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NEXT MEETING

Mon, 7 March 2016 at 20:00 at The Athenaeum, Newlands.

R10 for members; R20 for visitors.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT STELLENBERG

Athol McLaggan began his horticultural career in Natal and probably had our Vice Chairman, Errol Scarr, examining or moderating his Practical Examination at Durban Parks, the examining body for these pracs. He gained further practical work experience for his Diploma course working in nurseries in Los Angeles, San Diego and Seattle. On his return to South Africa, he worked at a nursery in Durban and later with Keith Kirsten before launching out on his own as a landscaper in Johannesburg in 1998.

Ten years later he moved to McGregor and three years after that to Cape Town where he divides his time between caretaking a property in Constantia and assisting with the running of the garden at Stellenberg.

Athol will tell us more about what goes on behind the scenes at this famous Cape Town garden.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

April: Marianne Alexander – *Good Morning Vietnam, Hello Singapore*

May: Melanie and Rod Stewart – *New Plymouth gardens, New Zealand*

June: Cherise Viljoen – *Fabulous Fynbos*

July: David Davidson – *Chelsea 2016*

Subject to change without prior notice

DIARISE THIS EXTRA SPECIAL MEETING

NB: TUESDAY, April 19th at 20:00 at ERIN HALL, Erin Road, Rondebosch

A stroll through three Algarvian gardens

President of the Mediterranean Garden Association of Portugal (MGAP*), Burford Hurry, will be visiting South Africa in April and has been persuaded to give us a talk while seeing family in Cape Town. He was born in Johannesburg and began gardening at the tender age of seven when his mother put him in charge of a tiny rockery and has "remained interested in gardening all my life, having had several gardens of differing sizes in South Africa and Zimbabwe". Burford arrived in historic Loule in 1986 and has been in his present garden for the past 14 years.

This talk will be an illustrated stroll through three MGAP member's gardens with a brief talk about our similar Mediterranean climates, our very different soils, as well as wind and fires.

For a sneak preview of his garden and a list of plants, have a look at the following link:



<http://portugalresident.com/my-mediterranean-garden-a-potted-version-0>

* MGAP is one of five associations, the CHS being one, that make up the group, Mediterranean Gardening International (MGi). If you are interested in receiving newsletters and information from these sister groups, please let Glenda know so you can be added to the MGi mailing list.

MGAP Board Member Meeting: (L to R) Jo Foster (English), Ben Hurst (English, but grew up in Nigeria – responsible for web domain), Rosie Peddle (English – secretary and real founder of MGAP), Rob Peddle (English – Treasurer), Gerhard Zabel (German), Burford Hurry (South African born and raised – President) and Regina (Brazilian).

President: Anne Bean, **Chairman:** Michael Tuffin, **Hon Treasurer:** Henry Diesveld, **Hon Secretary:** Glenda Thorpe

MEMBERS REMEMBERED**Sara Pascall****1927 to 12 February 2016**

Sara never could remember when she first joined "Horties", as she fondly referred to the CHS, but calculated that it was probably in the late 1950s or thereabouts. She was elected to the Committee in 1991 and was made an Honorary Life member in 2000.

Marjorie Starke, former CHS Secretary, remembers "she was always a great help to me when I needed it and great fun to have around". That says it all.

One of her oldest friends, Ruth Allen, recalls:

"I first met Sara in the sixties when I was living in Sea Point but only became friendly with her after moving to Klaassens Road in 1970. She came to see my garden with Wim Tijmens and she suggested that I join the Horticultural Society.

Just at that time the Horti was having one of the garden shows and she made me pick some things from the garden to put on the show. After that we became firm friends. She watched my children going up and was forever telling them how to behave and what to do. She was there for all the major events in their lives and was loved by all of them, including the grandchildren.

Years later, after I had been on several study tours and done a garden design course with Wim, a mutual friend asked us to help with the garden in her new house. This we did and that was the start of a ten-year association of landscaping gardens with Sara. Sadly this had to come to an end when she had to give up to look after and nurse her dying son David.

Sleep well, my darling Sara ... I am sure you are making a garden in Heaven."

Other members also have this to say about Sara:

"She was an amazing feisty lady.
We were fond of her and admired
her spirit and plant knowledge."

Lyn McCallum

"I have lots of fond memories of her: she was such a warm-hearted and entertaining person with a mischievous sense of humour, which could be quite anarchic at times.

I have several memorable visual images of her: sitting on the ground cooling her bare feet in the water of one of the little streams in Klein Optenhorst as visitors crossed over the bridge beside her whilst she threw out witty comments to all and sundry, is one.

On another note, she once sat at the end of my dining room table after a CHS committee meeting and beautifully sang the moving song 'Gloomy Sunday' to us all. (This was a piece of music which caused more than 18 people to commit suicide in Hungary in the 1930s and was banned by the BBC until 2002!). Nobody committed suicide amongst the CHS committee, thank goodness. I seem to remember that the meeting ended with Sara and Rod Stewart dancing a swooping waltz around us all. I treasure these memories."

Clare Gibbon

"I really enjoyed working on the Committee with Sara. She and I developed quite a bond for some reason.

She was a fund of useful information about a whole who's who in the social world and connections everywhere that got us entry to several "good to visit" gardens."

Wilma Tindall

"So sad to hear this. I remember her for her enthusiasm at the plant table and her wonderful way of persuading you to part with your hard earned cash to buy plants –even if you really didn't want them. But also for her amazing open gardens in aid of Tembaletu.

How many gardeners have been inspired after visiting some of the best private gardens in the Cape – gardens we would never have got to see!"

Marianne Alexander

"She introduced me to Hortie and Qi Gong – both of which I enjoy immensely."

Judi Thomas

Does anyone know when "Open Gardens" came into vogue? Marianne wondered whether Sara was the instigator of what has become a favourite pastime of the gardening fraternity come spring. If you have any knowledge of this, please let us know.

REPORT BACK**February Plant Table:**

Please use the pieces of paper provided at meetings to give your name, your suburb and your plant's name (if you know it), or the question you have about your plant. You could also do this at home to save time on your arrival. Place the note next to your "entry" to assist Jenny. These will also be used to compile this report back.

Aloe cooperi (below, left), a Natal grassland species that does well down here. Sunbirds love the tubular flowers.

Cyrtanthus sanguineus (below, second from left) – "Kei Lily"

"*Distribution and Habitat*: from near Bathurst in the Eastern Cape to KwaZulu-Natal, in rocky places along banks of streams and rivers, and in moist kloofs

Planting Suggestions: Plant in a well-drained, compost enriched soil mixture, in full sun only if there is a constant water supply, alternatively in light shade, preferably facing south. Place the bulbs with the 'shoulder' just below the soil surface. Water regularly throughout summer. In hot, inland areas these bulbs must be shaded from the midday and afternoon sun.

Once established, *Cyrtanthus sanguineus* will produce many off-shoots and bulblets. (I once planted 32 adult bulbs in a planter and two years later harvested over 300 little bulblets). Avoid disturbing the bulbs for 3 to 4 years as they resent being moved and may not flower during the following season. If in a container, this may need to be done more often - my last container simply burst open at the end of the second year. However, I have noticed that the more crowded they are, the better they flower."

Info from Lorraine Solomon at <http://kumbulanursery.co.za/plants/cyrtanthus-sanguineus>

Plectranthus oertendahlii (below, second from right) – needs a shady spot; very attractive leaves.

"*Distribution and Habitat*: endemic to a small area from the Oribi Gorge northwards to Uvongo in KwaZulu-Natal.

Planting Suggestions: This *plectranthus* is a little more fussy than most as it does not tolerate sun and needs a sheltered, shady position. Plant in humus-rich, well drained, slightly acid loam with the addition of compost and fertiliser according to your soil needs. Regular watering is also needed but don't over-water. Prune back hard after flowering during midwinter. *Plectranthus oertendahlii* is adapted to survive low light, making it a useful indoor plant. It loses its vigour as it gets older but cuttings root easily and the plant should be renewed periodically." (See more at: <http://kumbulanursery.co.za/plants/plectranthus-oertendahlii>)

Basil (below, right) – a perennial which makes a nice garden plant.



Barleria greenii – first collected near Estcourt in 1984! Buds sweetly scented at night and pollinated by moths. Attracts Bumble Bees. A good garden plant. Likes rocky areas in the open. Flowers can be white to dark pink, flowering February to March.

Brillantaisia subulugurica (Giant Salvia) is a member of Acanthaceae – like *Acanthus mollis* "Bears Breeches" and comes from Zimbabwe and tropical Africa.

A very showy plant with large dark green leaves. Height ±1.5m. Grows vigorously and produces long spikes of pretty, giant blue salvia like flowers in summer. Plant in protected position with full sun for part of the day to flower well. Prune hard after flowering, water regularly and feed with slow release chemical or organic 3:1:5 especially before flowering. (<http://www.newplant.co.za/brillantaisia-subulugurica>)

Beautiful fuchsias were also brought in. Although they usually flower in November, they had to be pruned because of the heat and wind and flowered at the end of January.

When there are not many flowers to see in summer, it is good to have a variety of foliage plants.

- *Persicaria senegalensis* forma *albotomentosa* (below, left) – appears to be a wetland plant, up to about 1m but could become a weed.
- *Artemisia* (below, right) – tolerant of heat and sandy soils. There is a wide range of these plants.
- *Plectranthus oertendahlii* (pictured above)



Libertas, South Devon

Rosalind Spears gave an excellent presentation – musical interludes included – on the projects tackled on their property over the past 18 years or so, their garden sculptures and their plants.

Clockwise from top left: The garden wall; beautiful Brugmansia in full bloom; the front entrance with the Virginia Creeper in striking autumn colour; Ruth Allen with Johnny Spears in front of a gorgeous Rhododendron.



SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL TIME

Your long-awaited renewal form for your 2016 subs is enclosed (separate e-mail attachment).

As you know, we have not had an increase in subscriptions since 2012 and the cost of producing and posting newsletters has risen year after year. At our recent Special General Meeting the majority of members voted in favour of a small increase in subs and also to apply a surcharge of R40 should members require newsletters by post.

Please complete the renewal form and return it, with your payment, in whichever way is most convenient to you. Remember it is kinder on the Society's bank balance to bring cash or a cheque to a meeting or to put the cheque in the post. Individual ATM deposits (cash or cheque) incur unnecessary bank charges for the CHS.

As it is impossible to keep track of who puts money down on the desk at meetings, it must be accompanied by a form. This form also serves to advise changes in your status, your willingness to help etc and these details need to be recorded. The same holds for "electronic" members – the form must accompany the payment notification.

Should a form not be completed correctly, nor the surcharge paid, it will be assumed that you require an electronic newsletter.

Receipts and membership cards will be issued when both the form and payment have been received. Anyone not having renewed by the AGM in May will be removed from the membership database – a case of "no form, no record, no more newsletter"! And we really would not like to do that!

JOURNAL OF A HAPHAZARD GARDENER – FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016

When a smidgen of rain fell over the Valentine's Day weekend, numerous birds flooded into the garden searching for food. We spent a fascinating half hour watching their various activities. A pair of noisy Cape Bulbuls moved happily among the trees and shrubs looking for food. The Mossie and his mate came hopping across the lawn foraging for seeds. A dull brown female Southern Double-Collared Sunbird searched for nectar in the yellow flowers of the *Bauhinia tomentosa* (right). The white eyes called to each other as they found another horde of insect pests on the leaves. An Olive Thrush, with his bright orange breast, who hasn't been around lately made a welcome return. He hopped and scurried around looking for worms and let everyone know in his aggressive fashion that he was back. Appropriately for Valentine's Day, a randy male Laughing Dove pushed out his rufous chest, trying desperately to attract at least one of the females that had alighted on the fence.



The *B.tomentosa* lights up the garden and flowers freely for months. The pretty bell-shaped yellow flowers each have a black marking in the throat. When the flower has died it leaves behind a seed pod. The shrub needs to be pruned to keep it in shape. The books indicate that it is a moderately fast growing plant but I have a white variety that is very slow: it has only reached knee height after five years in the garden. (Joffe, Pitta **Indigenous Shrubs**).



One plant that has survived very well over this dry summer is the *Lobelia* (left). They are easy to grow, have stunning flowers and a long flowering period. At the beginning of summer I planted some petunias and lobelias at the same time and the Lobelias have outlasted the petunias by several weeks. Because of the success of the garden variety, I have tried to grow the local *L. valida* without much success. They look lovely for a short while and then shrivel up and die.

Recently on a hike up Little Lion's Head, I saw what I think are *L. Coronopifolia* with magnificent bright blue flowers peeping out among the rocky lower slopes of the mountain. They are growing in the full sun and were being buffeted by the gale force South Easter.

A friend asked me recently if I could recommend some plants that could suffer a fair amount of neglect: are tough and drought-resistant. This led to some head scratching but the two at the top of the list were hiding in plain sight. The Mother-in-law's tongue *Sansevieria trifasciata* (right) had been sitting on the windowsill in the kitchen at the school where I help out. Left behind after a school project, rescued and watered occasionally



by the caretaker. They seem to grow easily in any soil and can be propagated by popping a leaf upright in sand. The other is the South African Hen-and-chickens *Chlorophytum* (above, far right) which loves the hot weather in my garden. The tufts easily take root. Another South African plant that thrives on neglect in my garden is the *Asparagus*. *A. desiflorus* 'sprengerii' with its sharp needle-like foliage. It is indestructible. It lives in a narrow neglected space between our garage wall and the neighbour's fence. It effectively hides an ugly pole that supports the carport.

Two bulbous plants that can be added to the list are the Wild iris *Diets grandiflora* and Wild garlic *Tulbaghia violacea* (below, left). The *Tulbaghia* hasn't stopped flowering all summer. The variegated leafed variety does not seem to do so well. (Pienaar, Kristo **A-Z of Garden Flowers in South Africa**).

Another indestructible plant is the groundcover creeping foxglove *Asystasia gangetica subsp. micrantha* with its masses of cream-coloured flowers with purple markings. It is a very suitable plant if you have shady places in your garden where nothing else will grow. It can also grow in full sun. It seeds easily and the 'stems also root easily at the nodes'. You have to be careful with this plant: my small garden was being overrun: other groundcovers were being suffocated and so at the beginning of the summer I pulled out a bagful of early seedlings. There are still a plentiful

number of plants growing happily in pots and sunny spots in the garden. (www.plantzafrica.com)



Another very useful groundcover in these dry times is *Plectranthus neochilus* (left). The City of Cape Town plants it in every open space. The one in our garden has a different leaf. It is variegated with pink tips. The succulent-like leaves and the pale purple flowers have a pungent smell. (Van Jaarsveld, Ernst **The Plectranthus Handbook**)

Jenny Scarr at the first meeting this year, talked about mulching the garden, and recommended a place on the edge of Tokai Plantation to buy mulch. (The entrance is in Orpen Road past the Stone Church and next to the first car park for the Plantation. There is a sign that the Constantia Lions meet there). The compost and wood clippings cost R8.00 a bag. I have previously bought the compost and while not the best in the world, it is doing a good job in my garden. The bags weigh on an average 10 kilograms. I also recently bought some wood clippings which weigh 6 kilos a bag. I shall now leave you for this month as I go off to add more mulch the garden after yet another day of high humidity and a temperature of over 30 degrees.

A BIT OF FUN

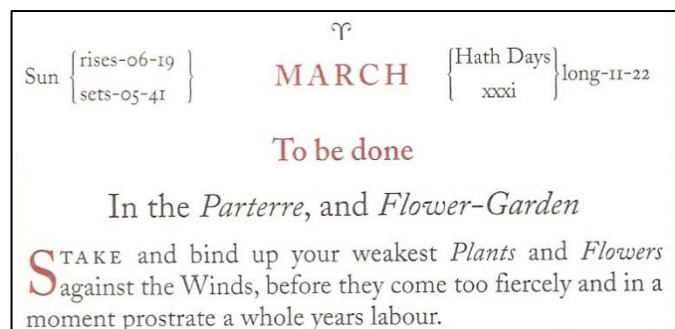
It seems there are no crossword lovers in our ranks. If you tried, the answers to the crossword puzzle are:

Across: 2. Silver Tree; 7. Onions; 9. Maggot; 12. Chair; 13. Opuntia; 14. Shrimp Plant; 18. Campsis; 20. Grass; 21. Radish; 23. Wattle; 24. Red Sweet Peas.

Down: 1. Scotch; 2. Spinach; 3. Vis; 4. Rim; 5. Ergot; 6. Straw; 8. Narcissus; 10. Aquilegia; 11. Compost; 15. Neanthe; 16. Acorn; 17. Asters; 19. Midge; 22. Hew; 23. Wee.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

Extract from *Directions for the Gardiner and other Horticultural Advice* by John Evelyn (d 27.2.1706):
Sound familiar?



Mediterranean Gardening International: This is a group separate from the Mediterranean Garden Society, which has branches in many countries. Join our MGI mailing list for news about the activities of the societies in the UK (Mediterranean Plants and Gardens), Western Australia (Mediterranean Gardening Margaret River), Portugal (see page 1) and France (Mediterranean Gardening France). Ask Glenda to add you to the mailing list and receive news of the wonderful gardens they visit.

Sima Eliovson's *The Complete Gardening Book for Southern Africa* will be available at the next meeting for a small donation.

(Photos: R and J Spears, Andrew Thorpe, Peter Henshall)