

FIRST MEETING OF THE YEAR

Monday, 6 February 2017 at 20:00 at The Athenaeum, Newlands.

R10 for members; R20 for visitors.

A GARDEN IN SOUTH DEVON WHICH HAS GILBERT AND SULLIVAN CONNECTIONS

You will remember that Rosalind Spears spoke to us last year about her gardens at Libertas.

This year her talk will focus on the wonderful planting in the gardens that run down to the sea at Coleton Fishacre in South Devon. They were created round the art deco house built by Rupert D'Oyly Carte in the 1920s. His inherited fortune came from his father, the impresario behind the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas.

Today it is beautifully maintained by the National Trust. We shall see the house, the gardens, the views and hear some of the operettas!

LAST GET-TOGETHER OF 2016

A small group attended our annual party on 5 December and enjoyed the balmy weather while relishing the culinary delights provided by everyone. 13 members were lucky enough to win some lovely items in the raffle draw, from books to plants, preserves and floral arrangements. Our thanks to Melanie, Michael and Jane for providing these lovely prizes.



Above: Is this what our parties have come to? Right: Janet and her *Spathiphyllum* prize.

2016 OUTINGS

Just to remind you, these are the gardens we had the pleasure of visiting last year:

Saskia Schelling's permaculture garden; Vergelegen; Will's Fuchsias; Woodstock Peace Garden; Pooh Corner, Noordhoek; Greystones and Simonsvlei in Constantia; the Bromeliad Paradise.

If you missed any of them, then be sure not to lose out this year. They are always well worth the visit.

FIRST OUTING OF THE YEAR

Saturday, 25 February at 09:30: Visit the Constantia garden of Neville Wylie, who is a nurseryman from Gauteng, now retired to Cape Town. He has a large, interesting and colourful garden with a wonderful mix of unusual indigenous and exotic plants. This is one not to be missed as Neville is a wonderful source of information and says his garden is looking beautiful at the moment.

Limited to 25 members. Please give your name to Glenda by no later than Wed, 22 February.

HOW TREES TALK TO EACH OTHER

Have you ever wondered whether trees communicate? You may find this 18 minute TED talk of interest.

https://www.ted.com/talks/suzanne_simard_how_trees_talk_to_each_other?utm_source=tedcomshare&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=tedsbread

FRIENDS OF THE ARDERNE GARDENS

A large group of FOTAG members, members of the Simon van der Stel Foundation and invited guests, gathered at the Arderne Gardens on 26 November to celebrate the progress of the second phase of FOTAG's Renaissance Project. This celebration included two tree plantings to mark the occasion.

Firstly, Richard Jamieson (below left, second from the right) planted a Hoop Pine – *Araucaria cunninghamii* var. *papuana* (this specific form coming from Papua New Guinea) – on the pavement outside the gardens. [Others in the picture are, from left, FOTAG Chairman, Francois Krige, Adam Harrower and Hank Lith.] Richard was a Senior Horticulturist with the City's Parks Department and later became Manager of Newlands Nursery. Arderne Gardens fell under his control. His part in shaping much of the gardens as we see it today went unrecognized. Unfortunately, after his retirement, the Gardens were neglected; hence FOTAG's efforts with the Renaissance project.

The second tree was planted by Mr Naito of the Japanese Consulate (below, centre). Seeds of the *Ilex rotunda* – the Kurogane holly (one of four species to survive the Hiroshima bomb blast) – were sent to Cape Town, and 69 other countries, by the UN Institute for Training and Research, as part of the Green Legacy Hiroshima Initiative. Adam Harrower, who has been nurturing these seeds, says: "Roughly around 170 trees survived the bomb blast and quite a number of them are still alive today. It's from these trees that seeds have been collected and sent to 70 countries around the world. The seeds have been planted as a symbol of peace, a symbol of hope and a symbol of resilience. We are very pleased to be part of a global movement of peace."

If you have visited the Arderne Gardens in the past, you may recall the white security guards' 'kiosk' at the entrance. This has been removed and replaced with a beautiful, solid wooden structure (below left, green roof on left), donated by the Simon van der Stel Foundation.

As for the rest of the garden, the beds are looking splendid, there's a sense of openness and the overall look certainly gives one the impression that someone cares. The upgrade and ongoing maintenance is all due to the hard work of Lisa and her assistant, James (below right).



An 8-page spread on the Arderne Gardens' renaissance is being featured in the February issue of House and Garden and is already on sale.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

Please note that subscriptions are only due from the end of February. The renewal forms will be issued with the February CHS News and payment can be made after that or at our March meeting.

CHS FLOWER SHOW

Have you responded to our Chairman about the organisation of future shows?

He is appealing to members to come together around a table to try and find a way forward so that the CHS will continue its 112-year legacy of staging flower shows. Perhaps you have other ideas as to how we can uphold the objective of our Constitution, which is to "encourage and improve the knowledge of all things pertaining to horticulture".

If you feel the same way, please get in touch with Michael Tuffin by the end of this month. Do not delay! He would love to receive ideas and suggestions – AND VOLUNTEERS. The show has been booked for 7/8 October.

Contact him at tuffin@mweb.co.za or 082 5575 994 and 021 788 9030.

CHS LIBRARY

In the November 2016 CHS News it was proposed that we start a library. We have a member who has volunteered to be the librarian, but we need to know from you, the members of the Society, if this is a facility that you would like to use. If you have any comments or suggestions, please send them to Glenda before the end of January, or bring them along to the February meeting. The decision to implement this will be subject to the response received.

PRESERVING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

We are close to the end of three months of Level 3 water restrictions. It's been tough going through the summer heat, but I hope that as committed CHS members you have been doing your part in saving every drop of precious water – not only to protect this natural resource, but your own pocket. If the rumours are to be believed, then we may be facing Level 4 restrictions in the near future – no watering of gardens, at all!!

What innovative ways have you found to recycle your household water in order to keep your plants from dying? Do you have any suggestions for those who are straining their backs by carrying buckets and watering cans?



A plastic wheelie bin is modified to capture and distribute water from a washing machine. This is a great alternative to a plumbed-in grey water system for those in rental properties who can't make permanent changes.

The washing machine pipe hooks over the side of the bin, which sits next to the machine while it is operating.

The bin is then wheeled outside to where water is needed. A tap fitting allows for a hose attachment.

The bin is reasonably easy to manoeuvre, although its four single-direction wheels sometimes make turning corners a bit of a heave.

Impact: Captures about 60L more water per wash.



What do you think of this idea? Found on <http://gosouth.co.za/using-grey-water-garden/>

“With the focus on being more water wise in our gardens, why not consider using the ‘grey’ water that is produced by your household? Which water can you use? On which plants should you use it? And what are the repercussions for your garden? Watering, along with composting, feeding, mulching and so on is a vital component in successful gardening. During prolonged dry periods, where water is at a premium, gardeners may want to make use of ‘grey’ water to keep their gardens alive.

Grey water, or second-hand household water, is water from the bath, shower, washing machine, etc. Of vital concern to gardeners is the level of salts, chemicals, soaps and fats that grey water may contain, and its effect on their gardens. Prolonged use of most grey water is not recommended in the garden as it does affect the soil and health of plants. But desperate times call for desperate measures, and grey water can be used, if a number of factors are taken into consideration.

Grey water used over a long period in the same position will ultimately damage the soil, causing the build-up of salts and deflocculation (finer soil particles filter downward), leaving the surface of the soil barren and sandy and low in beneficial micro organisms. For this reason, outlet pipes should be moved around to different parts of the garden, to spread the load.

The quality of grey water is a major concern. Bath and shower water, and rinse water from washing dishes by hand, is the best grey water to use, as it contains the least harmful chemicals. It can be used on most plants with little negative affect. Washing machine water (particularly from the first rinse) and dishwasher water should only be used on well-established trees and large shrubs, or lawns, as it contains harmful chemicals and fats that could have hazardous effects on the plants and also the soil. The key to using grey water is to filter it first (remove hair and other matter) and to allow it to stand for a while (a few hours) for sediment to settle. Keep grey water away from very sensitive plants such as roses, seedlings, ferns, orchids and delicate plants. Choosing safer, biodegradable or organic soaps and chemicals will also be a great help.

There are a number of very practical grey water systems on the market today. Most of them filter, collect and pump grey water out into the garden. Hire a plumber to connect them, and adjust all your plumbing to suit. Grey water in the garden is a great way to save water, the environment, as well as your garden.”

[Ed: Looks like a good idea, but are these bins water-tight?]

Another idea: The Home Gardener’s Tip from www.atlanticfertilisers.co.za:

“A great tip for planting new plants at your holiday home or someplace where you don’t get to water often. Line a large hole with the whole Sunday newspaper, before filling

with said soil, compost, fertiliser etc. and finally the plant. The paper acts as a water trap; preventing water from draining through the loose newly turned soil and staying around the roots. The paper also allows the water to spread evenly around the root ball. With time it rots away and the roots can grow through the paper.” - Allan Haschick

January in your Garden from www.atlanticfertiliser.co.za listed some resolutions for 2017. Here is one that is pertinent to our current situation:

“Trend 6: ‘Sustainable, sustainable’

Harvest and recycle every drop of water. This means rainwater harvesting tanks, the use of bath and washing water and even garden ponds, to use as an auxiliary water source.

Resolution:

Make a plan to catch any re-usable water flowing wastefully away from your home into storm water drains, at all cost! Be waterwise!

A hot topic at the moment is water restrictions. Some quick water-saving tips include:

- Repair leaking taps and hose-pipes
- Replace damaged hose fittings (they really don't cost much!)
- Water deeply and less frequently
- Schedule watering to take place in the early morning or in the evening
- Override sprinkler systems after and during rains
- Use greywater for irrigation”

An article in the Tatler of 25 February 2016 suggested that we save water by removing invasive plants from our gardens. Stodels provided reasons for removing them. This is an extract:

Availability of water: The fact that most invasive plants like to establish themselves alongside river banks and in river beds, means that they consume a great deal more water than indigenous flora which results in the slow dying off of indigenous flora. It is estimated that invasive plants consume about 3 billion cubic metres more water than indigenous plants.

They replace valuable indigenous vegetation: The invasive plants offer tough competition with regards to not only water, but light, space and nutrients. As a result, the natural indigenous vegetation begins to die which has a detrimental impact on our biodiversity.

Alien invasives to be removed are: Lantana (which produces the black berries), Black Wattle, Pampas grass, Bugweed and Castor-oil plants.

From the Editor: I have never used a basin inside our kitchen sink in which to wash dishes. With the restrictions in place I thought it might be an idea to see how much water is actually used, or wasted, by turning on the tap for a few seconds to wash fruit and veg or my hands, or rinse a glass. All I had was a 5ℓ ice cream container, so it was placed under the cold water tap. I was astounded at how quickly 5ℓ of water could be collected. This size container is much easier to handle and I pop out the back door to trickle a little bit of water onto as many pot plants as I can. I will also take this container and empty it into our wash basin because this runs into our 100 ℓ grey water tank and will spray over the garden as soon as it is full.

As mentioned in the article on page 3, in order not to destroy the soil, we have a series of about 18 sprinklers (the orange Gardena type) on short hoses, placed strategically around the garden. Pipes run from the grey water tank to the back and front gardens. One long hose is connected to a valve on these pipes and is attached, in turn, to each of these sprinklers throughout the garden. After every emptying of the tank (we can get two ‘sprinkles’ from one load of washing), the procedure is to move the hose onto the next sprinkler. It takes quite a while to cover the entire garden.

On the other end of the pH scale, this watering is supplemented by our irrigation system which uses well-point water that is excessively high in salt content. Each of our 4 stations irrigates for 30 mins (down from 45 mins) once a week. Despite our very tiresome and time-consuming grey-water set-up (at least it's not back-breaking), and minimal groundwater usage, we have managed to keep our garden alive during summers ever since the first restrictions in, was it 2004 or 2008? Between April and October we rely entirely on the rain to water our garden.

Please share your clever water-saving and -recycling ideas with the rest of the membership. Send them to Glenda.

2017 PROJECT

At our 2016 AGM, Janet Macfarlane proposed that we use some of our funds to sponsor a busload of school children to visit Kirstenbosch. Your committee decided this was a very good idea and has arranged for 3 busloads (60 learners and 3 teachers on each trip), to partake of the lessons provided by the Gold Fields Environmental Education Centre. The sponsorship covers the cost of the 3 hour lesson, garden entrance fee, worksheets and the use of the Gold Fields bus over 3 days. The fee to attend lessons is R20.00 per child. Naluxolo Primary School in 'Samora', near Philippi, has been selected and 3 groups of either Grades 4, 5 or 6 will attend over 3 days (31 May, 1 and 2 June). Our thanks to Janet for this suggestion.

LOST PROPERTY

A stainless steel bowl (28cm dia.) was found at the end of the Plant Sale. Is it yours? Speak to Glenda.

(Photos: Andrew and Glenda Thorpe, Life is a Garden: *Small Steps for Sustainability*)