



CHS NEWS

JUNE 2015

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NEXT MEETING

Mon, 6 July 2015 at 20:00 at The Athenaeum, Newlands
NB: R10 for members and R20 for visitors

David Davidson on **CHELSEA 2015**

NEXT OUTING

Wed, 22 July 2015 at 12:00: Pay a visit to the Compton Herbarium at Kirstenbosch. Start off by attending the Kirstenbosch Wednesday talk at 10:30. Adam Harrower will tell you about the Remarkable Trees of Arderne.

Let Glenda have your name by no later than 20 July.

REPORT BACK

June Plant Table:



[Far left] *Campanula trachelium* brought in by Sabina Wortley, stood at 90cm – already cut short!

[Left] A very unusual, unnamed Lavender was brought in by Nicola Anthony.

When you bring in a plant or flower for display on the Plant Table, please use the paper provided to write your name, the name of the plant/flower (if you know it), as well as something about the plant – position, size, feeding etc. To save time, you could write the slips out at home. Please place this piece of paper next to each of your plants. Jenny will use these when she describes the plants at the meeting and will pass them on for the report-back in CHS News. Some of us are still trying to learn plant names.

Confessions of a Flower Stalker:

Marion Whitehead gave us tips on how best to see our Spring flowers. Here is a summary of them:

Follow the season: depending on the winter rains, flowers bloom from early August in the Springbok area and the trend spreads south to Nieuwoudtville, Clanwilliam and Darling as the weather warms up throughout September.

Pick people's brains: stay at places where you can find out about the current flower hotspots from your hosts and fellow guests.

Snooze 'n cruise: there's no need to get up early as the carpets of daisies open for business only when the temperature reaches around 17°C mid morning.

Turn your back on the sun: drive or walk with the sun behind you, so the flowers face you.

Be open minded: the dazzling carpets of daisies are not the only show in the platteland in spring – bulbs and hundreds of other flowers are also at their titillating best and many of them open even on dull days, so don't pack up when clouds cover the sun. *Stop for koffie en koek:* it's a matter of road safety on these long stretches of road. Farm stalls serve great food and are good sources of flower info.

Check flower show dates: they take place when blooms in that area are expected to be at their best.

Hopefield: 27-30 August

Darling: 18-20 September

Bredasdorp: 27-30 August

Hermanus: 24-27 September

Clanwilliam: 27 August-5 September

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Outing to Namib Garden Nursery:

A very interesting morning was spent with Tom Kinneborough amongst many varieties of succulents and cacti. This was followed by a visit to Afmine who are producers of Volca-Rock, Gyp-Sea and Vermi-Gyp, as well as their new Enriched Mushroom Compost which is "more than just a plant feeder; it's a soil replenisher"! Olof de Villiers, CEO, tells us that they will test your soil/sand and provide you with the correct mix for your plants. If you're interested, look at their website www.afmine.co.za, e-mail them on info@afmine.co.za or call them on 082-414-1069.



In the Namib Garden [far left] and one of the Ferro Cacti coming into flower [left]. This plant, at approx. 45cm high and 35cm diameter, is 22 years old. These grow in a spiral.

Harold Porter National Botanical Garden:

The CHS News of July 2014 reported on the donation made to HPNGB to plant up the beds in the parking area that had been washed away by heavy rains the previous year. Here is an update on the progress since then:

"Attached are a few pics of the beds that we re-planted with the plants and trees we bought with your generous donation. The paving in the parking area and the front of the restaurant was finally completed last week and now we can concentrate on filling the gaps in the plant beds. It has been a long process, but as you can see, we are getting there.

The bridges in Disa Kloof are still closed as we are busy with the EIA process. We are hoping that at least one of the bridges will be fixed before the peak season, but if not, then all should be completed this time next year.

Once again thank you for the donation, we do appreciate it very much.

Kind regards

Berenice Carolus
Curator
Harold Porter National Botanical Garden"



MEMBERSHIP

A big vote of thanks to all of you for renewing your membership of the CHS. We appreciate your support – some over many, many years; others for a good number of years; and then those who are still relatively new and will stay members for a long time to come.

IN MEMORIAM

A member of eight years standing, Sjané Bezuidenhout passed away earlier this month. She was a regular visitor at monthly meetings. Our condolences to her sister, Lecia Bartmann (also a CHS member) and family.

MEET OUR BOOK PRIZE WINNERS:

Sihle Ngxabi (Best 1st Year student in 2014):

"I am Sihle Ngxabi and I am originally from the Eastern Cape in a small town called Mount Frere. I did my primary there and then moved to Cape Town for high school. I did my high school at Thembelihle high school in Khayelitsha, where it is difficult for a young guy because of drugs, alcohol, gangsters and peer pressure, but I kept focused and kept alive my dream of seeing myself at a university one day doing something that I love and am passionate about.

The reason why I chose horticulture is the fact that I enjoyed chapters

about plants in high school and I just wanted to go beyond, and I found horticulture as most relevant study when I did my research. I am now doing my 2nd year at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and I am currently doing my 1st in-service training at Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens for 6 months, which ends this month. I am enjoying every moment of my studies so far and I believe that doing something that I love is the reason why I am the best student so far and I believe that I am still going to achieve more.

I want to see myself in future as a successful horticulturist owning my own nursery."



JOURNAL OF A HAPHAZARD GARDENER – MAY/JUNE

The CHS's visit to the Company Gardens was wonderful. The shabby boring place of memory has undergone a transformation. An old municipal car park has blossomed into a vegetable garden [right] full of healthy succulent vegetables.

My own experience of vegetable gardening has been a resounding failure; apart from some tomatoes that spring up all over the garden, sown there from the compost heap. Tomatoes are now officially a fruit anyway.

The cabbages in the Garden looked big, round and juicy but as with every Eden there is the apple of knowledge. Getting urban dwellers to grow their own vegetables has been touted as a solution to feeding the urban poor. In fact South Africa has enough food to feed all its citizens but the food is unevenly distributed. The urban garden experiment in southern Africa has been a failure. The poor want to buy their vegetables at the supermarket rather than grow their own, and be modern, like everyone else. They don't want to wait six weeks for an uncertain bunch of carrots.

A school I know in Khayelitsha has a thriving vegetable garden but they employ parents to work in the garden thus creating jobs. The vegetables in the Company Garden are sold to the restaurant in the garden but not all. Some were going to seed. There is no firm plan at the moment to sell the surplus. In the first year the vegetables did not thrive because of a lack of nitrogen in the soil. The urban poor suffer the same problem; the soil on the Cape Flats is nutrient free; they also lack skills and money to buy seed and equipment. Like in the Company Garden they have irrigation problems in the summer. They suffer loss from theft and vandalism. I gleaned most of this information from the book of the month: *The hungry season; feeding southern Africa's cities* by Leonie Joubert. She visited eight different family groups and describes what they eat and why, in an entertaining and revealing way. Well worth a read and available from your local public library.

Useful plants are being cultivated along one side of the Garden. I was intrigued to see how many of these plants are also growing in my garden. They are Bergtee (*Geranium incanum*), with its cheerful mauve flowers, which pop up all over my garden in the spring. It was used to cure bladder infections, venereal disease and relieve the pains of menstruation. A lovely groundcover red sun rose (*Aptemia cordifolia*) acts as an anti-inflammatory, a poultice, a deodorant and best of all; as a love and good luck charm. It self-seeds easily. The snails love it. A friend swears by the healing powers of the leaves of the *Bulbine frutescens* which can be squeezed onto insect bites, burns and



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blisters for quick relief. Montague Museum sells Bulbine ointment which we have found very successful in relieving sunburn.

In the picture below, taken in the Company Garden, can be seen L. to R. *Pelargonium capitatum* 'rose scented', *Hypoestes aristata* 'ribbon bush', *Eriocephalus africanus* 'wild rosemary' and *Tulbaghia violacea* 'wild garlic'.



The ribbon bush in *my* garden is thriving in the shade, where it is in competition for root space. There are various other aromatic pelargoniums which can be used as herbs: *P. citronellum* repels insects. It grows vigorously and has spread over quite a large area. It is a pity that it has such an insignificant flower. *P. tomentosum* 'peppermint scented' looks a bit poorly as it is battling for root space. It will have to be moved one of these days.

While checking up on these plants, I discovered something new to me about the genus *Leonotis*. There are two in my garden – *L. leonurus* and *L. leonotis*. The *leonotis* variety has darker leaves and smaller flowers. *Leonurus* is the well-known 'wild dagga' and it was used to treat fevers, headaches, coughs and dysentery. We have apricot and creamy white varieties. The birds which visit our garden love them. I wish that I could say that I had tested the fruit of *Carissa macrocarpa* 'num num', but I haven't – too scared. Other useful plants are *Aristea ecklonii*, *Carpobrotus edulis* 'sourfig', *Cotyledon orbiculata* 'pig's ear', *Kniphofia praecox* 'red hot poker' and *Portulacaria afra* 'spekboom'.

Luckily some old trees in the Garden have fallen, which has let the sun in to transform dark overgrown areas of straggly groundcovers into bright flower beds. Great swathes of tall undergrowth have been cut back to be replaced with winding paths that open up secret places.

The garden was packed with people. Families with young children were using the facilities of the new restaurant. While the parents were gossiping around the tables, their children were playing on all the new apparatus that has been provided.

The weaver bird [below] and big green nests have been woven from cane. The children were climbing into them and happily bouncing around. Vast logs from a fallen tree in front of the restaurant have been transformed into climbing platforms to scramble over and to jump from [right]. The stump of the fallen tree has been left in place [below right].



One small boy was having a great time stamping his boots into the puddles and splashing everybody.



A garden bench displayed a sign, 'WiFi available'. The aviary has been renovated. There are large signs naming the birds in the cages. The plants are also very well signposted.

The Garden is a giant sleeping place for the many homeless who leave vast amounts of rubbish. City workers and learners from two schools nearby, who use the gardens as a walkway, also throw their litter around. It takes a workforce of eleven two hours every morning to clean up the rubbish. Large quantities are, however, recycled into compost and mulch for use in the garden. Good quality





waste like paper and tins is sold to a firm in Germany! The Rhodes' statue is still there. The grey squirrels, who are also supposed to be part of his legacy, must be the plumpest in Cape Town. Would Rhodes have introduced the American grey squirrel [left]?

The rains of winter have cursed my garden with its usual crop of weeds from the oxalis family. *Oxalis corniculata* is rapidly creeping across my lawn. As we all know sorrel is the very devil to control. The website gardeningineden.co.za/gardening-weeds.html writes of 'yellow little flowers and pods bursting open to fling the seeds.' The most attractive weedy sorrel in my garden at the moment is *Oxalis latifolia*, red garden sorrel. It reproduces through seeds and small bulbs which 'germinate deep' (My emphasis in both cases).

My plant of the month

The Christmas cactus, *Schlumbergera gridgesi*, grows happily outside in a hanging basket. It is visited by a female sugarbird. A fledgling Olive thrush has also made an appearance. At first he was being fed by his mother and feeding himself at the same time, but now he is on his own. The Cape Turtle Doves perch happily in our Fiddlewood tree. The collective noun for pigeons is 'a dropping'. So in future our visitors are 'a dropping' of doves. The biggest pooper in our garden is the luckily infrequent Hadeda. But it flies homeward each evening at just the right moment – time for a glass of wine.



Until next month, Goodbye.

AN INVASIVE ALIEN ON THE LOOSE

The May 28th issue of the Tatler reported on an invasive vine which is taking hold on the Cape Peninsula.

“Good looks can be deceiving, especially when it comes to the Madeira vine. It may have small white star-shaped flowers and soft, heart-shaped leaves but this invasive species is known to cause ecological damage as it smothers and displaces any tree, including the Milkwoods which are classified as one of South Africa's protected trees.

The project manager of the City's Invasive Species Unit, based in Westlake, Ulrike Irlich, asks the public to report any sightings of this invasive vine, *Anredera cordifolia*, which is trying to establish itself across Cape Town.

This invasive species has been classified under the National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act (NEMBA) as a Category 1 b species, meaning it must be controlled or removed and destroyed if possible.

Any form of trade or planting of it is strictly prohibited.

Ms Irlich said they have received reports of Madeira vine growing in Somerset West, Durbanville, Marina da Gama, Clovelly, Camps Bay, Rosebank, Claremont, Bergvliet, Tokai and Constantia.

Commonly known as Madeira vine, bridal wreath, potato vine or lamb's tail vine, it is an evergreen vine native to tropical South America, which spreads out in a dense mat when unsupported, or climbs into tree canopies.



The vine can climb to heights of up to 40m. The leaves are slightly fleshy and soft, bright green and heart-shaped. The stems are hairless, twining, and can become 30m long, initially being green or pink-red and herbaceous, advancing to become brown and woody with age, reaching 2cm to 3cm in diameter.

Small, white, star-shaped flowers appear on long stalks between February and May, similar in appearance to a lamb's tail, and being numerous and densely arranged on the plant, giving it a soft appearance.

In the Noordhoek area it has started smothering Milkwood trees, *Sideroxylon inerme*.

The Madeira vine spreads through wart-like tubers on the stems or underground. These regenerate from cut or broken stem sections, making it a particularly troublesome exotic that is able to smother or bring down trees.

Ms Irlich says due to the vine spreading by tuber growth and root systems, it is critically important not to discard plant material in compost heaps, landfills or dumping sites. Instead, residents should contact the City for advice about disposing plants of any size.

Residents who want to take part in reporting invasive species or obtain more information on Madeira vine and invasive species in general can visit www.capetowninvasives.org.za or go to the Facebook page www.facebook.com/ctinvasives They can report sightings to the Cape Town Invasive Species Unit: invasive.species@capetown.gov.za, 021 444 2356/7, or email ulrike.irlich@capetown.gov.za.



Anredera is a genus of plants native to Latin America, the West Indies, Texas, and Florida. Some are naturalized in other regions (notably Mediterranean region and on various oceanic islands). Most of them are evergreen vines of dry scrubland and thickets. Members of the genus are commonly known as Madeira Vines. At least one species, *A. cordifolia* bears edible roots or tubers and leaves similar to those of *Basella alba*. [Wikipedia.org and <http://sydneyweeds.org.au/wp-cms/wp-content/uploads/uploads/Anredera-cordifolia-tubers.jpg>]

ITEMS OF INTEREST

1 – 4 July – Nature and Nurture: Local Ikebana and Bonsai clubs will display flower arrangements and miniature trees at UCT Irma Stern Museum. Tuesday to Friday from 10am-5pm and Saturday from 10am-2pm. Morning walkabouts at 11am. Situated in Cecil Road, Rosebank, gated parking is available in Chapel Road. Tea and coffee available.

Further details are available on www.irmasternmuseum.org.za. For more information phone Mary van Blommestein on 021-685-5686.

24 – 27 Sept – Fynbos Creatures: This is the theme of the 2015 Hermanus Botanical Society's Flower Festival in the Fernkloof Nature Reserve. Entrance is from 9am-5pm every day and costs R20 (R10 for pensioners). Refreshments will also be on offer. For further information contact botsochermanus@telkomsa.net or call 028-313-0819.

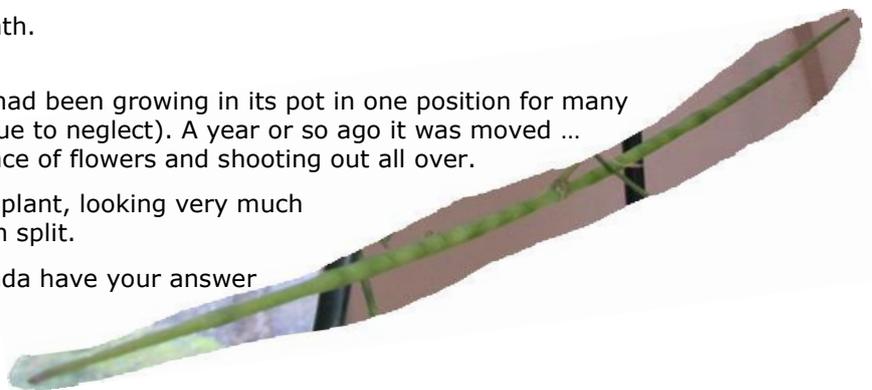
A Mediterranean Link: The CHS is now officially a member of Mediterranean Gardening International, which is made up of the French, Portuguese, British and Australian Mediterranean Gardening Societies. www.mediterraneangardeninginternational.org has us listed, with a couple of our photos on the 'Our Principles' page. Have a look.

More about this new association next month.

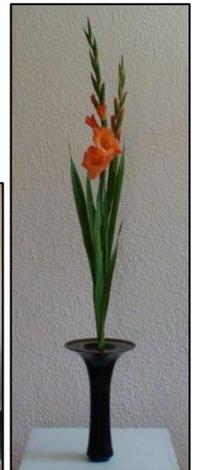
Have you seen this before? This plant had been growing in its pot in one position for many years and never really thrived (possibly due to neglect). A year or so ago it was moved ... and it just took off, producing an abundance of flowers and shooting out all over.

A number of these [right] are now on the plant, looking very much like a ballet dancer doing a jeté or Russian split.

Can you guess what the plant is? Let Glenda have your answer either by phone or e-mail.



Olive tree –
artist Thys Klem



Ikebana Ikenobo
Style issuike