



# CHS NEWS

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JULY 2014

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## **MONTHLY MEETING**

**Mon, 4 August 2014 at 20:00** at The Athenaeum, Newlands  
(R8 for members and R20 for visitors)

### **FAIRY RINGS AND FAIRY TALES**

Dr Eugene Moll commenced his academic studies in Botany and Zoology and after obtaining his BSc degree, went on to obtain his BSc (Hons) degree in Botany. He then progressed to an MSc and in 1971 attained his PhD in Botany.

Dr Moll has held senior academic positions and a professorship at the University of Cape Town and also at the University of Queensland, Australia, as well as at several other South African academic institutions.

In "semi-retirement" for a number of years now, he has been working on the so called 'Fairy Rings' to which we give little thought. Two articles have appeared in Veld and Flora as he has been updating his research (March 2009 and March 2011). Dr Moll's work takes him from South Africa, through Namibia, Botswana and up into Angola and involves not just the botany of the area but how animals, insects and humans have shaped our landscape over thousands of years, giving him a giant jigsaw puzzle to solve. This should be a good opportunity to hear of his most recent work.

## **NEXT OUTING**

**Thurs, 31 July at 10:30:** Visit the Vera School for Autistic Learners.

Vera School was founded in 1970 and was the first school in the world custom built for learners with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), one of only five Autism Specific Government schools in South Africa. Autism is a severe, life long, developmental disability of neurobiological cause. The school, with 145 learners, is situated on a 1,5 hectare piece of land in the residential suburb of Rondebosch East.

As the education and treatment of learners with ASD is regarded internationally as the most demanding, a high teacher-learner ratio is essential. The full staff complement at Vera is 74. The Department of Education acknowledges the need for the high staff-learner ratio and allocates more staff to Vera in relation to other schools. The allocation, however, is not enough and Vera has to spend the largest part of the budget on salaries in order to maintain the present effective staff complement.

Due to the shortage of funds for niceties like a garden, in January last year a plea went out to our members to donate plants to beautify the Vera School's garden, which they did with great enthusiasm. Now is your chance to see how these plants have fared.

Limited to 25 members. There is still place so please let Glenda have your name by no later than 29 July.

**Sat, 30 August at 15:00:** Visit the garden of CHS members, Cherry and Peter Mann in Lakeside.

This 1000m<sup>2</sup> property has lots of trees and is 50% indigenous. In 1984 the development of this rocky Port Jackson-infested garden on a slope began and continued for about 10 years. Until 2011 only basic maintenance was carried out. Since then frantic development has taken place and this garden produces very unusual specimens, often displayed at our monthly Plant Table.

The adjacent Council-owned land was adopted and has also been developed since 2011 and is 90% indigenous.

Limited to 20 members. Please let Glenda have your name by no later than 28 August.

## **REPORT BACK**

### **July Plant Table:**

*Cyrtanthus* (also known as Ifafa lily, probably relating to where early collectors found it). usually flower prolifically when pot-bound.

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*Babiana* – has a spicy aroma. Local species flowering above Silvermine or Lion’s Head and Rondebosch Common. Hybrids at nurseries are usually taller but a lot of the species are short and flower when the leaves are tiny.

*Thryptomene saxicola* (right) – small shrub under 1m. This Australian version of fynbos belongs to the myrtle family. It prefers well-drained soils in part to full sun. It is frost hardy and a good choice for rockeries and coastal plantings. Tip prune after flowering to maintain a compact shape. Flowers from Autumn to Spring.

<http://floridanatives.wordpress> tells us that “*Kalanchoe delagoensis* (far right) aka “Mother of Thousands” and “Chandelier Plant”, can be found growing around old wooded areas & home sites. Not a native plant, it was brought here years ago as a tropical houseplant. Considered invasive, it spreads quickly by little tiny leaflets that fall off the main leaves. Once they hit the ground they start growing fast. It blooms with bright coral colored tubular flowers that hang like chandeliers. It takes the plant 2-3 years before it flowers, then the main plant dies. But the many thousands of leaflets grow on! It looks like a good plant for hummingbirds – but I don’t usually have hummingbirds in the garden during January. They will freeze to the ground in cold weather – but come back quickly.”



*Heliotrope* (right) – comes in both dark and pale mauve, but only the latter has a scent.

*Gasteria* (far right) – from the northern Cape

(Below left to right):  
*Lachenalia viridiflora* – jade green flowers

*Lachenalia reflexa*(?)

*Lachenalia bulbifera*



*Agathosmas* and all the *Buchus* are coming into flower or already flowering. Jenny suggests you visit Kirstenbosch to see what is in flower and decide what it is you’d like to add to your garden to give it more colour at this time of year.

## A GOOD TURN

Towards the end of 2013 heavy rains devastated the parking area (below, top) of the Harold Porter National Botanical Garden in Betty’s Bay. It took seven months or more to have the area re-paved and the beds prepared for planting (below, bottom).

Your CHS Committee decided to donate R20 000,00 to the HPNBG for the planting up of this area, for which they are very grateful. We will keep you updated on the progress of these beds and the plants that will adorn this area.

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## COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Jenny Simpson, also an Elgin based member, adores *Buddleias*.

"*Buddleias* are named after the Rev. Adam Buddle, an English vicar and botanist, who died in 1715. However *Buddleias* (the common name drops the more scientific "j") were not widely grown in Europe until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The common name, "Butterfly Bush" is self-explanatory and certainly the African ones in my garden are adored by hosts of butterflies and all sorts of other flying creepy crawlies. I have noticed that the exotics do not command the same sort of adoration from the South African insect brigade; maybe it is just a question of "who you know".

### Reasons for collecting these plants:

- That beautiful arching habit is the perfect backdrop to a mixed border and means that with the slightest breeze the sprays of (sometimes) sweetly scented flowers add movement and interest to the garden.
- They are fast growing, not too fussy about soil and very forgiving when it comes to drastic pruning. I prune the exotics (such as *Buddleja davidii*) at the beginning of winter so that they flower with the first flush of roses in late spring (the sight of the crimson rose "Sympathy" in the arms of the deep purple "Black Knight" gives me an instant high.) Others such as *Buddleja madagascariensis*, which flowers in late winter, are cut back after flowering. When I say cut back I mean quite drastically – sometimes to half a metre or less.
- They are dead easy to propagate. A cutting taken after flowering popped into a sandy medium, kept moist and in the shade will soon show signs of growth.
- The medium green leaves with silver-grey undersides add a tone of that much vaunted "silver" to the garden.
- The African and indigenous ones are fairly water wise.

### Some recommended plants:

*Buddleja davidii*: "Black Knight" – 2m x 1m – deep purple flowers (to die for).

*B. davidii*: "Empire Blue" – 1.5m, has violet-blue flowers with an orange centre.

*B. davidii*: "Charming" – 1.5m, lilac-pink flowers.

*B. davidii*: "Royal Red" – 2m, mauve-red flowers.

- B. davidii*: "White Cloud" – 3m, white flowers that ought to be deadheaded as soon as they turn brown to retain the "white cloud" effect.
- B. davidii*: "Harlequin" – leaves are dark green and pointed with creamy-white margins (a plant that you simply must).
- B. auriculata*: 3m x 2m, indigenous with sprays of sweetly scented cream flowers.
- B. salviifolia*: "Weeping Sage" (right) – 6m x 3m, indigenous with strongly scented mauve flowers – attracts the birds and butterflies.
- B. x weyeriana*: "Sungold" – 2m x 2m, summer flowering with ball-shaped orange-yellow flowers tinged with mauve.



## **A GARDENER'S DILEMMA: Caterpillars – to kill or not to kill?**

### PART 1:

At this time of the year caterpillars abound in the garden and many of us are in a quandary as to whether or not to kill them.

Do we want a garden with as near as possible perfect plants but with fewer and fewer of our beautiful moths and butterflies visiting? Or are we prepared to put up with some of our much loved and nurtured plants being damaged by the voracious appetites of most caterpillars, so that we may have the pleasure (and it IS a pleasure) of watching butterflies drinking nectar from our garden flowers, and moths flitting around an outside light on a soft summer's evening?

And what of the environment and the ecology? What damage would be caused by the persistent destruction of each and every caterpillar? What about the slender links of the food chain? To say nothing of the dreadful fact that the wholesale killing of each and every caterpillar (along with their habitat destruction) could lead to the extinction of many of our butterflies and moths

The prolonged use of poisons in our gardens and elsewhere must surely have something to do with the disappearance of several caterpillar and insect eating birds. The African Hoopoe and the Common Wagtail are two birds that immediately spring to mind. In the 1970's these birds were regular visitors to our neighborhood (Bergvliet), but are now, sadly, seldom, if ever seen. Klaas's Cuckoo, one of the few birds that prey on the caterpillar of the Garden Acraea, is now so rare, that when one is heard in our garden it causes quite a stir and necessitates the general downing of garden tools to rush for binoculars to try and spot this elusive little green bird!

Here are the most common caterpillars found in our gardens today, with suggestions of how to find them and how to get rid of them sensibly, or to keep them, as the case may be:

The **Hawk Moth** is a medium sized brown moth with red flashes under its wings. The caterpillars feed mainly on *Impatiens*, *Arums* and *Fuchsias*. They are smooth, green or brown, with large prominent eyespots on their heads. They grow into large, fat, muscular caterpillars with the ability to withdraw their heads into their bodies if disturbed. They are vigorous feeders, and can, if left unchecked, strip a plant overnight. The best way to deal with these caterpillars is to go out at night, armed with a torch and catch them in the act of devouring your plants. Failing this, they can be found during the day resting on the lower stems of the plant, just below the surface of the soil, under leaf litter, or lurking against the side of the pot of the plant they are eating.

Everyone is familiar with the ubiquitous **brown hairy caterpillar** or "Woolly Bear". The adult form of this caterpillar is the **Tri-coloured Tiger**, a white and yellow moth with black crescents on its wings, a red abdomen and red sides on the thorax. They feed, mainly at night, on many garden plants, including *Hebe*, *Heliotrope* and a variety of vegetables. Hand pick these caterpillars, also by torchlight at night, and keep a sharp eye out for them during the day as well, especially when watering, as they dislike getting wet and writhe about frantically if they are caught by a jet of water.

To be continued .....

Lyn McCallum

## **GARDENING TIPS FOR JULY – thanks to [www.stodels.com](http://www.stodels.com)**

### **“Plant and sow:**

- Plant pansy and viola seedlings now in well composted beds. They'll reward you with a burst of colour in late winter and spring.
- Sow the following seeds now for colour in summer: alyssum, marigolds, linaria, Shirley poppies, impatiens, vygies and calendulas.
- Sow winter veggies, like cabbages, leeks, peas, turnips, carrots, radishes, beans, cauliflower, broccoli, Swiss chard and Asian greens.
- There's still time to plant lillium bulbs. Get them into the ground before the end of the month.

### **Feed:**

- Feed all flowering plants with 3:1:5 to boost flower production.
- Water camellias and azaleas regularly to prevent bud drop. Also remember to keep the soil around these plants well mulched.
- Feed spring and summer flowering bulbs with bulb food once every two weeks.
- Fertilise hydrangeas with an application of 3:1:5 and compost.

### **Prune:**

- It's time to prune your roses. Aim to get your pruning done between the last two weeks of July and the first week of August.
- Prune and shape deciduous fruit trees like peaches, apples, pears and apricots. Spray with lime sulphur a few days later.
- Prune summer and autumn flowering climbers and shrubs like cassia, clematis, golden shower, barleria, ribbon bush, wild dagga and westringia.
- Pinch out the growing tips of sweet peas to encourage strong, bushy growth.
- Cut off the old fronds on ferns to make way for new growth.

### **Prune those Roses ...**

Most rose experts agree that the best time to prune roses in the Western Cape is between the last two weeks of July and the first week of August. There's no need to be intimidated by pruning – it's actually a very simple exercise and, even if you don't manage to prune like a professional the first time, any pruning is better than no pruning at all. Pruning now helps to promote better flowers and lush growth from October onwards.

Once you have completed your pruning, dig in compost and Bounce Back fertiliser around the bushes. You must seal all pruning wounds with Steriseal. Once completed then you have to spray with Lime Sulphur in order to kill off dormant fungus and pests.

### **You will need :**

Steri-seal – to seal off the pruned branches to prevent infection entering the plant.

Lime sulphur – to spray on the whole bush to prevent any disease.

A spray bottle to spray the roses

### **Love your Lemons ...**

Every garden should have a lemon tree. They're wonderfully attractive trees and once they're established, you'll never be caught without lemon juice again. The "Eureka" variety is very popular due to its thin skin and small amount of pips, but it's worth giving the "Cape Roughskin" variety a try too – its juice is slightly sweeter than most other varieties.

### **Here are some tips for keeping your lemon tree in peak condition.**

All lemon trees should be fed during the winter months. Feed with a balanced fertiliser like 8:1:5 or 3:1:5. Large, established trees need about 2kg, while newly planted trees need about 300g of fertiliser. Sprinkle granules all the way from the stem to the outer drip line of the tree. Water well before and after feeding. Place a thick layer of organic mulch all around the stem of the tree. For an extra boost, feed your lemon tree with 75g of Epsom salts, which is a good source of magnesium and sulphur, which help to promote the development of blooms and fruit.

### **Coping with the cold ...**

Based on the near freezing winter temperatures we have been experiencing in the Western Cape recently, it makes sense to consider adding a few winter stalwarts to your garden. These plants cope very well with cold temperatures and will soon form the backbone of your winter garden.

- **Deciduous trees** such as oaks, maples, birches and plane trees all do well in frosty weather. As an added bonus, they offer lush, new spring growth and gloriously rich foliage colours in autumn.
- **Conifers** cope well in the cold and many varieties turn a wonderfully warm bronze or orange colour during the winter months. They grow best in full sun in an area where there is good air circulation.
- **Hardy evergreen shrubs** which look good all year round include Nandina, Viburnum, Camellias and Elaeagnus."

## TO CROCK OR NOT TO CROCK

John van der Linde submitted this article. Whether you agree or not, every 'crackpot' idea has its merits.

THE TIMES  
Wednesday, 23 April 2014

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## Gardeners' trick is a crackpot idea, tests show

The long-established gardening trick of placing "corks" in patio pots to protect plants has been debunked by experts, who claim it can actually harm them.

For years TV gardeners such as Alan Titchmarsh have advocated placing a layer of broken terracotta pieces in the bottom of a tub to increase water drainage. The method, passed down through generations of gardeners, is said to stop the soil becoming too waterlogged, which can kill the plant.

Now a team of experts at *Which?* magazine have claimed that the practice is nothing more than a gardeners' myth, after having carried out a series of controlled tests.

They used 40 ten-litre



Experts claim the practice of planting with 'corks' is a gardeners' myth  
JULIETTE WADE/GETTY IMAGES

pots and planted five trailing yellow calibrachoa plants, known as million bells, in each one. These were chosen as they are known to get root rot in very damp soil. Half of the pots were plastic and half were made of clay, and 50 per cent of these had corks added to them. Some were also put on saucers.

Each container was watered regularly, and when the plants had bloomed



The TV presenter Alan Titchmarsh says that the trick to improve drainage  
CHRIS GONIPA

there was found to be no difference between the pots with corks in and ones without.

Ceri Thomas, editor of *Which? Gardening*, was part of the team behind the test. She said: "Despite six in ten gardeners telling us

they always use corks in pots, we found that this made no difference to how well the plants did in our tests. In fact, in wet summers corks can prevent water draining out of the pot and do more harm than good."

Titchmarsh, who has previously advised gardeners to use corks on the BBC's gardening website, was not available to address the new research.

Colin Brickell, group plant buyer at Haskins garden centre in Ferndown, Dorset, insists that corks do help container planting. "We have always put corks in our pots at Haskins and will continue to do so," he said.

"In January and February they made a big difference because we had so much rain and they helped to stop the plants getting waterlogged." ■

### ITEMS OF INTEREST

- ⊗ Would you like some uniformity in the saucers/trays/bottoms you place under your pot plants? There are 50 black plastic (20cm dia.) saucers available at R3 each from Ian Brown of the Clivia Club. If you are interested, please contact him via [ianbrown@telkomsa.net](mailto:ianbrown@telkomsa.net).
- ⊗ *Urban-Eco Life e-magazine*: Subscribe, for free at [WWW.WILDWORLDBOOKS.COM](http://WWW.WILDWORLDBOOKS.COM). The latest issue is available on line with many interesting articles.

### DATES TO DIARISE

- ❖ 6/7 September: CHS Flower and Garden Show
- ❖ 20 September: Annual CHS Plant Sale
- ❖ 25 – 28 Sept: Hermanus Botanical Society Annual Flower Festival

(Photographs: Andrew Thorpe, Benjamin Festus, Google Images)