

## NEXT MEETING

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

R10 for members; R20 for visitors.

### CREATING A GARDEN IN MEDITERRANEAN FRANCE

Christine Savage, President of Mediterranean Gardening France, will be visiting the Western Cape at the end of October and has agreed to talk to us. She says, "When we bought our 'Mas' (or farmhouse) in a fruit growing valley in rural Provence, I was given a number of coffee table books full of glossy photographs of stunning Provençal gardens. It seemed that all that one had to do was to build a few rustic walls of local stone, plant some olive trees, cypresses and box, and above all, swathes of lavender, and we too could have a garden worthy of the magazines.

Almost twenty years later we do indeed have a beautiful Provençal garden but nothing like the one I had imagined. My talk will explain why and show you what the garden looks like today."

## NEXT OUTING

**Sat, 5 November at 14:00:** Visit the Platteklouf Glen garden of Japie Esterhuyzen to see his collection of Bromeliads. This is how his garden started:

"I started this garden about 25 years ago. There was not a blade of grass on the property when we moved in.

I always wanted a Tropical looking garden and moving down from Bloemfontein with its severe frost in Winter, made me feel that I landed in Paradise! So I started planting. I could not afford large plants so everything I planted was small. I quickly discovered what havoc the Southeaster can cause in a garden! So fast growing screening plants went in to protect the more tender ones.

Slowly but surely I created a micro climate where all kinds of plants were happy.

I have a lot of palm trees which helped giving that Tropical feel. And I concentrated on different leaf shapes and colours. Never an abundance of flowers, but the flowers that appear from time to time, have to be vibrant. Jewel colours.

I had one or two Bromeliads almost right from the beginning, but about 10 years ago I discovered a lady in East London who imported Bromeliads. Then the craze – or perhaps the craving – started!

I never wanted the Bromeliads to be show pieces in a show case so they are all over in the garden. Some in shade, some in sun, some in dappled shade.

I do have a shadehouse in the back garden where I grow Bromeliads until they are ready to be moved into the garden. That is also where I grow



some new hybrids that I created. I have registered a few of my hybrids with the Bromeliad Society International.

Apart from my love for Palm trees and Bromeliads, I also love growing some orchids and Epiphyllums. They make stunning exotic splashes of colour from time to time through the year."

If this is not enough to entice you, then maybe these pictures will. It seems to be a garden not to be missed.



Limited to 20 members. Please let Glenda have your name by 3 November.

Directions will be sent to those who make the list.

## REPORT BACK

**October plant table:** Spring is still 'sprunging'!

Unfortunately my Dictaphone, which records all Jenny's comments, 'died' after a few minutes, I didn't take notes so the list is incomplete, names possibly incorrect, and I only have the photographs that were taken to go by. Google has been very useful, but not in all cases.

*Cyrtanthus elatus* (right, above) – "George lily" grows from Natal to the Cape but not so easy to get to flower. How to get it to flower? Jenny tells us: "Probably needs to be dried out in the summer for the bulbs to really get dried off and almost 'roasted'. With most bulbs you feed it when it's in leaf and when they die down all that food is concentrated in the bulb and that then produces the flowers.

Look after your bulbs. Don't think they will do it on their own, because they don't. But they do set seed and will be able to produce a lot more. They like to be pot-bound, which is common with most bulbs and orchids."

*Begonia* (cane variety) – shade

*Echium* (Pride of Madeira)

*Psoralea* sp.

*Erythrina crista-galli* (right) – exotic coral [grown in Bonnievale]

*Geranium dalmaticum* (below, left), an herbaceous perennial) [grown in Milnerton]

Plants grown in Constantia:

*Plectranthus zuluensis*

*Polygala*

*Crotalaria capensis*

*Scabiosa africana*?

Plants grown in Pinelands:

*Pelargonium betulinum* (below, right)– grows to 50cms or more; comes in pink or white; flowers from August to January in coastal dunes from Yzerfontein to Knysna. Seeds easily; cuttings are also easy to strike.

*Streptocarpus aylae* (below,centre) – discovered in 2008 by Trevor Edwards and his daughter on vertical rock faces in lower Msikaba River gorge in the Eastern Cape; Ernst van Jaarsveld discovered a second colony in the same area in 2012.



## Recent garden outings:

Simonsvlei, the home of Susie Leblond-Harris, was once the home of Leslie Hill (1908 – 2003), who used his fortunes to preserve one of the country's most important botanical regions, the Succulent Karoo. Susie has the daunting task of restoring the large property. She has started with the garden close to the house and is working her way outward. Her vegetable garden is very successful.

Then we had a surprise invitation to see The Mistral, the home of Wendy Ackerman, because everything was in full bloom.



Left (top and bottom): The veggie garden; the group at the bottom of the Leblond-Harris garden.

Centre (top and bottom): The Banksia rose; Mike, Andrew, Glenda, Angela, Wendy, John and Sabina (seated)

Right: The "Elephant's Ear" lily



## MEMBERS' PRIDE AND JOY

Nicky Ross:

*"This is the largest rhubarb leaf (right) in my garden in Stanford, measuring 54cm from the tip of the leaf to the start of the stem and 45cm wide!"*

John van der Linde:

*"(This Clivia won) First Prize at the Cape Horticultural Society Show (left). It is one of my own breeding. There were only 4 entries in the class, 3 of them from me!"*

*This is another one that I bred myself (centre). It was awarded joint second place. It was bred from two plants from the "Appleblossom" colour strain."*



NB: The City is planning to impose Level 3 water restrictions from 1 November. Use of hoses and irrigation systems will not be allowed – and the cost will also increase.

## **GARDENING IN OCTOBER**

### **Hunger busting!**

Here is a guide of easy-to-grow veggies to sow and plant now:

**Carrots** – sow seeds directly several times from spring to autumn to ensure a continuous harvest. The soil must be cultivated deeply to make it loose and friable.

**Cumbers** – sow seeds directly. The plants will need sturdy stakes to keep the fruit off the ground.

**Green beans** – plant seeds of bush types which are easier to manage.

**Lettuce** – keep on planting oak and loose leaf lettuce seedlings – available in trays from your local nursery.

**Radishes** – sow small amounts directly throughout summer.

**Squashes and baby marrows** – sow seeds directly. As soon as they emerge, they need to be thinned out to allow ample space for you to trail them up some obelisks made of poles. You can also trail them over a wire fence.

**Sweet peppers** – plant seedlings from your nursery.

**Tomatoes** – plant seedlings from your nursery. Tomato seedlings should be planted deeper than they originally grew in their nursery trays. The plants will be more anchored and sturdier and roots will develop along the buried portion of the stems. Pinch off the lower leaves when you plant them.

**Spinach** – plant a few rows of spinach every few weeks to ensure a continuous supply.

### **To do:**

Feed young veggies every two weeks with a water-soluble fertiliser and keep a sharp eye on germinating weeds between the rows. Put out snail bait amongst strawberry plants and provide a mulch of straw, coarse clippings, or weed matting to prevent the fruit from touching the soil. Pick the fruit frequently to encourage new ones. Water all citrus trees deeply, once a week. Thin out peaches, nectarines, apricots and plums when they are about pea-size. They need a second application of a general fertiliser suitable for fruiting plants. Continue spraying and baiting against fruit fly and codling moth.

Sow more parsley, chives and basil seeds in pots to keep on a sunny kitchen windowsill.

Plant out a last crop of lettuce and coriander before the summer heat starts.

### **Seedling success relies on:**

- Compost enriched soil.
- Not being pulled out by their stems – push them gently out of their punnet from below, with a pencil or stick and firm them down gently in a planting hole that fits the size of their root balls.
- Regular watering afterwards.
- Pinching out their growth tips as they go along, to make them bushier.
- Regular feeding of lawns with a granular lawn fertiliser spreader (to be used according to instructions given on the product) and by hand out of a bucket for garden beds.
- Dead-heading in support of continual flowering.
- Remember to put out cutworm bait after planting young seedlings.

### **Sow like a pro**

All summer-flowering annuals and most summer vegetables and herbs can be sown now that night temperatures are higher. Here are some handy tips when sowing:

- **Large seeds** – place a piece of chicken wire over the seed tray to make a template for sowing evenly. Use one seed per hole.
- **Small seeds** – fine seeds such as petunia or lobelia can stick to your fingers and are difficult to spread out. Mix them with dry sand or bread flour in an old flour shaker and shake the mix lightly over the moistened soil.

Freshen up garden containers containing specimen plants like lollipop standards, by pruning them neatly once again to maintain a round shape. Plant some bright red bedding begonias around the stems this month and you will have a great festive look in December.

Feed the garden every month with general fertiliser, for optimal growth and water early in the morning, on wind-free days.

(Taken from the <http://www.lifeisagarden.co.za/> link on the Go South website)



## SAVE OUR FLOWER SHOW

At this month's meeting I made a plea for help in saving the Society's Flower & Garden Show, suggesting a way forward.

Remember, this and the wholly successful Plant Sale are the only events we produce that show our public face. However, there seems to be an inbuilt lethargy on the part of members in their attitude towards the Show.

It is a large event that needs a great deal of planning and this requires the input of a lot of people. Considering it is our public face I find it difficult to believe that at the last Show there was an amazing total of 453 exhibits but these were put on by only 27 people. Twenty-seven out of a membership of just over 200!!!!

Are members put off by the competitive element in the Show itself?

I find this difficult to believe especially as there is one class in the schedule - THE BEST FLOWER IN MY GARDEN - in which everybody could exhibit the *one* exquisite flower in their garden.

Wouldn't it be a wonderful to astonish the public (and members) with the variety of flowers that can be grown in Cape Town gardens seen from 200 single exhibits?

We need small teams of people who can spend a little time together to look after the various elements that go to make up the presentation of the Show.

Here they are:

1. Posters and printing
2. Storage and portage
3. Tables - book delivery dates, putting up, covering, placing Class Cards
4. Entries - sending out Show Schedules, receiving requests, writing out cards.
5. Judging - booking judges & Stewards, booking Talks organising gifts.
6. Catering - for judges and for the prize party.
7. Silverware - looking after cups, collecting gifts and vouchers from the Trade.
8. Publicity - Press, Radio, & Facebook
9. The Trade - booking stall holders, allocating space and settling them in.
10. Café - liaising with charity involved [Lions already booked for 2017.]
11. The Gate - gate-manning schedule

Please don't let the Show die. I would love to receive ideas and suggestions from you by the end of this year. Contact me at [tuffin@mweb.co.za](mailto:tuffin@mweb.co.za) or 082-557-5994 and 021-788-9030.

Michael T (Chairman)

## JOURNAL OF A HAPHAZARD GARDENER –OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2016

The day of the Plant Sale in Marina Da Gama was sunny and windless; perfect conditions. There was an impatient queue waiting for the gates to open at ten o'clock. One customer rushed in and left two hours later with two plants: she had obviously looked long and hard. Another was much vaguer in his request: he wanted a plant with a blue flower. After questioning it transpired that he had seen a tree with lovely blue flowers: one disappointed customer.

Our early bird customers



Ruth handling the raffle, preserves and seedling sales.



I helped at the Plant Sale this year for the first time and enjoyed myself immensely. A young man, who has just bought a house in Welcome Glen, had written out a long list of local plants. He had researched them on the internet as to their suitability for planting in their brand new home. He had also priced them at various nurseries. He heard the Plant Sale advertisement on FMR, gave up the idea of a hike, and sped to the sale. With our help he managed to tick off about half the plants on his list, plus some others that we were able to suggest he use. He also marvelled that the prices were about a quarter of those at the nurseries. A very happy customer left with more than R500 worth of purchases.

It was also useful to notice for future reference, what people actually buy. Two plants that I had brought, *Chlorophytum comosum* (hen-and-chickens) and parsley were still there when I left at 12.30.

To top it all, Melanie served the workers with tea, coffee and delicious home-made goodies, like scrumptious marmalade made of every citrus fruit you could imagine.

It is half-way through October and I haven't had to water my garden. The rain hasn't been all that plentiful but the showers have arrived at regular intervals. Yesterday I was thinking that I would have to start watering as some plants were beginning to look distressed, but there was a good downpour last night. This morning there was a full rainbow which stretched across the sky with Table Mountain as a backdrop.

But a hot dry summer is forecast. It is rumoured that there will be even stricter water restrictions. What to do about this? I have been spending some money on mulch and spreading it thickly over the garden. I like to use rooibos mulch in my pots; it disappeared for a while but has reappeared at more than twice the price – R49.95 for 15DM. I also like to use chipped peach pips, but they have increased to R49.95 for 30DM. (Local manufacturers cashing in on the drought). I am also busy repotting using pellets that help to retain moisture in the soil. On the Cape Talk gardening programme someone suggested that you bury plastic bottles, pricked with a few holes near the roots of your plants. Then you fill them with water which irrigates underground: no wasting of water as usually happens when it runs off the surface of our 'oily' soil.

Some plants that are growing particularly well in my garden at the moment are an air plant, a rose scented pelargonium and some Cotula. The air plant is *Tillandsia tenuifolia* (Bromeliaceae) (below, left). It hangs from a tree which provides some shade and plenty of sun and it survives a weekly watering in the summer. (When I checked this plant on the internet, I found a recent article from Australia, stating that their government had forbidden the importation of air plants because they contain a dangerous bacterium, xylella, which attacks fruit trees and is impossible to eradicate). *Pelargonium capitatum* (below, right) should be in every garden as it is very easy to grow, as it self-seeds prolifically and is water wise. *Cotula sericea* (below, centre) forms a mass ground cover and is also easy to grow from cuttings that root quickly. It is also fairly water-wise. *Sericea* means silky, which is an apt description.

Two gardening events occur in October. The 9<sup>th</sup> was Garden Day. The web site suggested various activities that could take place. One idea sounded good fun: 'Instead of book club, have a plant club. Ask guests to bring an interesting plant to swap with one of the other guests'. The other is the Cape Town Flower and Garden Show. The helpers at the plant sale commented negatively about how expensive it is. So maybe I won't see you at the High Tea.



## **BOUNTIFUL BASIL**

**To experience one of nature's most delicious perfumes, just bury your nose in a handful of freshly picked basil leaves.**

The fragrance and flavour of basil has made it one of our most popular culinary and household herbs. It also has many health benefits, especially as a cleansing tonic for the system. There are now so many different types of basil and what fun it is to experiment with the new varieties and new tastes in addition to the culinary stalwart sweet basil – *Ocimum basilicum*.

### **Growing basil**

All basil plants are equally easy to grow; they prefer morning sun in hot areas and full sun in cooler areas. Basil does best in fertile, well composted soil that drains well. The basil plants need more water than other Mediterranean herbs so should be watered regularly, the best time being in the morning. Monthly feeding allows them to produce lush leaves and pinching off the growing tips of small plants encourages bushy growth. Annual basil and some perennial varieties are frost and cold sensitive, while the perennial pink basil and sacred basil will survive winter if planted in a sheltered, sunny part of the garden.

Basil is a good companion plant for tomatoes, reputedly increasing the flavour of the fruit and promoting healthy growth. It also helps repel aphids, white fly, fruit fly and beetles.



### **Sowing basil**

Basil germinates easily and is quick to grow from seed, but should only be sown after all danger of frost has passed.

- Prepare the bed by digging in extra compost, rake it level and remove stones and sticks.
- Seed can be sown in rows or scatter sown at a depth of 3mm. Lightly firm down the soil and water gently.
- Keep the soil moist until germination, which usually occurs within seven days.
- Thin out plants until the final ones are 30 cm apart. The thinned out plants can be eaten as micro and later baby salad leaves.

For a constant supply of fresh leaves sow a new batch of seed every six to eight weeks, or bring in new young plants.

### **Pests**

Basil is generally pest free but may be attacked by spider mites (especially when it is hot and dry), aphids and beetles. Too much water or poor drainage in excessively wet weather can make it susceptible to botrytis, which manifests as black patches on the leaves and stems. Deal with insects by cutting back the plant or spraying it with an insecticide. Improve drainage by adding milled bark or coarse compost to the soil.

### **Harvesting**

Ideally, one should pick the leaves as they are required because they don't store well in the refrigerator. Leafy stems can be put in a jug or bottle of water and kept for a few days. To extend the harvest of leaves, do not let the plants flower as this can cause the leaves to become bitter. Remove the flowering tops as they appear. Once your second and subsequent plantings are producing enough leaves for picking then allow the first batch of basil to flower so that you (and the bees) can enjoy the flowers as well.

### **In the kitchen**

Basil is most associated with Italian and Thai cooking and goes particularly well with tomatoes, whether fresh or cooked up as sauces. Add the leaves at the end of cooking. The leaves can also be used in salads and to flavour herb vinegar, herb oil and herb butter.

Basil is also the main ingredient of pesto and a good way to preserve extra basil is to blend the basil, olive oil and pine or almond nuts required for pesto. The mixture can then be frozen and the parmesan cheese added later, when the pesto is to be used.

### **Medicinal properties**

Basil has antidepressant, antiseptic and soothing properties. The fresh leaves can be made into a cough syrup with honey or an infusion can be drunk to help relieve a cold. Rubbing fresh leaves onto insect bites and stings will help relieve the itching.



**Watermelon salad**

This simple recipe is perfect for a hot summer's day. Simply cut watermelon into chunks, then add sliced red onion, a bit of crumbled feta and a few fresh basil leaves. Make a simple dressing of 2 tablespoons olive oil and 1 tablespoon lemon juice with a pinch of salt. Pour the dressing over the salad when you are ready to serve.

(From *Life is a Garden* on <http://gosouth.co.za/bountiful-basil/>)

**ON THE SNAIL TRAIL**

After last month's article, a member's husband sent this in:

Hey you there in your spiral shell  
It seems I know you all too well  
If you don't leave my leaves alone  
You'll stay as big as you have grown.

**NOTICEBOARD FOR ITEMS OF INTEREST****List of 2016 Open Gardens:**

**Mamre:** 28/29 October from 10:00 to 17:00. The Mamre Garden Club is opening the 6 winning gardens in a recent competition. R50 entrance (includes tea). Tickets from 3 Klinker Street. For more information call Toni Dymond on 082-926-9295.

**Rosedale, Lower Nursery Road, Rosebank:** 29 October from 14:00 to 18:00. This complex for seniors (under the auspices of the SA Legion) invites you to a Garden Tea Party. R25 entrance (includes tea). For more information call Sue on 021-685-3685 / 083-467-5995 or Del on 083-658-1018.

**Rustenberg:** 28/29/30 October from 10:00 to 16:00. Rozanne Barlow is opening her garden for all to see. R40 entrance. Plants for sale and tea available under the oaks. For more information call Rozanne on 082-442-1721 or razanne@rustenberg.co.za

**Elgin:** 29/30 October and 5/6 November from 10:00 to 17:00. Barbara Knox-Shaw and her team again invite you to visit 20 gardens. For more information call Barbara on 078-021-2101 or 021-844-0154 or to get the list of gardens and costs visit <http://www.elginopengardens.co.za/>

**Constantia:** 12 November from 10:00 to 17:30 and 13 November from 10:00 to 16:30. The three Garden Clubs in the Constantia area invite you to see 4 gardens in aid of various food garden projects. R50 entrance (includes tea) if bought in advance. R60 if bought on the day. Plants for sale. For more information call Lyn on 021-712-4561.

**Stellenberg:** 12/13 November from 09:30 to 17:30. Sandy Ovenstone is opening her garden again in aid of St Joseph's Home for Chronically Ill Children. R50 entrance; R35 for tea; Doreen has plants for sale in the nursery. For more information call 021-761-2948 or 083-300-1196.

(Photos: Japie Esterhuyzen, Nicky Ross, John van der Linde, Life is a Garden, Peter Henshall, Andrew and Glenda Thorpe)