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NEXT MEETING

Mon, 2 May 2016 (public holiday) at 20:00 at The Athenaeum, Newlands.

R10 for members; R20 for visitors.

Notice is given of the 111th AGM of the CHS to be held on Monday, 2 May 2016 at 20:00 at The Athenaeum, Campground Road, Newlands

Agenda

1. Confirmation of Minutes of the AGM held on Monday, 4 May 2015
2. Chairman's Annual Report
3. Treasurer's Financial Statements and Auditor's Report
4. Election of President
5. Election of Committee
6. Appointment of Auditor for the ensuing year
7. General

The Minutes of the 2015 AGM, the audited Financial Statements for the year ended 29 February 2015 and the Balance Sheet are enclosed. We would appreciate you bringing your copy of these documents to the meeting.

Please sign the Attendance Register on your arrival. All members and visitors are required to sign when attending the AGM – one person per line.

Our brief AGM will be followed by

THE REMARKABLE TREES OF THE ARDERNE GARDENS

Adam Harrower, horticulturist at Kirstenbosch, will give an illustrated talk on the many wonderful trees in the Arderne Gardens.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL TIME

If you have not yet renewed your membership, bring your money and form to this meeting so we can keep you on our mailing list.

Receipts and membership cards will be issued when both the form and payment have been received. Anyone not having renewed by the time the May newsletter is issued will be removed from the membership database – and this is not something we like doing.

OUTINGS

Sat, 14 May at 09:30: Visit Will's Fuchsia Nursery in Tokai. Come and learn all you want to know about Fuchsias: pruning, pinching, shaping, soil, and disease control. Limited to 20 members.

Jane Pegrum and her father, William, started Will's Fuchsia Nursery in 2012, when she decided to leave her corporate job. Her father was suffering from cancer and she wanted to spend the time she had left with him doing what they always had such a passion for – Fuchsias! Together they worked hard and now she continues the business in his loving memory with over 400 different varieties, the widest in the Western Cape.

RSVP to Glenda by Wed, 11 May 2016.

Sat, 4 June at 08:30: We will visit the Woodstock Peace Garden, which is a partnership between Co-Creators Landscaping (the managers), the Alpha School (for learners with autism) and the Woodstock community. This will be followed by a walk around Co-Creators' Bruce Beyer's own garden. Limited to 25 members.

RSVP to Glenda by 2 June 2016.

MEETINGS

6 June: Melanie Stewart – *Volcanic Garden Magic – the gardens of New Plymouth, New Zealand*

4 July: David Davidson – *Chelsea 2016*

Subject to change without prior notice

REPORT BACK**April Plant Table:**

Jenny's report on the plants brought in by members, starting off by explaining which Invasive Aliens we need to be looking out for. Here are three of the 11 most invasive plants that should not be growing in our Western Cape gardens:

1. *Kalanchoe delagoensis* (also known as *K. tubiflora*, *Bryophyllum tubiflorum* or *B. verticillatum*) – comes from Madagascar. Michael bought a plant at Worcester Botanical Garden and this Kalanchoe came up as a freebie (right).
2. *Pennisetum* green 'fountain grass': must be got rid of– grass seeds blow in the wind and send them everywhere. I suggest if you see this in a neighbour's garden, take them a cake as a trade-off and take the grass out ☺
3. A little is lovely – a lot is not necessarily better so just be very careful if plants do very well in your garden, like the red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*). This is on the "hit list" and so, it appears, is the white variety (*Centranthus ruber* 'Alba') now. We have to be very careful how we manage our gardens.



Indigenous plants that don't invade:

Bauhinia galpinii – 'Pride of de Kaap' (below, left) – from Barberton area; makes a wonderful show of flowers; makes a lovely groundcover shrub.

Plectranthus (*petiolaris* and *ambiguus* below) are all doing their thing at the moment: they do like shade and moisture because they come from further up the coast.



Justicia – from eastern Cape; likes a bit of shade and moisture down here

Tecoma capensis 'Cape Honeysuckle' – rather than put out bird feeders, plant these to attract birds. It comes in red, orange, yellow and salmon

Dyschoriste thunbergiiflora (below, left)

Thorncroftia longiflora (below, centre) – from Mpumalanga and northern kwaZulu Natal



Senecio articularis 'Boesman's kersie' (below, right) – from Karoo and Eastern Cape; plants in shade produce more foliage



Nerine humilis and *N. sarniensis*

Euphorbia globosa – from Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage area; endangered.

Other plants:

Plectranthus argentatus – from Australia; one of the few grey leaved plants for shade

Pennisetum setaceum rubrum 'red fountain grass' – is allowed

Achimenes (below, left): a Gesneriad like Gloxinias, Saintpaulia, Streptocarpus etc from tropical central/south America. Overwinters as tiny scaly rhizomes.

Ornamental chillies (below, centre) – dark leaves add depth and shade in the garden.



This month's "mystery plant" (above, right) has everyone foxed. Do you know the name?

Last month's "mystery plant" is possibly a *Pedilanthus bracteatus*.

NB: 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. These will be used to compile this report back. You could also do this at home to save time on your arrival. Place the note next to your "entry" to assist Jenny.

Behind the Scenes at Stellenberg:

Athol McLaggan took us through the year's planting and maintenance schedule at Stellenberg. It was fascinating to hear how "simply" they work – and how hard – despite the size and reputation of this famous Cape Town garden. Two points that could be of interest to you were Athol's tips on pruning, fertilizing and mulching.

Summer pruning in January: The reason for this summer pruning is because the days are getting shorter and by pruning back you take the plant back proportionately so that it can cope with the amount of light that it will be getting. You reduce the volume of leaf material because of the shortening day.

- You really have to be ruthless with Marguerites, indigenous artemisias, non-repeat flowering roses, begonias, impatiens etc and cut them back. If you are ruthless you will have a lovely show in March. If you are not, by the time March comes along, everything gets long and lanky and starts getting black spot.
- To prune your spring and early summer flowering shrubs eg. Deutzia, Weigelia and Philadelphus, it's not a cutting down but more like stripping. Go through the bush and remove about a third of all the oldest wood. Because it's going to flower on last season's wood you don't want to cut all of that off. The bush needs to be thinned out. The bush will remain the same size, just thinner. Take cuttings at the same time.
- Do the same with Wisterias, which should be pruned severely after they've flowered (around September). Do this again in January when you remove any thin twiggy branches to get it back under control.

Athol visited France two years ago and got this tip from a French gardener for Hydrangea care: "No prune!" she strips out oldest wood – the grey 'barky' wood. Not cutting it halfway but taking it out from the bottom. As the new leaves push out, she feeds with LAN (high nitrogen) – a tablespoon to each bush – encouraging the leaves to grow healthily. Once the leaves are established and flowers start to form, she feeds weekly with a weak solution of tomato-based fertilizer (her husband had been a farmer so had access to lots of tomatoes).

Fertilizing and Mulching: They use 50 Kg bag each of Super phosphate, bone meal and 2:3:2. These are mixed all together and used when planting or spreading onto compost mulch. TIP: Leave out the bone meal if you have dogs.

Athol says they keep all chipped up mulch which is then made into compost and put back into their garden.

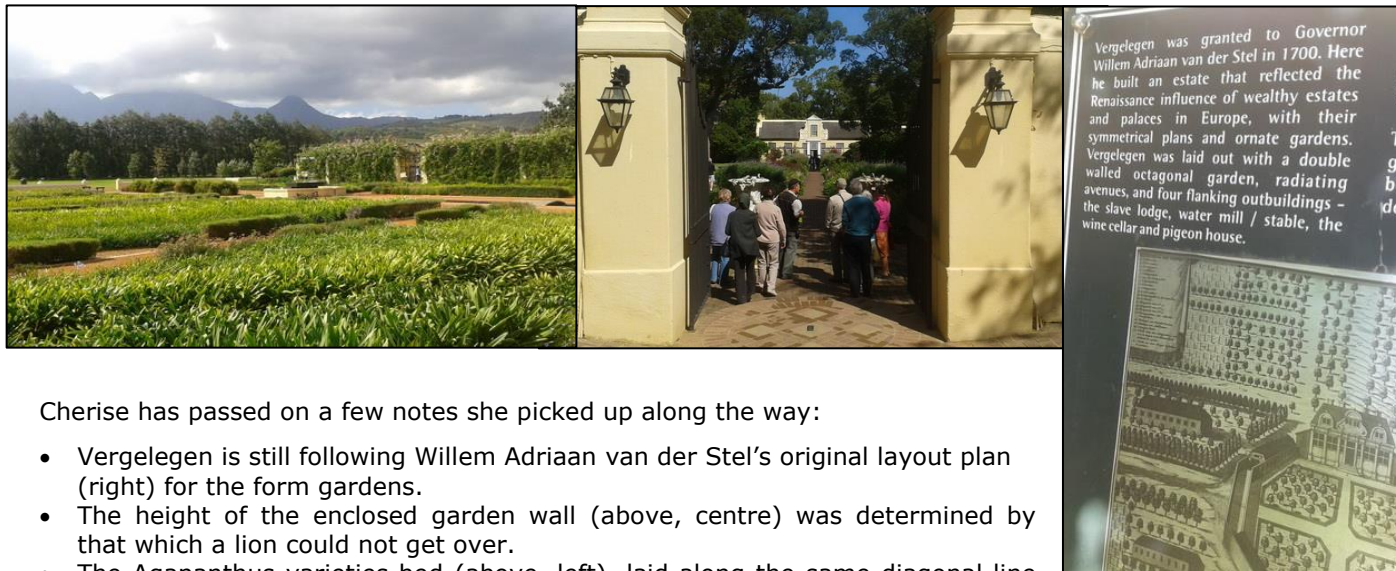
TIP: Francois Krige, the arborist, believes we are spreading disease through the use of this chipped bark/mulch which we are purchasing. He says 30% of materials going to the dump, from where some compost manufacturers get their material, is coming from diseased material.

The best is to make your own compost from material that comes from your own garden. That way you know that anything that is diseased gets thrown away and not spread further.

At least 40 members and visitors to our meeting were given the unexpected opportunity of having a tour of Stellenberg "out of season", which was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Thanks to Athol, Sandy and Doreen.

Vergelegen visit:

By all accounts our small group spent a fabulous morning with Richard Arm, the Gardens Manager, whose enthusiasm was infectious. He is also a wood sculptor and has made climbing sculptures in the children's play area from the fallen oak trees.



Cherise has passed on a few notes she picked up along the way:

- Vergelegen is still following Willem Adriaan van der Stel's original layout plan (right) for the form gardens.
- The height of the enclosed garden wall (above, centre) was determined by that which a lion could not get over.
- The Agapanthus varieties bed (above, left), laid along the same diagonal line as the outside orchards and vines are. Best seen in Nov. The trees in the distance will form part of a new 70 hectare arboretum (Kew gardens is that size in its entirety) that will be developed soon.
- Camphor Tress were declared National Monuments in the 1940s; for the last 15 years Prof Yolanda Roux has given these trees their annual 'medical check-up' to ensure their health and well-being.
- Richard says: "The rose garden has just been replanted, only with Fragrant roses, in a colour wheel formation radiating from the centre to ensure one does not get the 'Smartie Box' effect".

TIP: They spray the stems of their beautiful bamboos with a green dye to effectively disguise all the graffiti scratchings.

CHS member, Barry Thomas, couldn't make the outing but sent in this story: "In 1974 my brother and I were tree surgeons and had a job to work at Vergelegen when it was owned by the Barlow family. We did some work on the famous Camphor trees out front but there is an old Oak tree around the back, reputedly planted by Adriaan van der Stel. It was in a sorry state, the top had been ripped out in a storm and like most English Oaks in SA was full of mildew and rot. We spent a few weeks reducing the crown, cutting out all the rotten heartwood and fitting steel bars to reinforce what was left. My brother come out here a couple of years ago (he lives in the UK) to ride the Argus Cycle Tour with me and we took a drive out there to visit "our" Oak tree. Lo and behold! some 30 odd years later it is a picture of health with a big crown which is verging on top heavy."

Richard gave special permission to enter and photograph inside the old oak (far right).

**IN MEMORIAM**

Jeanne Ward, a member of many years standing, lost her year-long battle and passed away four weeks ago. She was a keen attender of meetings and outings and always willing to help at our flower shows. Our condolences to her family.

And our oldest member, joining the Society in the mid-1940s, Heather Edwards, passed away during the week. Heather was a great exhibitor at our shows "in the good old days", winning a number of trophies along the way. When she was no longer able to do this, she would still do her duty at the gate. Our condolences to her daughter and family.

JOURNAL OF A HAPHAZARD GARDENER – APRIL/MAY 2016

Autumn can be a melancholy time of the year: days shorten, leaves fall in their zillions and a wet winter (we hope) is on the horizon. No sadness, however, in our garden. The birds have sprung into life fattening themselves up for the cold times ahead. Sugarbirds have been digging deep into the wild dagga plants looking for nectar. The Olive Thrushes, including a juvenile, have been wrecking the garden, throwing the soil out of the pots and scattering the mulch of leaves and bark everywhere looking for grubs. The Redwing Starlings have joyously joined in the fun. They are a pest stealing the coir from the hanging baskets for their nests. The young thrush has been leading a dangerous life because the abundant bird life has attracted the neighbours' cats into our garden. We were woken very early this morning by their caterwauling – the one under the car making the most noise. A cat has left two sorry mounds of dove feathers on the front lawn.

The way the leaves fall in autumn is psychologically satisfying because it reinforces the idea of the natural rhythms of the year. The leaves of our Hawthorn tree blow out the oxygen and suck in the unwanted carbon dioxide. It is full of red berries and I have wondered why the leaves of deciduous trees fall? Apparently the cells at the leaf stalk attached to the branch form a dam cutting the flow of sap and nutrients. Each leaf is now on its own. Photosynthesis uses up the remaining chlorophyll. The sugars in the leaf begin to react with the proteins in the cell sap to make the wonderful pigments in the leaves. Different sugars create the different colours in the leaves. As I type – outside the window the russet leaves are slowly drifting down leaving piles of messy leaves to be swept up by my wife yet once more. I looked up synonyms for brown and found biscuit, bronze, tanned, tawny and toasted: all suitable words to describe the leaves in our garden.

Another advantage of autumn in the Cape are the still days – no South Easter. This last week we walked in Wynberg Park. We strolled through the leaves making a satisfyingly unique crunch underfoot – bringing back memories of one's youth. These leaves annually produce tonnes of photosynthesised biomass and we could imagine the many insects busily turning them into soil.

The fat squirrels were foraging for food among the fallen pine cones and acorns bulking-up for winter. Our dog, Max, had a wonderfully busy time chasing time chasing them back up the trees. (Source of information and thoughts about autumn taken from Mark Cocker *Nature Watch* [Guardian Weekly 27.11.15](#) and Paul Evans *Nature Watch* [Guardian Weekly 04.12.15](#)).

A friend commented the other day that there were no flowers in her garden at the moment which is not true of our garden. The ground cover *Baleria repens* 'Rosea' and *B.repens* 'Purple Prince' are full of red and purple blossom at the moment.

Various forms of *Plectranthus* are flowering profusely. *P. Ciliatus* – white (below, left) grows in any shady area. The other one in the picture is a hybrid and has striking purple flowers. *Plectranthus* 'Troys Gold' (below, centre) is a hybrid with attractive mottled green leaves with yellow edges. *P. Ciliatus* – mauve (below, right) – they seem to like the lack of rain as they have flowered particularly well this year. You can also see the hawthorn leaves scattered around. *P. ambiguus* 'Manguzuku' has very attractive dark purple plumes and has been flowering for ages (see similar variety on pg. 2).



Nerine filifolia with its grass-like leaves put on a splendid display of pale pink flowers (below, left); *N. bowdenii* with its cyclamen-pink flowers is just coming into bloom. Bulbs usually flower for a short time but these *Cyrtanthus* (below, centre) lasted for a fortnight. *Hypoestes aristata* (Ribbon bush – below, right) is indigenous and is an easily grown shrub, needing little attention. It needs to be trimmed back after flowering. It prefers the shade and seeds itself easily.



That is all for this month as I need to get into the garden to use the swept up leaves as compost. I saw an amusing cartoon in the Spectator magazine of 21.11.2015 by Kipper Williams in which a man uses a leaf blower to remove the fig leaves of a disconcerted Adam and Eve.

FALLEN LEAVES

A few ideas, summarized from the October 2013 issue of RHS's *The Garden*, for all those leaves you have to constantly rake or sweep up at this time of year:

- ✓ Leaves can be added to the compost heap to counterbalance a mass of green material such as grass clippings;
- ✓ or keep leaves separate to be converted into precious leafmould*.
- ✓ Alternatively, use a mower (without the collection bag/hood) to finely chop up the leaves directly back into the grass.
- ✓ In shade beds, woodlands or at the backs of borders, let the fallen leaves decompose directly onto the bed.

* Leafmould is a great soil improver, either mixed in or as a surface mulch. It will help break down heavy clay, aid sandy soils to retain moisture; and increase worm and micro-organism activity in both situations. The natural place to apply leafmould is around trees, shrubs and woodland bulbs and is also useful in aiding drainage in potting-compost mixes.

Making leafmould: collect leaves into a bin bag, loosely tie the top and then pierce holes in the sides. The leaves need to be moist, so add a little water, if necessary. These can then be stacked out of the way for 12-18 months, in which time the leaves will break down.

For large amounts of leaves, create a cage using chicken wire and place the leaves in this.

Shredded leaves will break down more quickly, so it could be worth going over piles with a mower first.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

The U3A Gugulethu request for any unneeded wheelbarrows and/or other garden implements to help Nonkululeko, a run-down Food Garden in NY 133 Gugulethu, resulted in a number of donations. Ann Long says: "Just a big thank you to all who have given all sorts of garden implements so generously".

Congratulations Ernst Van Jaarsveld

The April edition of the RHS magazine *The Garden* announces that Ernst Van Jaarsveld has been awarded the RHS' Veitch Memorial Medal recognising his achievements in "the advancement of science, art and the practice of horticulture." The citation reads: "Ernst van Jaarsveld curates the succulent collection at Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden. He has introduced many plants into cultivation and freely shares his knowledge around the world." The prize was first planned in 1870, in memorial of James Veitch of Chelsea.

"...James Veitch (1815 – 1869) was the third in a long line of horticulturists who established the renowned family business Veitch Nurseries. James junior was an industrious and astute businessman, a skilled horticulturist, and from 1856 to 1864, an active member of the Council of the RHS. Among other contributions, he instigated the formation of the RHS Fruit and Floral Committees. Under his guidance, the Royal Exotic Nursery became the largest of its kind in Europe, due mostly to his division of the nursery into 11 sections: orchid, fern, new plant, decorative, tropical, soft-wooded, hard-wooded, vine, propagating, seed and glass. ..."

[Wikipedia]

(Photos: Andrew Thorpe, Peter Henshall, Cherise Viljoen, Athol Brown, Google Images)