

President: David Davidson, **Chairman:** Errol Scarr, **Hon Treasurer:** Henry Diesveld, **Secretary:** Glenda Thorpe
Honorary Members: Laurie Powis, Colin Cook, Marianne Alexander, Barbara Hey, Mary Smith,
 Anne Bean, Adam Harrower, Michael Tuffin

NEXT MEETING

Monday, 2 October 2017 at 20:00 at The Athenaeum, Newlands.
 R10 for members; R20 for visitors.

WATCH THIS SPACE

Unfortunately our speaker, Marianne Alexander, has a family crisis and is unable to speak to us. Please attend on the 2nd because we *will* have something in place on the night.

OUTINGS

Cherise Viljoen, who organizes our outings, has been unwell for the past seven weeks. Our monthly outings will resume in November. Page 6 has a list of horticultural events for you to visit during the month of October.

REPORT BACK

September Plant Table:

The selection this month came from these gardens:

University estate garden with rain

- *Wigandia caracasana* – S America – difficult to get to grow, but when it does – wow! [below, left]

Kenilworth garden with rain

- *Croton* – growing outside to about 1m
- *Leucadendron* (IND)

Constantia garden with borehole and grey water

- Bluebells (Spanish) – one of the first plants that was found to have a similar mycorrhizal association to orchids; it was then discovered that many plants need that fungus in the soil to help their roots absorb nitrogen and other vital chemicals.
- *Bletilla striata* (ground orchid)
- *Myosotis scorpioides* "Forget-me-nots" – self-seeding
- *Gladiolus tristis* (IND) [below, 2nd from left]

Mowbray garden ...

...with grey water

- *Iris japonica* – multiplies like a weed, but pretty in flower

... with rain

- *Gladiolus splendens* (IND) – Calvina; growing in pots (scarlet) [below, centre]

Harfield Village ...

... eco-pool

- *Aponogeton distachyos* "Waterblommetjies" (IND) – W Cape and Mpumalanga provinces – aquatic flowering plant with scented blooms; introduced elsewhere in quiet ponds and vleis which dry up in summer; dormant in the dry summer and grow when pools fill with rain [below, 2nd from right]

Harfield Village ...

... garden

- *Senecio petasitis* – SW Mexico to Nicaragua – grows in sheltered spot to 2.5m; masses of flowers in late winter/early spring; can take sun; regrows quickly after pruning; grows from soft wood cuttings [below, right]



Bergvliet garden with borehole water

- *Melasmaerula ramosa* (IND) – Clanwilliam; tiny bulbs which come up everywhere; disappears in summer and re-appears in late winter/spring; shade [below, left]
- *Lobelia laxiflora* – half a metre; sends out suckers; morning sun; perennial
- *Rondeletia amoena* – slow growing evergreen shrub; early morning sun; will take shade; very attractive even when not in flower
- *Crassula montana* (IND) – needs shade in hot weather [below, centre]
- *Abutilon megapotanicum* – morning sun or shade; has a sprawling, trailing habit [below, right]

**Diep River garden ...**

... with grey water

- *Babiana* (IND) – blue turned white from one year to the next
- *Plectranthus zuluensis* (IND) – flowers on and off throughout the year

... with rain

- *Gasteria* (IND)

Pinelands garden with rain

- *Sparaxis bulbifera* (IND) – white; grows on road islands and anywhere where it is boggy and wet
- *Sparaxis grandiflora acutiloba* (IND) – Clanwilliam – yellow; grows in gravel/sand
- *Calceolaria pinnata* – Jamaica to Brazil; attractive annual; self-seeds
- *Hesperantha bachmannii* (IND) – Namaqualand to East London; flowers open overnight and closes the next morning so probably pollinated by a moth; very fragrant [right]
- *Veltheimia bracteata* (IND) – Humansdorp to E Cape; dusty pale pink; garden forms are deeper pink if in shade; come in peach and lemon. The *V capensis* is more sun-loving.

**Rondebosch garden with rain**

- *Freesia laxa* (IND) – comes in scarlet or blue

Marina da Gama garden with grey and saline wellpoint water

- *Eucharis amazonica* – S America – needs to be kept dry but water to initiate flower buds
- *Pelargonium* Copthorne

Lakeside garden with rain

- *Scilla* or *Merwillia peruviana* – growing on a pavement; hot and dry; neglected!

Rugby hothouse

- *Clivia* Daruma Shima Fu – Green Throat – Japanese hybrid; has been flowering since 15 August.

Betty's Bay garden

Bunch of IND flora [right]

- Grey *Eriocephalus* – wild rosemary
- 2 *Stoebe* (now *Seriphium*) species "Slangbos" – useful as a filler in the vase; can be cut back hard
- *Cliffortia obcordata* – another good filler with light green leaves; does well in dry sandy gardens
- *Leucospermum conocarpodendron* (hybrid) "Veld Fire". Yellow pincushion. When cutting for the vase or cutting off faded flowers, cut back quite hard to beginning of the present year's growth.
- *Leucospermum bolusii* – grows along Clarence Drive between Gordon's Bay and Rooi Els; has white fragrant flowers
- *Leucadendron* "Safari Sunset" – bracts turn red and yellow when plant flowers.



These plants are given a little water every 2 – 3 weeks (when the owners are there). They try to create a basin around the plants to hold water as the soil is 'oily'.

Plants from unknown gardens:

Tetradenia (was Iboza) *riparia* (IND) – shades of lavender, mauve and pink; aromatic

Clivia blooms in all shades

JENNY'S CHOICE FOR SEPTEMBER

EXOTIC



Brassolaeliocattleya "Namib Sunset" BLC Duckitt Beauty x LC Trick or Treat – cared for in a hothouse in Rugby

Arpad says this won 2nd place at the Cape Orchid Society's monthly meeting on 22 August, so is past its prime!

INDIGENOUS



Peggy's *Pelargonium echinatum* – grown in a Breërivier (near Wolseley) garden with rain – arid areas of Klein Karoo, into the mountains; dormant in summer; flowers and leaves appear with spring rains; spiky stem; unusual in that all 5 petals are marked .

Annual Book Prize Winners – Conclusion:

Jennifer Howard completed a national diploma in nature conservation through CPUT in 2014. In 2015 she completed a bridging year into horticulture and in 2016 attained her BTech cum laude with 80% and 3 distinctions in horticulture. This is what she has to tell us:



"In 2014 I completed my work integrated learning year at a small, 9ha, urban nature reserve in Casablanca near Strand, where the last remnants of critically endangered Lourensford Alluvium Fynbos is protected. This tiny plot of land, surrounded by an impoverished community, was where my passion for plants and how they can benefit the community at large was born. As part of my diploma I completed a research project on the habitat extent and condition of this barely studied vegetation type and through this project and other restoration projects occurring on the reserve I noticed that there was a gap that existed between the horticultural sector and conservation in South Africa, this was a gap I was determined to fill. The conservationists knew how the environment should function but had little knowledge on how to propagate plants or reintroduce them into the environment and the horticulturists that I worked with knew how to grow the plants in a controlled environment but not how to make them thrive in a natural environment. This was most evident in areas that were to be restored to natural fynbos, where farmland or roads had once existed and many restoration efforts failed because of this. This work as well as the experience I gained at CPUT awakened my interest in learning how to effectively propagate fynbos and in 2016 I undertook a research project doing exactly that, studying the germination effect of smoke treatment on the seeds of the indigenous, medicinal *Agathosma betulina*.

During my BTech year I came to realise that conservation starts at home and that I can help each and every person make a difference in the world through their gardens. One of the biggest threats to our natural environment is the fragmentation of habitats, where natural areas are transformed into residential lots with alien gardens and monoculture lawns. Birds and insects are often confined to the mountains and nature reserves in and around Cape Town but cannot move amongst them because of the residences that lie between them and this leads to a whole host of ecological problems needlessly arising. I envision an alternative, where gardens contain a majority of indigenous plants that will both benefit the natural environment and the gardener who owns it. We are so privileged in the Cape floral kingdom to be home to over 9 000 species of plants, of which 69% are endemic. To my mind it makes sense to take advantage of this and plant our gardens with indigenous plants that vary in a phenomenal amount of ways and may not exist anywhere else on the planet. These gardens would act as stepping stones between the pockets of natural land for birds and insects so that our home can become one that is sustainable for all. Furthermore, with the current drought crisis everyone is aware of the need for South Africans to save water if we, as a nation, are to survive and I believe one of the ways in which individuals can make a difference is by planting water-wise indigenous gardens.

My plan for the coming years is to start supplying indigenous plants to the gardens and businesses of Villiersdorp and Theewaterskloof, where I see a gap in the market that can be filled in an environmentally friendly way. Through looking into gardens and speaking with various people in the village I have found that not only are the majority of gardens filled with unsuitable species of plants that are noticeably suffering, there

is currently no formal nursery in the village. I plan to change all this by supplying the people of Villiersdorp with plants that will work for them and their beautiful natural environment. I will be starting small, on a small plot and taking advantage of the many markets that occur regularly while building a client base and funds needed to grow the business.

I am passionate about conserving South Africa’s natural environment but I am also passionate about horticulture and I truly believe that, where compromises can be made, the two can work together to build a better future where people and nature are no longer at odds but rather collaborating together.”

RECORD SALES AT THE CHS PLANT SALE

An enormous thank-you to all the members who grew plants and nurtured seedlings, helped sort and price plants and then sold them – we’ve set a new record!

Our grateful thanks, too, to a couple of nurseries who donated plants.

Our sales total was just over R13 300 and, with the costs deducted, we’ve brought in R12 357, which included R265 in raffle ticket sales! This total figure is all the more remarkable in view of our water shortage...

Very importantly, too, very few plants required labels, and this made a great difference to the work-load – thank you for naming your plants.

There were about 650 plants for sale, and the buyers had the most incredible value and range from which to choose, with well-grown plants in virtually every category. The quality of the plants and the low prices are resulting in word-of-mouth advertising, which is proving invaluable in gaining support for our sale.

A breakdown of the price tags shows that most sales occurred in the R10 category with 148, followed by the R20 category, with 123. The R15 plants were third, at 88.

Thank you again to all our helpers and our green-fingered growers – it’s such a rewarding project and your support is greatly valued so please continue to slip and pot up in preparation for a year from now!

Melanie



Lesley Porter, the 1st Prizewinner with her beautiful arrangement made by Jane Robertson (all flowers from her garden)

JOURNAL OF A HAPHAZARD GARDENER – SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2017

I have been repotting plants this month using the soil from the compost heap. There were plenty of slimy, wriggly earthworms (*allolophora spp.*) angry at being disturbed. I was pleased to see them, knowing that the worms had been busy aerating and improving the drainage in the soil with their underground tunnels. It is wonderful how perfectly made the creature is: it chomps away at the organic matter which passes through its body and then it is excreted as beautifully enriched soil. In our walk on Rondebosch Common we could see thousands of earthworms' pooh castings. You would think that these castings would be loved by everyone: not apparently by green keepers on golf courses as the worms mess up the greens.

When reading up about the earthworm I discovered that animal manure in the compost encourages their activity. The heap needs to be kept moist. And that the worm's egg cocoons can tolerate the harshest conditions like drought.

We don't have a worm farm but my brother says that his Red wigglers (*Eisenia foetida*) work well in his garden. He feeds the worms vegetable peelings, garden clippings and newspapers to produce the "worm tea" which he feeds to his plants. Don't feed indigenous plants with this mixture - they die.

To conclude this month I went in search of a poem about earthworms. I particularly enjoyed this children's shape poem by Leonard Clark (right).

I used the following resources:

- Thanks to Richard Briers for his article Earthworms in *A little light weeding*
- Gardiner, Nancy *Affordable gardening*
- *The Royal Horticultural Society encyclopedia of gardening*
- www.sheerpoetry.co.uk/junior/literacy-hour/year-3/shape-poems



Eisenia foetida "Red Worm"

Earth-worm

Do
you
squirm
when
you
see
an earth-worm?
I never
do squirm
because I think
a big fat worm
is really rather clever
the way it can shrink
and go
so small
without
a sound
into the ground.
And then
what about
all
that
work it does
and no oxygen
or miner's hat?
Marvellous
you have to admit,
even if you don't like fat
pink worms a bit,
how with that
thin
slippery skin
it makes its way
day after day
through the soil,
such honest toil.
And don't forget
the dirt
it eats, I bet
you wouldn't like to come out
at night to squirt
it all over the place
with no eyes in your face:
I doubt
Too if you know
an earth-worm is deaf, but
it can hear YOU go
to and fro
even if you cut
it in half.
Do not laugh
or squirm
again
when
you
suddenly
see
a worm.

ALOE, ALOE

A few interesting pieces of information sent in by members, Marianne, Peter and Lyn, regarding Aloes:

PlantzAfrica's website, <http://pza.sanbi.org/aloiampelos-tenuior>, explains the new Aloe genera:

The genus *Aloe* was reclassified in 2013, the old broadly circumscribed genus has given way to a narrower generic concept for *Aloe* and two new genera are now recognised: the rambling aloes *Aloiampelos* (right) and the tree aloes *Aloidendron*.

Aloiampelos ciliaris (Haw.) Klopper & Gideon F.Sm. var. *ciliaris* – ORANGE

Aloiampelos tenuior (Haw.) Klopper & Gideon F.Sm. (= *Aloe tenuior* Haw.) – YELLOW

Pietermaritzburg nursery, Blackwoods' blog, had this to say about name changes:

"There seems to be a regular update of botanical classifications that often result in new names being given to plants. One of the most recent changes was the name **Acacia** which became either **Senegalia** or **Vachellia** depending on the flower and thorn structure of the plant. Just as everyone is coming to terms with these updates, **Aloe barberae**, the well known tree aloe has also been re-classified, due to a whole reshuffling of the aloe group. All the tree aloes have been accorded new names; most are now **Aloidendron**, whilst **Aloe plicatilis** is **Kumara plicatilis**. For those wanting to read more on the subject look out for the new book 'Tree Aloes of Africa' by Ernst van Jaarsveld and Eric Judd.

Safe to say, tree aloes will always remain prominent feature plants in the garden whatever their name might be in botanical terms. They're big, bold and statuesque always making their mark in the landscape."

In answer to Jane's question, regarding the seed swap box, to "let us know the colour and size/shape of *Aloe polyphylla*, and whether it likes direct sun", two members answered, helped by <http://pza.sanbi.org/aloe-polyphylla>:



Aloe polyphylla is a species in the genus *Aloe* that is endemic to the Kingdom of Lesotho in the Drakensberg mountains. It is well known for its strikingly symmetrical, five-pointed spiral growth habit.

Aloe polyphylla grows in high altitude grassland, between 2000 and 2500 metres – sometimes higher – although apparently only on the more easterly facing slopes at these higher altitudes. This could be due to the cold, where it may be important for the plants to receive early morning sun in winter. The plants are sometimes also under snow in winter. The spiral aloe grows in basalt rock crevices on very steep slopes with loose rock which aids in keeping the plants very well drained. They often grow in the mist and cloud belt in Lesotho. Although soils are well drained, the plants here have a continual flow of water in the summer months. The rainfall is very high and the summers very cool at these high altitudes in Lesotho.



DATES TO DIARISE AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

- **Fish Hoek Flower Show – 7 October 2017:** Open from 09:30 to 15:00. Cost: R10. The FHGC Show Schedule is available if you have some blooms to exhibit. All the details about entering your plants can be found in the schedule.
- **Rare Plant Fair – 14 October 2017:** Takes place at Tokara on the Helshoogte Pass from 09:00 – 15:00. Cost: R50 per person.
- **Noordhoek Open Gardens – 21/22 October 2017:** Four categories of gardens to see (medium, large, indigenous and food) from 10:00 – 16:00. Cost: R25 per garden; R125 per day or R200 for both days. All of the proceeds will go towards the On The Verge community greening project. Once printed, maps and information brochures will be found at <http://www.noordhoektourism.co.za/noordhoek-open-gardens-2017>
- **Elgin Open Gardens – 28/29 October and 4/5 November 2017:** 18 gardens to visit from 10:00 – 17:00. Cost: R0 to R30. For full details visit www.elginopengardens.co.za which is full of photos of the gardens and has many suggestions for where to eat or stay over the weekends. For more information: 021-844-0154 / 078-021-2101/ 083-459-3790 or info@elginopengardens.co.za
- **Aloes to spare:** Member, Roy Oldfield, is looking for any excess Aloes you may have in order to beautify a bed or two at the Brown and Annie Lawrence Retirement Home. Call him on 021-531-3630.

Photos: Andrew and Glenda Thorpe, Google, Rod Stewart