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**Honorary Members:** Laurie Powis, Colin Cook, Marianne Alexander, Barbara Hey, Mary Smith, Anne Bean, Adam Harrower, Michael Tuffin

## NEXT MEETING

**Monday, 6 November 2017 at 20:00** at The Athenaeum, Newlands.  
R10 for members; R20 for visitors.

To give her her full title, Emeritus Professor, Biological Sciences, University of Cape Town and Honorary Professor, Institute for Water Studies, University of the Western Cape and Freshwater Research Centre, Cape Town, Prof Jenny Day will speak to us about

### WATER IN CAPE TOWN: THEN ... AND NOW!

... and perhaps tell us where we go from here!

## OUTINGS

**Sat, 18 Nov at 09:30:** Visit an unusual indigenous meadow garden in Sir Lowry's Pass Village. Designed and maintained by Sue Buckland, the early morning has been requested by our hostess, as the vision of the early morning light, backlighting the grasses, is simply exquisite and must not be missed. Limited to 20 members. Please let Glenda have your name by 15 November.

## REPORT BACK

### Plants for Goedgedacht

An Arbor Week plea went out and donations were brought to our September meeting. The instigator, Fee Pegge, says, "I would just like to thank all the members who so kindly donated trees, plants pots etc to the Goedgedacht project. I delivered a whole bakkie load to them and they were very appreciative of all we gave them. They are doing amazing work in training people in very impoverished communities. The school and crèche were very busy with lots of happy children running around and there is a wonderful positive feeling about the whole place. It was most interesting to see what Mikal Lambert is busy with. Once again many thanks to all who supported them."

### October Plant Table:

Spring is definitely in the air judging by the wide variety of blooms brought in by members.

### Wellpoint water:

- *Cymbidium* – grown outside under a carport. Needs a high temperature at Christmas time when they start initiating their flower buds and then they flower predominantly in the winter.
- *Impatiens sylvicola* (IND) – grows from George onwards: shady area; seeds itself; good filler
- *Lavatera* – drought tolerant
- *Geranium palmatum* or *madeirensi* – biennial; lovely just for foliage, but when the head of flowers comes out, it's a bonus.
- *Leonotis nepetifolia* (IND) – sunbirds like the nectar
- *Streptosolen* "Marmalade Bush" – smallish bush
- *Erysimum* "Wallflower" – seed themselves
- *Aquilegia* – English herbaceous perennial; come in all colours
- *Salvia* "hot lips" – fussy about quality of water they get
- *Abutilon* – small shrub; easy to grow
- *Verbena* – low; covers the soil; has a scent

### Grey water:

- *Isoloma* (previously *Kohleria*) – best as a pot plant; needs a protected area
- *Hibiscus* – huge range of colours; thrive on neglect and drought
- *Cyrtanthus* (IND) "George Lily" – grow naturally between Knysna and Uitenhage; grow on from seed
- *Clivia* Californian Yellow x Chubb Peach x Chiba Sakura – has grown well this year possibly because of the long cold winter
- *Salvia africana-caerulea* (IND)
- *Melastomaceae* *rasamosa* "Fairy Bells" (IND) – Clanwilliam into Namaqualand, growing through plants; very promiscuous and self-seeds madly
- *Pelargonium capitatum* (IND) – spreads beautifully and flowers for a long time
- *Coleonema* – tough shrub; slow grower; pink and white forms
- *Pelargonium* hybrids – fussier than indigenous; need more water and care.

**Both grey water and rain:**

- *Lachenalia contaminata* (IND) – needs sun

L to R: Cymbidiums, Cyrtanthus, Clivia, Dombeya

**Stored rain water:**

- *Freesia laxa* – from KZN; grows in light shade; filler under trees
- *Crassula* “amoena”? – fast growing and multiplies

**Grey water and slightly saline wellpoint water:**

- *Gasteria* hybrid? – larger than true *Gasteria*
- Hybrid *Pelargonium*

**Only watered when it rains:**

- *Dombeya rotundifolia* “Common Wild Pear” (IND) – from Natal to Mozambique to N Botswana to N Namibia – white flowers turn coppery colour; ideal small garden tree
- *Pelargonium betulinum* (white and pink)(IND) [below, far right] – on coastal dunes from Yzerfontein to Knysna; when they get woody and straggly, takes slips and start again

L to R: two *Pelargonium* hybrids; another hybrid, close to *P. fulgidum* (VERY drought tolerant); *P. betulinum*

Jenny commented that *Salvias* seem to be appearing with names that are not species, just a hybrid with names like “Pakhuis Pass”(which appears to be a natural hybrid between *Salvia africana-caerulea* and *S. albicaulis*). She went on to say: “You don’t know which camp it belongs to, whether it’s a Namaqualand one or a coastal one and it does make growing them quite difficult. If you know where a plant grows naturally, you’ll know how to grow it in your own garden – whether it needs full sun, light shade or whatever. So it is always worthwhile being specific about names on plants when you buy them, unless you can recognise them immediately.”

**JENNY’S CHOICE FOR OCTOBER****EXOTIC**

*Dendrobium kingianum*  
– eastern Australia;  
comes in white and  
pink; pure specie used  
for hybridizing. Nice  
scent during the day.  
Flourishing on grey  
water.

**INDIGENOUS**

Wilma’s *Lachenalia orthopetala*  
(IND) from Piketberg,  
Malmesbury, Durbanville –  
getting scarce (loss of habitat);  
easy to grow – harder to find  
bulbs/seed. Gets both grey and  
rain water.

### Talk with Tanya

We received a surprise invitation to Builders Warehouse's Talk and Tea with The Gardener's Editor, Tanya Visser, on 30 September. Nine members attended and enjoyed a very informative and hilarious afternoon with her. Three of our members, Georgina, Angela and Steph, were lucky enough to win some wonderful products (see if you can spot them in the photo) and we all walked away with a goody bag and a plant.

In these times of water restrictions and having to be more conscious of our water usage, Tanya made a number of suggestions to combat our urge to do things as we've always done them and to find ways and means of re-inventing our gardens. Here is a very brief summary of what she had to say:

- Don't raise ninnies. Toughen up your plants.
- Get rid of stuff that doesn't have value.
- Retain plants that are well behaved – maximum impact with minimum effort.
- Hairy- or grey-leaved plants are tough and can withstand dry conditions.
- Suggestions of waterwise plants were: *Oscallaria*; *Santolina*; *Metalsia fastigata*; *Convolvulus*; *Correa*; *Syzgium pondoense*; *Sedum* "gold" and the dark red-leaved *Coprosma*.
- If watering with grey water, use half a cup of vinegar in your wash load. It's as good as fabric softener – and more environmentally friendly.
- Use a Gorilla tub (modern version of a builders' trug) to carry your water from the house to the garden instead of a rigid bucket.
- Using organic fertilisers means you don't have to water it in.
- Bioganic Bio Ocean (formerly Neutrog) is a general fertilizer.
- Wonder's waterwise granules can be used in dry areas.
- Potting mixture: 1/3 palm peat (sterile; neutral pH); 1/3 potting soil; 1/3 compost; handful Bio Ocean; handful bone meal (use Super Phosphate if you have dogs).
- When mulching with fresh grass clippings, do not make a thick layer. Best to first dry out the grass cuttings.
- Combine veggies with plants.
- Let your veg or herbs go to seed. Grow carrots for their flowers.
- Do not let weeds flower. Take out or pull off flowers before the seeds are scattered around the garden.
- Getting rid of onion weed: Do not dig out. Constantly twist/cut off the leaves and pull off flowers. You need to do this for at least 6 months to get results.
- Use Roundup Gel to kill weeds. Takes 10 days.
- Read instructions on insecticide boxes, bottles or inserts so as not to overdose.
- Complete 350SC kills aphids and sooty mould.
- As done in ancient times, grow these in rows:  
First Corn – let it germinate  
Then plant runner beans in between the corn – they will use the corn as stakes to hold onto  
Finally, plant pumpkin or squash in between – this will form a groundcover.
- Planting veg seed:  
Fill a tray with peat and flatten (don't compact it)  
Mix seeds in 2 handfuls of peat  
Put this mixture on top of the peat in the tray, filling the entire top  
Add a Vermiculite layer  
Flatten down gently  
Water  
Put in an area where there is light (not direct sunlight)  
Seeds will germinate within 10 days  
Water when dry – approximately twice a day  
Feed when plants are 5 – 7cm high  
Transplant and water.



Angela (centre), behind and to her left is Georgina, and Steph, our lady in the hat

### IMPRESSIONS OF OUR TREK INTO THE KAROO – Part 1

The visit by 25 members from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of September came about through Sue Goosen's connection to the CHS before moving to Prince Albert. The seed was sown when Andrew and Glenda Thorpe visited Prince Albert in September 2015 and met up with Sue. Plans for this weekend eventually got underway earlier this year.



Sue had organised six of her Prince Albert Garden Club members' gardens for us to visit – those of Malcolm Searle, Marlene Malan, Maureen Cumming, Sonja McKenna, Lorna Verran and, of course, her own. Succulents abounded, as did a variety of other plants. Bernice Mallet's comment: "The exterior of the town was dry and



unpromising, but the gardens were stunning in their creativity, colour, textures and sheer innovation. What a delightful surprise."

Maureen, being a botanist, had labelled her plants, for which we were grateful. The delicious teas offered by our gracious hostesses were most welcome. It is very satisfying to find a group of people as passionate about their gardens as we in the CHS are.

(Top, L to R: group at Marlene's house; Malcolm's fairly new Babylonstoren-style garden; the lawn that was, in Lorna's garden; Left: cheery Violas in Sonja's garden and Maureen's veggie garden in the pool that once was.)

Countless visits to the Renu-Karoo Nursery were made to purchase the many varieties of *Pelargonium* and the numerous other varieties of plants on offer. Many of us were very taken with the creeping form of *Portulacaria afra* which we'll find very useful as a groundcover.

A few members have sent in their impressions of the weekend away:

"In the Spring of 2017 an enterprising group of amateur Horticulturists gathered at the southern edge of the Great Karoo to investigate the future of gardening in Cape Town. The chosen meeting place was the picturesque village of Prince Albert. As well as being situated on a cultural crossroad, it lies at the intersection of botanical, geological and climatic zones – a place whose rainy season occurs the whole year round, but only produces 80mm per annum. The town is saved, however, by the 800mm that falls upon the grand wall of the Swartberg to the south. So it is that engaging upon the pleasures of a pedestrian ramble one is beset by cascades of bright *Bougainvillea* interspersed with the rushing artificial rills of the *leiwater*. Each property is enhanced by its holding tank, but most display the rigours of the place – no soft English shrubberies here, but many examples of gravel and mulch and succulent and Karreeboom. However, it is without the urban confines that the true nature of the environment manifests itself: the hardy scrub, the exposed strata, and the sere passage of the Dorpsrivier.

So it was with very great admiration that we enjoyed experiencing the awesome exertions of several local plantsmen: the transformation of a once-sterile hospital courtyard; an expansive mini Babylonstoren, incorporating aspects of heritage; a flourishing and eclectic cottage garden; the Goosen's spectacular floral creation (right), *ab initio*. Over and above these private grounds, we were impressed by a well-appointed nursery, inducted into the mystique of the olive, and hiked amidst the wondrously adaptive wild plants living on the ancient weathered sandstone and shattered quartzite.



So, on surveying one's own prospects, Tanya's admonition to perceive opportunity in adversity comes to mind. Let the attrition of the weak begin!"

John Macfarlane

"Thank you so much from us both for all your hard work and excellent organisation. We all met some very interesting and resourceful people there. Showed us what can be done with so little."

Ninon Carrington and Peter L'Estrange

"It was as we drove away that mom and I agreed that Prince Albert was a little paradise in the wilderness of the Karoo. The *leiwat* from the mountains is the life blood and allows plants and people to flourish. But even the dry dead looking Karoo is full of life as the walk with Sue Dean showed us. What an amazing experience that was. It opened our eyes and allowed us to gain so much more from the walk with André the next morning. The gardens were interesting and varied and it was an eye-opener to see succulents, such as common Melkbos, used in such different ways. It was great meeting such friendly and knowledgeable gardeners. What really was the highlight of the trip to me was the amazing Renu-karoo nursery and Sue Dean's talk – an introduction to so many new plants to try. The purse was empty and the bakkie packed with new plants and glorious Malvas when we finally pulled out!"

Yvonne and Peggy Reynolds

Spotted on the wall at Renu-karoo Nursery:

*The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago. The next best time is now.*

Chinese Proverb

"A fantastic 3-4 days were spent in Prince Albert with many thanks to Glenda for organising all the visits to 6 gardens as well as many other activities, making it an action-packed long week-end, if one signed up for all the various visits and activities.



Our first "garden" was an internal courtyard at the hospital of PA, which received a charming make-over by the ladies of the local PA Garden Club. (Left, from top: May 2017; July 2017 and September 2017.)

There we got a taste of how passionate everybody in PA feels about their town, with many volunteers and many offers of sponsorship, all helping for the good of the community.

I have yet to come across a town with so much feeling of loyalty by the residents.



It did not matter who you spoke to; whether it was someone who had been living there for over 30 years like Sue Dean or somebody from Gauteng who decided to get out of the rat race 3 years ago and definitely felt it was the right decision. No one has any regrets. On Friday evening Dr Sue Milton-Dean (left, bottom), gave us an illustrated power-point lecture on the flora of that part of the Karoo, which was followed by a walk through the veld with her the following day.

To me this drought-stricken vegetation consisted of brown bossies, rocks and brown sand, but Sue, with her enthusiasm, brought everything to life as we walked through this "dead" landscape.



All the gardens that we visited were very different, but all had something in common, namely an abundance of Spekboom (*Portulacaria afra*), some growing in most attractive hedges; all the gardens were a green oasis in a predominantly brown landscape, due to either having a borehole or leiwat running in small canals. The timing of when you can open the gate to receive your 10 or 20 minute water allowance (part of your title deed) has to be strictly adhered to, which needs a keen gardener, as one of the people in our midst has his allowance at 3 o'clock in the morning when he can open his sluice-gate!

Hannie van Wieringen



Interesting plants we saw – and some facts about them:

On one verge we all spotted yellow bushes commonly called Spanspekbus (*Manocheilus albicans* – Amaranthaceae) which look like a saltbush and the swollen fruits looked like twirly lime yellow lollipops! (Top of page 6, left.)

*Athanasia tomentosa* or Lang Jan was widely used in the gardens in town. (Top of page 6, centre.)

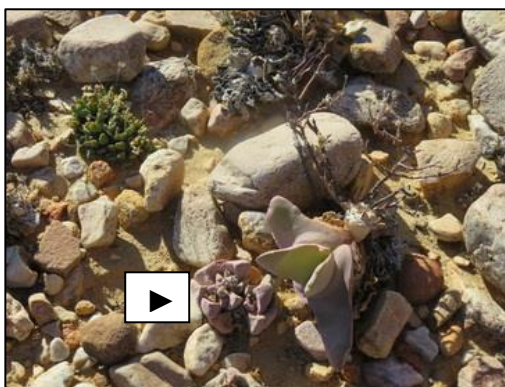
There are many *Portulacaria afra* hedges in the village, and plants of one clone, which can be thousands of years old, will all flower at the same time. (Top of page 6, right.)

NB: Goji berries are potentially invasive plants in the Karoo and are related to *Lycium*.





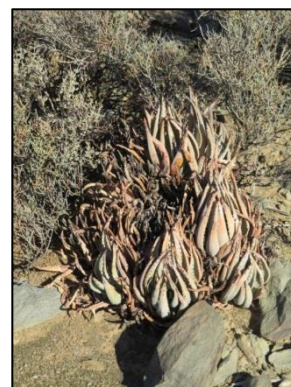
New plants encountered on our walk (below, left) through the Wolwekraal Reserve were:



*Bijlia dilitata* (Prince Albert Vygies), which only occurs in a 10km radius of the town on quartzite (left).

*Aloe claviflora*: Also known as the kraal aloe or cannon aloe. One of the easiest succulent plants to identify in the arid regions of the wild either by its angled inflorescence that

protrudes horizontally from the side of the plant (below left) or by the circular arrangement in which the plants grow, resembling a camp fire (below, centre). The plants start as a small, dense, circular group (below, right) which gradually continues to grow outwardly. This later causes a hollow to form in the middle of the circle as the plants continue to grow outward. This is a very typical feature of *A. claviflora* in the wild. (<http://pza.sanbi.org/aloe-claviflora>)



*Astroloba robusta* (below) enjoys growing in the shade of another plant (when they are available).



#### Advice from a tree

- Stand tall and proud
- Go out on a limb
- Remember your roots
- Drink plenty of water
- Be content with your natural beauty
- Enjoy the view.

Extract from Morne Faulhamer's talk in September



## JOURNAL OF A HAPHAZARD GARDENER – OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2017

At the time of writing, on Sunday October 15, it is Garden Day. As it has been raining and bitterly cold I haven't been able to do any of the wonderful things the local community newspaper suggested I do: invite friends around for rooibos tea and treats or have a scavenger hunt for example. This has left me to think about what I could have done. Reading a book in a comfortable garden chair is definitely one possibility. I have just finished reading a wonderful book *The garden in the clouds: Confessions of a hopeless romantic* by Antony Woodward. It is a light-hearted, funny account of setting up a garden in five acres of rocky ground high up in the Welsh mountains. One of his ambitions is for the garden to be fit to open for the public as part of The National Gardens Scheme which raises funds for charities that support cancer patients.

This is not a garden in the conventional sense. At about 1200 feet Woodward likes to boast that is the highest garden in Britain. He spends many months researching what plants will grow at this height but eventually abandons the idea and sets up a 'not' garden instead. Visitors are offered dry stone walls, blue harebells in the meadow, wild ponies, beehives, abandoned farm machinery, a stunted orchard of traditional apple varieties and a free first cup of tea. The bees sting him through thick gloves, sheep eat the harebells and this quote from a poem by Pam Ayres about stone-walling gives you some idea of the problems he faced as he tried to build similar walls. 'I am a dry stone waller, / All day I dry stone wall, / Of all the appalling callings, / Dry stone walling's worst of all'. Sissinghurst it is not, but it sounds a fascinating place. Search out the site at [www.gardenintheclouds.com](http://www.gardenintheclouds.com) for some excellent photographs: for example, a series of pictures of the small-holding during the winter makes you fully appreciate a Cape Town winter.

My comfortable garden chair has space in the arm rest for a well-filled glass. A refreshing drink in the garden? Nothing better: here are 2 recipes for summer drinks. One is alcoholic, the other not. So take your pick.

### Wine Punch

2 bottles wine (rose or white)

150ml water

90g castor sugar

2 oranges and 2 lemons

Tinned pineapple juice or crushed pineapples

1 litre ginger ale

Tot of rum or brandy

Sprigs of mint, slices of lemon, ice cubes

Chill wine, ginger ale, pineapple.

Dissolve sugar in water together with rinds of fruit, over gentle heat.

Bring to boil and simmer for a few minutes. Strain.

When cold, add juices of fruit and remaining ingredients.

Add ice cubes, mint, lemon slices just before drinking.

### Lemon Syrup

Boil together for about 5 minutes

2, 5 kg sugar

2, 5 litres water

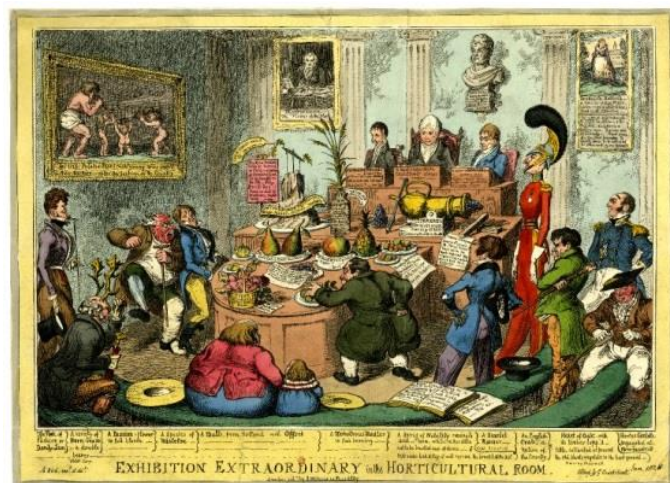
Grated rind and juice of 10 – 12 lemons.

Add one packet of tartaric acid.

Cool, strain and bottle.

Till next year: I leave you with this picture by the illustrator and satirist George Cruikshank: *Exhibition Extraordinary in the Horticultural Room*.

For an explanation of this 1826 etching, visit [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=1646335&partId=1&searchText=Cruikshank+locust&page=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1646335&partId=1&searchText=Cruikshank+locust&page=1).



## WATER READINGS

Errol Scarr has been testing their water for a number of years and started testing spring water 18 months ago.

He says the levels are far more stable now than they were a year ago and these are the most recent results for the water they use (in Pinelands):

	pH	ppm
Municipal	8.17	77
Rain (stored in tank)	6.95	55
Spring (from Newlands Brewery)	6.39	59

A re-cap on what it all means:

- pH is a measure of concentration of hydrogen ions in the soil/water and a range of between 5.5 and 7.0 is best for the growth of most plants; LESS than 7.0 indicates ACIDIC; 7.0 is NEUTRAL while anything above 7.0 indicates ALKALINE.
- ppm refers to the Total Soluble Salts. Readings of up to 1400 ppm represents no salinity problems. As we want a weak fertiliser concentration for Orchids, we normally aim for 1200 to 1500 ppm.

Drinking water (municipal) is normally slightly alkaline as the treatment works have it alkaline to help maintain the pipe infrastructure and, they believe, better for ratepayers!!

## CHS PLANT SALE

The final total after expenses is R12 184,37. Well done and a big thank you to everyone who grew plants to help achieve this. Also to those who came to sort and price, and those who sold on the day, thank you for your help.

Donations of left-over plants went to "charities" connected to CHS members: the Marina da Gama Garden Club with a few hardy plants for the islands; to Toni Dymond who runs the Mamre Garden Club (hardy plants again) and a mixed range to Lillian Masebenza, a member, to help get her community nursery going. Her main objective is to give abused women, in particular, something good to do.

*Melanie Stewart*

## DATES TO DIARISE AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

- **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](http://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](mailto:info@elginopengardens.co.za)
- **Stellenberg Gardens – 11 /12 November:** Open from 09:30 – 5:30pm both days. Teas R30 per person. Entrance is R50 and children under 12 are entrance free, but to please be under adult supervision. Regret no pets or picnics allowed. Proceeds to go to St Joseph's Home for Chronically ill Children.
- **Little Orchard Nursery** in Diep River (next to the De Waal Road bridge) has instituted a Pensioner Day on Thursdays when those of more senior years can get 15% discount on purchases.
- **Robin's Nest, Pinelands:** To make their surroundings more appealing, the garden is to be re-vamped. If you have any hardy plants going begging, please call Janet Macfarlane on 021-671-5563 or [janet@mac.co.za](mailto:janet@mac.co.za) to arrange collection.

Photos: Andrew Thorpe, Tanya Visser, Peter L'Estrange, Glenda Thorpe, Judi Thomas, Errol and Jenny Scarr, Iain Macfarlane, John Macfarlane, Sue Goosen and Google