



# CHS NEWS

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SEPTEMBER 2014

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## MONTHLY MEETING

**Mon, 6 October 2014 at 20:00** at The Athenaeum, Newlands  
(R8 for members and R20 for visitors)

### ***FROM THE HIGH HIMALAYAS TO THE HAGUE – THE STORY OF A BEAUTIFUL RIVER OWNED BY TWO COUNTRIES***

India is building a dam just upstream of its border with Pakistan, which will drastically change flows. Pakistan took India to the Court of Arbitration in The Hague.



**Dr Jackie King** is an aquatic ecologist with 40 years' experience of ecological research on the rivers of southern Africa. For the last 25 years she has specialised in developing and applying methods for assessing the water requirements to sustain river ecosystems (Environmental Flows). From 1997 to date she has been contracted to lead scientific teams working on environmental flows and river system management worldwide.

In 2010 she was appointed as an inaugural member of the National Water Advisory Council to advise the South African Minister of Water Affairs. In 2012 she was appointed Extraordinary Professor at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town.

Dr King was appointed, in 2009, as scientific advisor to the Government of Pakistan in a dispute with India over a dam in the Himalayas, and this talk will cover the river, the people of Kashmir, and the court case at the beautiful Peace Palace in The Hague.

## NEXT OUTING

**Sat, 18 October at 10:00:** Visit the indigenous and recently re-vamped Constantia garden of members Jane and Gerald Robertson. Please let Glenda have your name by no later than 16 October.

**November – date and time to be confirmed:** Following the very interesting and informative talk by James Fisk on the Hotel Verde, we will be visiting this "greenest hotel in Africa".

## REPORT BACK

### ***August talk – Fairy Rings and Fairy Tales***

Dr Eugene Moll let us into a few of the secrets of the little known fairy rings (not those at the bottom of your garden), which are found in Namibia, southern Angola and in South Africa. This is a synopsis of his talk:

"Fairy Rings (FRs) are slightly concave, bare circles, in a monospecific grassland matrix. They only occur on red sandy substrates in the pro-Namib: from southern Angola to just across the Gariep River into RSA.

FRs can be small (a few metres in diameter) or much bigger (up to 25 x 30 m) – with an average size of some 10 m diameter.

### **There are many theories regarding their formation...**

The size, shape and distribution of FRs is similar to the large termitaria that occur in many parts of southern Africa – such as the Okavango, KNP and Zambia, and to the *heuweltjies* (little mounds) of the Cape winter rainfall region.

### **Distribution**

FRs only occur in the pro-Namib (between 50-150 mm mean annual rainfall), and then only on sandy substrates.

As such big concentrations are few in number, AND there are many areas where there are only a few. They are all substrate dependent and ALL within the pro-Namib...

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## How are they made?

There are many theories, some of which are:

- ❖ Geological...
- ❖ *Euphorbia damarana* "graves"...
- ❖ Termites...
- ❖ Seed harvesting ants...
- ❖ Other fossorial animals...
- ❖ Self-regulated plant growth...
- ❖ Fairies/dragons and other things...

## Generally accepted "facts" about FRs:

One is that the FR soils have more moisture than the soils off the FRs...

## Another FR "fact" is that FRs leak gasses like:

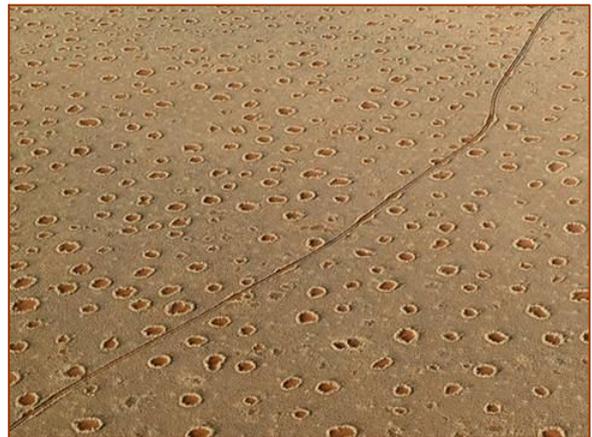
- ❖ Methane
- ❖ Carbon monoxide
- ❖ Carbon dioxide

And that they are long-lived ~40 yrs & possibly MUCH more?

Our proposal is that FRs are possibly made by *Hodotermes mossambicus*!

This is where the commonly accepted "facts" end...

What led us to this unique conclusion was when we used ground penetrating radar (gpr) to "see" what was happening deep down below the surface....., but THIS IS STILL OUR "SECRET"!



### Examples of fairy rings

*Above left:* The dark spot, centre right, is the shadow of a vehicle travelling on a track through the desert

*Above right:* Another track running through the desert between the many fairy rings

*Below:* Grass growing no further than the perimeter of the fairy ring



## September Plant Table:

Jenny says a lot of plants either need a hot/cold schedule or a wet/dry to stimulate flowering. The *Eucharis amazonica* (below, right) flowers following a dry spell. The Eucharist lily is one of the loveliest bulbs – and even when it's not flowering, the foliage is a tremendous asset. Flowers have a fragrance. This was backed up by <http://pacificbulbsociety.org> saying: "***Eucharis amazonica*** is widely cultivated, although very commonly confused with *E. x grandiflora*. Staminal cup measuring 11.2-13.8 mm long to apex of teeth and 28-30 mm wide, margins slightly recurved, interior stained green particularly along filamental traces, shallowly cleft between stamens. This species has a narrow distribution from Huallaga valley near Moyobamba and Tarapoto, northeastern Peru. This species is at least partly sterile (Meerow 1989). Viable seeds have never been produced in cultivation and is thought the whole population to be a single clone. Plants flowering at least twice a year, July-August and December-March. Flower fragrance is sweet and spicy and seems stronger during the day.

In cultivation, this plant can be grown as a houseplant with little humidity in the air. A slightly sunny window with filtered light is best, although some members find that too much direct light can cause the leaves to scorch. During the active growing season, it also likes a lot of water and occasional fertilizers if possible. The mix should be rich in organic matter but well drained. In tropical climates, the plant will bloom naturally without special treatment. In other climate, drought or temperature stress is necessary to induce bloom. To drought stress, during spring and fall, allow the leaves to flop a little before watering again (Marc Hachadourian). To cold stress, grow at 80 °F followed by a drop in temperature for 3-5 weeks at 70 °F induced a 95% flowering rate (J. van Bragt et al. 1986)."



***Dipogon lignosus*** – Cape Sweet Pea – indigenous to W and E Cape. Extremely vigorous. Quick grower and would cover a wall. Probably better to plant in a pot because it can strangle shrubs and trees it climbs into.

*Plantzafrica.com* (recorded by CHS member, Rebecca Wengrowe, in 2012, together with Alice Notten)

"The Cape sweet pea 'is a delicate and beautiful twiner and well worth cultivating' (Pole Evans 1931). This plant is a semi-evergreen, hardy perennial with fragrant eye-catching flowers and minimal watering needs, making it a worthy garden subject, but it should be cultivated with care as it is known to be invasive in some areas.

## Description

*Dipogon lignosus* is an herbaceous perennial with a climbing habit, becoming woody below. Its green softwood stems climb up nearby structures, shrubs or trees, sometimes growing more than 2 m tall and extending far sideways when given the chance. The leaves are pinnately trifoliolate (composed of three leaflets) and are a dark to medium green with a light underside. The leaflets are diamond-shaped, with a wide set base and then tapering to a fine point. Each leaflet has its own stipule. Pink, mauve, magenta and purple peaflowers adorn the new growth on stem tips in short, dense racemes on long peduncles. Flowers occur throughout spring and summer (August to January). The fruits are flat, sickle-shaped pods, containing four to six seeds each, and form shortly after flowering. This fast growing twiner is evergreen in warmer climates, but may become deciduous in areas where frost occurs."



Apparently the Western Australian Government is not happy and the Australian "Florabase" website has this to say:

**"General Biology.** *Growth form.* Vine. *Reproduction.* Seed. *Dispersal.* Explosive, birds, water, soil and garden refuse. *Time to first flowering.* 2+ years. *Vegetative regeneration strategy.* coppices/resprouts. *Seedbank persistence.* Soil, medium, 1-5 years. *Fire response.* Fire can kill mature plants and stimulate seed germination.

**Notes.** Infestations smother all ground-flora, topple shrubs and trees and prevent any regeneration occurring. Soil disturbance generates mass seed germination.

**Additional information.** *Origin.* South Africa. *History of use/introduction.* Garden escape. *Similar native species.* *Hardenbergia comptoniana*.

**Suggested method of management and control.** Hand pull seedlings and small plants ensuring removal of all root material; sever vines of larger plants and leave to dry in canopy, then dig out woody roots; scrape and paint using 100% glyphosate or foliar spray in highly degraded sites with 1.5% glyphosate; in more sensitive

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sites, cut stems off at chest height, lay lower sections on ground and apply 1.5% glyphosate over them. Read the manufacturers' labels and material safety data sheets before using herbicides."

[Ed: Somewhat vicious, wouldn't you say?]

***Salvia Africana lutea*** (golden brown flower) is a good host for butterflies.

*Plantzafrica.com* (recorded by our very won Cherise Viljoen in 2002)

*Salvia africana-lutea* is an aromatic, hardy shrub with unusually coloured flowers borne over a long period. It is fairly fast-growing, up to 2 m and very attractive to wildlife.

Flowering begins in early spring, and the bright yellow flowers soon fade to rusty-orange and then reddish brown. After the petals fall, the saucer-like calyx, which becomes papery with age, remains as an added attraction. The flowers are both attractive and a curiosity. I.C. Hedge (1974) says the flowers at maturity give the impression of being withered. He describes them as golden brown, often with a trace of purple at the base. The flowers contain a lot of sweet nectar which attracts bees and moths, and acts as an essential food supply for sunbirds, particularly when proteas are not flowering. The flowers are complimented by greyish-green, aromatic foliage. Altogether, this is a very worthwhile addition to one's garden.

The name is derived from the Latin word *salvere* meaning to save or heal, and refers to the medicinal properties of some species. The first part of the specific epithet, *africana-lutea*, describes the plant's origin, and the second part describes the yellow colour of the emerging flowers.

The distribution of *S. africana-lutea* extends from the coast of Namaqualand to the Cape Peninsula and eastwards from there to Port Alfred. In its natural state, it grows not far from the sea and is often a common constituent of the vegetation on coastal sand dunes."

***Salvia dolomitica*** (right, top), from Mpumulanga, is bee pollinated.

*Plantzafrica.com* says: "The dolomite sage is the perfect, hardy, frost tolerant shrub for every garden which will reward its gardener with its long summer display and aromatic foliage.

*Salvia dolomitica* is a hardy, fairly fast growing, neat upright shrub, 1–2 m high. It branches from a basal rootstock-like stem and the diameter expands, over time, to form a thicker bush. Short, simple and glandular

hairs adorn the stems.

*Salvia dolomitica* is best grown in open ground in full sun, but will tolerate light partial shade. It is best grown in well-drained, composted soils. The dolomite sage will survive with little water, but responds well to regular watering, especially in summer. No extra feeding is necessary for strong, healthy growth in good soils, although an occasional foliar feed would do no harm and the plants will tolerate and respond well to general fertilizing. The plants need to be pruned back hard every year or alternatively every second year to encourage bushy, non-woody growth. This is best done in late winter, prior to its new spring growth."

Orchid from North India/south Himalaya. Its genus is ***Coelogyne flaccida*** (right, centre). There are a number of species dependent on cool areas, of which this is one. Some prefer warmer areas.

Other specimens on the Plant Table:

*Corydalis*: Fumitory Family (Fumariaceae) grows mainly from Afghanistan to the Far East; *Sparaxis bulbifera* – found wherever it's wet eg. on Rondebosch Common; *Babiana angustifolia*; *Veltheimia* – lovely glossy foliage with the raspberry colour flower. Other colours are pink and yellow (Lemon Flame); *Arctotis stoechadifolia* – cream, ground cover growing on sand along the West Coast. The grey foliage is very attractive; *Clivia* – Chinese dwarf hybrid; *Lachenalia pustulata* – makes a lovely pot plant for a patio; *Impatiens* – grows in shade, but best to grow the New Guinea type as the *Impatiens* as we know it, has practically disappeared; *Freesia laxa* – from E Cape and Natal; Aloes, which are loved by Sunbirds; *Buddleia*; Pennywort (right, below).



**Pennywort for Animals** by Jimmy Symmonds (an article from The Gardener – [www.thegardener.co.za](http://www.thegardener.co.za))

Pennywort's botanical name is *Centella asiatica*, derived from *centum*, meaning 'hundred': which refers to its many kidney-shaped leaves with indented margins, and *Asiatica*, referring to pennywort's Asian origins. It is indigenous to large parts of Asia and northern Australia and plays an important role in the cuisine and herbal medicine traditions of Indonesia, China and India. This increasingly popular herb has many benefits for animals, too.

## **PENNYWORT'S BENEFICIAL QUALITIES**

It is pennywort's leaves that are mostly used in herbal medicine. They have a slight peppery taste but are otherwise fairly bland and generally palatable, even for the fussiest of animals.

Pennywort has many health-promoting properties that have been valued traditionally and are being increasingly validated by modern science. Many of these properties are also beneficial to the animals we care for. Pennywort is called *brahmi* in India, a Sanskrit word meaning 'bringing knowledge': This name is a reference to its use in supporting the mind and the nervous system, and modern research is now confirming that pennywort can indeed help to relax the nervous system and enhance the memory.

Pennywort is also traditionally used to promote longevity, acting as a general tonic, and is beneficial to older animals and those that require convalescent support. Plants with this effect are called 'adaptogens' in herbal medicine, and pennywort is a good example.

Pennywort also contains constituents that help the skin to heal. Used topically as a wash, a simple poultice, or as a cream, pennywort reduces irritation, stimulates new skin growth and reduces scarring.

## **WHEN TO USE PENNYWORT**

Pennywort is particularly useful in older animals with nervousness and signs of senility. Added to an animal's food, pennywort leaves can relax the nervous system, nourish the brain and enhance cognitive abilities. For all animals that are weak and needing restorative support, especially those under long-term stress, pennywort can play a useful supportive role.

Animals with wounds may also benefit from pennywort's skin-healing properties. For minor cuts, burns, rashes and scratches, pennywort makes a good

first-aid choice to help repair damaged tissues and reduce itching or irritation. Pennywort can speed up healing, improving the circulation and skin elasticity, and reducing scar formation. This is especially useful where wounds are slow to heal, for example over a knee or elbow joint, or after surgery where there is pressure or tension on the skin.

## **GROWING PENNYWORT**

Pennywort is a fast-growing, perennial groundcover that has become naturalised in South Africa. It is widely distributed and easy to grow and is becoming a popular herb in the garden, which means that it is increasingly carried by many nurseries. Pennywort likes to grow in moist, partially shaded areas such as forests, marshy areas and riverbanks, and does not like severe frost. Propagating pennywort is easy. Take cuttings from the creeping stems, and roots will appear at the nodes.

Besides enhancing your garden and enriching your animal's environment, pennywort leaves can be harvested and added, pulped or finely chopped, to your animal's feed when necessary. Pennywort leaves can also be processed into a tea, poultice or cream for use as first aid on wounds.

## **WORDS OF WISDOM**

Pennywort is generally considered safe for animals. However, rare instances of skin allergies and upset digestion are possible. Before using herbs, always consult your veterinarian if your animal is on medication, pregnant, lactating or undergoing surgery.

More information on herbs and animal wellbeing can be found on the Happiness Is website ([www.happinessis.co.za](http://www.happinessis.co.za)). Comments and questions can be emailed to Cara Harris and Jimmy Symmonds, at [hi@happinessis.co.za](mailto:hi@happinessis.co.za).

## **FOTAG (Friends Of The Arderne Garden) REPORT**

Lisa Conradie, of Ravanello, works part-time in the garden and this is an extract from her report for the months of May to August 2014. The areas referred to are on a map which was not suitable for reproduction in this newsletter. Should you require this electronically, together with Lisa's full report to the FOTAG committee, please request it from Glenda.

"The project areas are starting to overlap to a degree, due in part to the following:

- Donated materials are more suitable to certain sections and planting time + area must be given priority in some cases (as with the Arums).
- Maintenance is needed in previously planted up sections. This was taken into consideration in the budget and I have attempted to explain to new contractors what needs to be weeded, however, they currently lack the skill to follow this up efficiently (weeding without destroying our special Hellebores for example), therefore we will continue weeding in the more 'difficult' sections.

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- Watering with drag lines is starting on warmer days, where seedlings are still small and soil dries out quickly. Until irrigation is installed this will continue. Installation of new irrigation is proving to be very time-consuming but I will continue to fit that in with the Renaissance project. This overlap should not affect the schedule as long as a good pace is kept up.

## Arderne nursery:

The nursery has been cleared of most bits and pieces and most stock of rooted cuttings has been planted up. There were various cuttings of specimens which had been prepared earlier in the year for sections 17 and 22 and these were planted out in August.

## Compost:

A 1.5 x 4 x 1 meter layered compost heap was built on 29 August, using materials from the garden and horse manure purchased from the stables. Materials not found in the yard were donated by Ravello.

A brief summary of the work that has been done: *Pelargonium tomentosum* has been added from cuttings taken earlier this year; more Arum lilies were added; Bokbaai Vygies are starting to flower at the entrance, but the soil is very wet in this area following the rains, so will await results; *Stachys lanata* from nursery was planted up along the edge of the bed bordering the new lawn; *Azaleas* currently in full bloom; beds have been cleared of weeds; *Clivias* that were lifted from the garden earlier this year and kept in storage in the nursery have been planted; planting up of variegated *Plectranthus* (*P. madagascariensis* var. *madagascariensis* ?) purchased from a supplier; weeds were removed in between the roots of the Wedding Tree. All in all, lots of *Plectranthus*, *Clivia*, *Dietes*, *Alyssum* and *Zantedischia* have been planted.

Lisa has given us a "wish list" of items and plants for FOTAG. Should you have any of these to donate, please contact her first to check if they are still required. Her details are lisavicini75@gmail.com / 071-358-3321.

## The following items would be welcomed:

Bird net (available at Starke Ayres)	Clean 80l drums	Clean plastic pots and trays, various sizes
Clean river sand	Environmentally friendly garden products (leftovers, etc)	Fresh garlic
Garden tools	Leftover seed of annual flowering plants	Orange bags (the net bags oranges are sold in)
Organic fertilizer	Perlite	Plant labels (cut from Yogurt containers)
Sandstone	Vermiculite	Watering cans
Wire, various sizes		

## The following plant material would be useful:

<i>Ajuca reptans</i> (various foliage colours)	<i>Asystasia gangetica</i>	<i>Bromelia</i> spp.
<i>Carissa</i> 'green carpet'	Comfrey (pinks and blues)	<i>Dissotis canescens</i> , <i>D princeps</i>
<i>Euphorbia millii</i> (Christ Thorn)	Ferns, various	<i>Gunnera perpensa</i>
<i>Helichrysum</i> 'limelight'	<i>Helleborus</i> spp.	<i>Hypoestes aristata</i> (white)
<i>Hypoestes phyllostachya</i> (white, red or pink Polka dot plant)	<i>Limonium</i> spp.	Louisiana iris (Blues)
<i>Melianthus major</i>	<i>Pelargonium tomentosum</i>	<i>Streptocarpus formosus</i>
Turf (shade and sun)	<i>Viola odorata</i> (pinks and blues)	

## Bulbs:

<i>Amaryllis belladonna</i>	<i>Aristea ecklonii</i> ; <i>A capitata</i> (blue and pink)	<i>Crinum</i> spp. (there is lots of space in ponds for <i>C. campanulatum</i> )
Bluebells ( <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i> ?)	<i>Clivia</i> spp.	
<i>Eucomis autumnalis</i>	<i>Gladiolus</i> spp. (pinks)	<i>Iris germanica</i> (pinks and violets)
<i>Kniphofia</i> spp.	<i>Schizostylis coccinea</i>	<i>W. borbonica</i> subsp. <i>Ardernei</i> (white)

More unusual exotics would also be appreciated, but it must first be discussed with Lisa or Adam Harrower.

## ITEMS OF INTEREST

- ☼ **Sat 11 October 2014 – SARDA's Annual Open Garden at Watroak Farm:** Gates open at 09h30 and close at 17h00. Entrance R30.00 and Teas R20.00. For more information, contact Bee on 021-794- 4393 (office hours) or Debbie on 082-406-3434.
- ☼ **Sat/Sun 1, 2 and 8, 9 November – Elgin Open Gardens:** For more information, visit [www.elginopengardens.co.za](http://www.elginopengardens.co.za) or contact Barbara Knox-Shaw on 021-844-0154 / 078-021-2101.
- ☼ **Fri/Sat 14 and 15 November 2014 – Open Gardens Constantia:** Entrance fee is R50, which includes tea and cake served in one of the gardens. To find out more, visit <http://opengardensconstantia.wordpress.com/> [Ed: Can you spot a current CHS member in the photo of 1994?]

(Photographs supplied by: Jackie King, Errol and Jenny Scarr, Eugene Moll and Google Images)