



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 April 2018 at 20:00 at The Athenaeum, Newlands.

DEVELOPMENT PLANS AT BABYLONSTOREN

Ernst van Jaarsveld will definitely be back to tell us about the progress that has been made, and the innovative ideas and new projects taking place, at Babylonstoren.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

On the 18th of March in 1903 this Society held its first meeting, at which a number of prominent local figures were elected to the Committee. And, here we are, 115 years later, still holding meetings and hoping to elect new Committee Members.

The attached Nomination Form is for you to complete if you feel there is a member who would be an asset to the Committee. You have to get them to sign the form and return it to Glenda by no later than 25 April.

NEXT OUTING

Thursday, 19 April at 10:00 to visit the garden of Donovan Kirkwood in Noordhoek. Limited to 25 members. Please RSVP to Glenda by 17 April.

Donovan has this to say about himself and his garden:

"I'm an ecologist by training, and still work as a conservation consultant, so gravitate towards the local flora. The Noordhoek valley still has small remnants of a natural wonderland of Strandveld, coastal forest, lowland, and mountain fynbos interwoven by wetlands. In the third year of drought, our habitats and plants have a lot to teach us about resiliently beautiful, extreme low water gardening that also supports local conservation and wildlife.

My garden is on the old Fish Hoek-Noordhoek (alkaline to neutral) windblown marine sand corridor with (acid sand) sandstone outcrops of the Dassenberg Koppies. So I'm mostly growing elements of those endangered Cape Flats Dune Strandveld and Hangklip Sand Fynbos in my mostly wild garden, but do have other elements. I will share some of the special locally adapted plants that grow here and some lessons the ecosystems have for gardeners. Most of the plants are propagated from immediate local seed, or occasionally cuttings or rescue from nearby development sites, and there are many interesting plants with high potential not available in cultivation.

I also have a strong interest in heirloom veggies, and have a fair bit of work experience in sustainable design.

This is not a show garden, but is still in the process of being established with only very minimal supplemental watering from rainwater tanks. The real show is spring annuals and bulbs, so in late April there will only be the not very showy perennials to be seen. In many ways this drought has been an amazing learning opportunity, and I've become more convinced that the only sensible response is to completely change our usual horticultural practices. Locally indigenous planting is only part of this and I'll surely rant about mulch, and drone on about how excessive fertilising and especially digging in compost is a disaster for a really drought-proof garden."

There is no obligation, but he will have some plants available for sale, and has SnapScan/Credit Card facilities.

REPORT BACK

Annual Subscriptions and Levies

Subscriptions for the new year are now due. Please complete your form and return it with proof of payment or pay at the next meeting. An explanation about the printing/postage and bank charge levies can be found in last month's CHS News. Another renewal form is attached for your convenience.

March Plant Table (suburb and source of water)**Kirstenhof and wellpoint:**

Vinca (Apocynaceae) – white; very hardy [below, left]

Verbena – 250 species in the genus; comes in many colours

Odontonema strictum (Acanthaceae) – from Central America; waxy flower; loved by Sunbirds

Bougainvillea (Nyctaginaceae) – seem to be surviving the drought but still need a certain amount of water; to get more flowers from your plant, grow them in a pot and keep them clipped back

Ruellia brittoniana “Mexican Petunia” – from South America; grows in full sun [below, 2nd from left]

Helianthus tuberosus “Jerusalem Artichoke” – from North America; grown for its vegetable roots but makes a very attractive flower [below, 2nd from right]

[IND] *Bauhinia galpinii* “Pride of De Kaap” (named after the Kaap Valley near Barberton, not the Cape) – from KwaZulu Natal to Zambia; very, very hardy scrambler [below, right]

**Newlands and no water:**

Vinca – pink, from South America; makes a lovely show when everything else is wilting; self-seeds.

[IND] *Polygala virgata* “Purple Broom” – grows in the most inhospitable areas; never gets watered [right]

**Marina da Gama and rain water:**

Salvia – this is an IDIOT plant – **It Does Its Own Thing!**; survives without water; is pruned down every 2 years

Pinelands and no water:

Zauschneria californica (now *Epilobium canum*) “Californian Fuchsia” or “Hummingbird Flower” – from USA to Mexico; very drought tolerant; flowers on and off all year [right]

**Pinelands and grey water:**

[IND] *Turraea obtusifolia* – from Eastern Cape to as far as Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Botswana; summer flowering; shrub to small tree [far right]

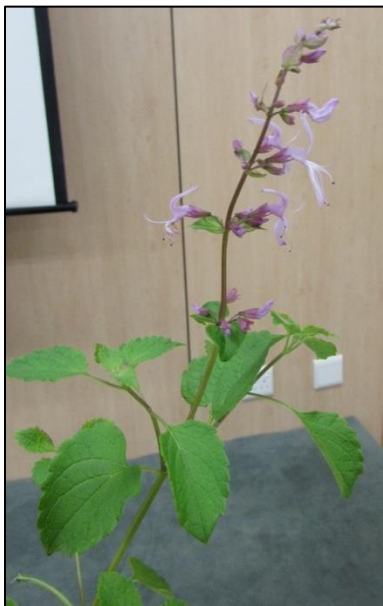
**University Estate and rain water:**

Frangipani (Apocynaceae) – The species variously are indigenous to Mexico, Polynesia, Central America, and the Caribbean, and as far south as Brazil, but are grown as cosmopolitan ornamentals in warm regions.

[IND] *Freylinia lanceolata* – nectar source for butterflies and birds; tough [right]



This plant [below] was brought in to be identified. Everyone was flummoxed. Jenny and Shelley think it is *Orthosiphon labiatus* (now *Ocimum labiatum*). Would you agree? If you agree, or know the correct name, please let Glenda know.





Looking at all the plants that are brought in, most getting regular watering, Jenny suggested that we compile a list of the most drought-tolerant, yet most attractive plants. After all, isn't that what most of us want – a plant that looks beautiful but survives on very little – just what falls from the sky? And this does not mean "what falls from the sky and collected in a tank".

So, if you have a plant that is left to its own devices and produces lovely flowers from only receiving rainwater, bring it along. On the slip write "only rainfall" next to "Other" and place it on the table.

The hunt is on!

JENNY'S CHOICE FOR MARCH

EXOTIC	INDIGENOUS
Kirstenhof and wellpoint water:  <p>Nicola's <i>Lophospermum erubescens</i> "Creeping Gloxinia" – from Mexico; grows to about 6'; cut back after seeding.</p>	Kenilworth and borehole water: <p>Beth brought in two <i>Nerine</i> blooms – <i>N filifolia</i> and <i>N bowdenii</i>. Pictured here is the flower bought as and labelled by Beth as <i>filifolia</i> but without seeing the whole plant it was impossible to accurately identify which was which. We did not get a photo of her <i>N bowdenii</i>, but her blooms remain a worthy winner.</p> 

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COMMITTEE

It's Melanie Stewart's turn this month.

"I was born in Cape Town, grew up in Bloemfontein and moved to Johannesburg, where Rod and I met. I was a journalist and Rod was a cameraman, and, after we married, in 1969, we formed a film production company, where I produced the commercials and documentaries.

From that time, we've made gardens in every home we've had. We moved to Bryanston right in the middle of the Highveld drought conditions of 1980, and it was here we first learnt many water-saving measures.

Later, Rod helped me make a Victorian knot garden, about 11m x 7m in size, with a sundial, fishpond and fountain. At one stage, we had over 150 herbs, and, after a hailstorm, the surrounds would be filled with the most amazingly rich herb fragrances.

When we moved to Cape Town, 17 years ago, I realised what a joy it had been to garden in Gauteng! We'd never seen so many slugs, snails, aphids and other plant predators as we have here.



We all know what a challenge gardening can be – every plant I buy shows the ultimate perfection of that plant/bulb/shrub on the label, and I live in hope that that is what I'll end up with... hah! In addition to that, I'm always seduced by any bulb or that which is unusual or rare – and, naturally, very difficult to grow! My failures outnumber my successes by a vast amount, but it doesn't stop me from trying!

We joined the CHS in 2001 and went onto the committee a couple of years after that. There was nothing like the CHS in Johannesburg, so it was marvellous to find it and all the Society offered. I left the film industry when we moved down here, and now work as a book/poetry editor, and I have many interests: gardening (naturally), sculpting, painting, drawing, reading and so much more.

And grubby, broken nails and damaged joints are really a small price to pay for the ongoing joy our garden brings us, even when there's a drought!"

JOURNAL OF A HAPHAZARD GARDENER – MARCH / APRIL 2018

In the 1950s *Erica verticillata* (whorl heath or vlei heath) a 'handsome strong growing' member of the *Erica* family with 'fine showy' pink flowers was declared extinct in the wild. By great good fortune six clones of the plant have been found both in South Africa and overseas. Various attempts have been made to reintroduce the plant to its natural habitat which is in the low lying areas of the central Peninsula. Rondevlei Nature Reserve, the centre of Kenilworth Race Course and the Table Mountain Park in Tokai were the only available places left to set up the experiment. In the 1990s *Erica verticillata* were planted at Rondevlei and they are thriving. In 2004 Dr Tony Rebelo and Anthony Hitchcock from SANBI set up an experiment to establish them in Tokai.

The CHS was invited to view the present state of the experiment in Tokai about which Anthony Hitchcock had written in 2013: 'They have established splendidly at Soetvlei and Prinskasteel wetlands at Tokai.'

So on a cool Saturday morning on the 24th of February we found ourselves slipping and sliding through a dense undergrowth of Acacia in the Prinskasteel Wetlands of Tokai Plantation. In some places we had to push our way through thick stands of Black Wattle. Once we reached the stand of *Erica* we could see how the dense growth of blackberry brambles (*Rubus fruticosus*) were strangling the *Ericas*. (The berries tasted delicious – not the usual dried up variety you find elsewhere on the mountain). The 'splendid establishment' was suffering grievously. Sanparks was supposed to keep this area free of alien vegetation but has failed to do so. When told about the brambles the contractors then sprayed the bramble, nearly killing off the *Erica* at the same time.

Newspaper headlines popped into my head – it is a great pity that *these* headlines have not appeared:

SANPARKS SPRAYS POISON OVER FYNBOS

NATIONAL HERITAGE THROTTLED

The plants were a tremendous sight – up to 2 metres in height. The flowers were a beautiful pink colour which ranged in shades from pale pink to a dark cerise. Anthony Hitchcock also showed us another stand of *Ericas* that were being choked by the healthiest oak trees I have ever seen.



L to R: Cherise with her namesake, *Erica verticillata* "Cherise" (dark pink flower); a happy bee; colour varieties

We picked bunches of flowers which later looked stunning as a table decoration for guests at dinner that evening. I was able to rant about Sanparks and how they have neglected to protect the plant. How does this happen?

I have tried to grow *E. verticillata* in my garden without much success. Tony Hitchcock told us that they are not difficult to grow either in pots or in the open. They are 'fairly hardy, disease resistant and can be grown from cuttings'. They need acid soil and the roots mustn't be disturbed. I'll have to give them another try.

An interesting piece of trivia is that Bergvliet Primary School has *E. verticillata* emblazoned on its school badge.

I used the following sites:

pza.sanbi.org/erica-verticillata

pza.sanbi.org/history-loss-and-rediscovery-erica-verticillata



L: *Erica verticillata* planting, Prinskasteel, Tokai, July 2009 (*Sibbaldia Journal*)



R: Transects set up for planting at Tokai, July 2009 (*Sibbaldia Journal*)

R: The same area, February 2018

On the other side of Orpen Road was another horticultural gem. This is an extract from SIBBALDIA: 39 – *The Journal of Botanic Garden Horticulture*, No. 15:

"The area is called the Tokai Restoration Trail and includes interpretation boards explaining the restoration process, reasons and the management plans. The trail was designed by a local landscape architect and includes pathways and a boardwalk over the wet areas. A range of CFSF species are planted, ten of which have threatened status: Extinct in the Wild, Critically Endangered, Endangered and Vulnerable. The trail was planted by Tokai Park staff, Friends of Tokai Park, Kirstenbosch National Botanic Garden and Millennium Seed Bank staff, and was opened by Park Manager Paddy Gordon in September 2013."



A pdf file of the Journal is available from Glenda on request.

CLEAN YOUR INDOOR AIR – NATURALLY

Plants are notoriously adept at absorbing gases through pores on the surface of their leaves. It's this skill that facilitates photosynthesis, the process by which plants convert light energy and carbon dioxide into chemical energy to fuel growth.

But scientists studying the air-purification capacities of indoor plants have found that plants can absorb many other gases in addition to carbon dioxide, including a long list of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Benzene (found in some plastics, fabrics, pesticides and cigarette smoke) and formaldehyde (found in some cosmetics, dish detergent, fabric softener and carpet cleaner) are examples of common indoor VOCs that plants help eliminate.

An indoor plant's ability to remove these harmful compounds from the air is an example of phytoremediation, which is the use of any plant — indoors or out — to mitigate pollution in air, soil or water.

Indoor plants remove pollutants from the air by absorbing these gases through their leaves and roots. The microorganisms that live in the soil of potted plants also play an instrumental role in neutralizing VOCs and other pollutants. ~ *Live Science*

by Janice Anderssen
Home-Dzine

When winter arrives, we close windows and doors to keep a home warm. Adding air purifying plants not only benefits air quality, but also removes toxins that we breathe.

Houseplants that purify indoor air

We know that all plants – both indoor and outdoor varieties – produce oxygen and absorb carbon dioxide. Did you also know that certain houseplants control humidity and indoor climate, and there are specific plants that purify the air? Known as air purifying plants, these plants absorb harmful gases and improve indoor climate, making the air that we breathe clean and invigorating.

Indoor air contains tiny particles that are residues of toxins from furniture, clothes, flooring and paint, to name a few. Air purifying plants have the ability to filter these substances from the air via microscopic openings on the leaves. These harmful substances are absorbed by the plant and passed on to the root system.

Visit your local garden centre and ask for air purifying plants that clean the air in your home.

At the top of the list of air purifying plants are plants with large leaves. These are excellent at capturing harmful particles.

Other air purifying plants include: mother-in-law's tongue or sansevieria, spider plant, Dracena, ficus, ivy, peace lily, schefflera actinophylla, and golden creeper. If you prefer flowering plants, consider: gerbera, chrysanthemum, azalea, poinsettia, and cyclamen.

GOOD TO KNOW: Most air purifying plants require regular watering, so be sure to keep them happy as they clean the air. Plants also benefit from being dusted off to remove traces of the toxic particles. Gently wipe with a soft, damp cloth or set the plant in the shower to rinse off the dust.

There are numerous studies that reveal that plants not only have a calming effect, but that they also help to clean the air of toxins and improve the indoor climate. If you consider the documented beneficial properties of plants, including air purifying plants, it's a wise choice to fill your home with plants!

During the dry seasons of the year, buy plants that increase humidity and improve air quality.

[Source: <https://gosouth.co.za/clean-indoor-air-naturally/>]



AND, LAST BUT NOT LEAST, WELCOME ...

... to our first new members for the year – Belinda du Rand and John Withers. We hope to see you at meetings or outings so we can get to know you.

Photos: Andrew Thorpe, Rod Stewart, Anthony Hitchcock, Cherise Viljoen, Glenda Thorpe