it as a makeshift ruler when planting seedlings.
- ✓ Always harvest herbs before they flower, as this is when the leaves have the strongest flavour. Pick rosemary, thyme and bay leaves and hang them upside down in bunches to dry. Mint, parsley, chives, tarragon and sage should be chopped, dropped into ice trays, covered with water and frozen for future use.

## ITEMS OF INTEREST

- ⊗ *Tecomaria capensis*: Do you have an explanation as to why the leaves (pictured right) differ? They are the same species but come from two separate plants.

## DATES TO DIARISE

- ❖ **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.

**NB:** We will have a table there to promote the CHS and another 4 members are needed to fill the time slots. Please let Glenda know if you are able to do a 2-hour duty some time over this weekend.



(Photographs: Andrew Thorpe, Google Images, [www.plantzafrica.com](http://www.plantzafrica.com))

# CHS NEWS

MARCH 2014

6



## THE CAPE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

### NOMINATION FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Name of Nominee .....

I have been a member of the CHS for approximately ..... years.

I agree to be nominated to the CHS Committee.

**Signature of Nominee** ..... **Date**.....

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Name of Proposer .....

**Signature of Proposer** ..... **Date**.....

I believe this person to be a suitable candidate to join the Committee, for the following reasons:

.....  
.....

2. Name of Seconder .....

**Signature of Seconder** ..... **Date**.....

**NB: The elected Committee appoints the Officers of the Society.**