

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

## NEXT MEETING

**Monday, 3 September 2018 at 20:00** at The Athenaeum, Newlands

### “WHAT’S BEHIND THE HEADLINES”

#### An update on the SAVE THE PHILIPPI HORTICULTURAL AREA CAMPAIGN

You may have been following this in the local press, ...

Nazeer Sunday will tell us about what progress has – or has not – been made so come and find out how you can possibly help to keep our local vegetable farmlands from becoming residential areas.

## NEXT OUTING

**Sat, 15 September at 10:00:** Visit Fresh Woods, the garden of CHS members Barbara and Peter Knox-Shaw.

Fresh Woods is a 67-year-old rambling, romantic 2.5 hectare garden, where the emphasis is on naturalistic planting where winding paths open up to sudden, unexpected vistas. It houses a major collection of over 350 old and wild roses, and is also home to a large collection of Japanese maples and many rhododendrons. There is a large woodland garden under mature pines, a young maple forest, an indigenous tree forest, and a bamboo grove. It has been featured frequently in books and magazines, and was the first private garden ever to be given an Award of Garden Excellence by the World Federation of Rose Societies. In early September there should be a fair amount of flowering trees out such as American dogwoods, Chinese Fringe Tree, crabs, perhaps some early cherries; some early roses (La Follette, Park’s Yellow and related Gigantea roses); also some Maddenia rhododendrons should also be out. With luck the maples will be leafing out, a lovely moment. If the year is early there could be handkerchiefs on the Davidia. Hellebores should still be in evidence.

If you are interested in attending, please let Glenda have your name by 12 September.

## REPORT BACK

### August Plant Table (suburb; source of water)

*Sechium edule* “Choyote”, “Sou Sou”: this specimen (below, centre) was taken from the meeting 2 months ago (below, left) and has been on Scarr’s kitchen counter since then. It has shrivelled, almost the way a seed draws on the food it has stored in order to grow and has now produced a shoot. A perennial, climbing plant and related to the *Luffa*.

### Malmesbury; borehole water

*Luffa aegyptiaca* (below, right) – Cucurbitaceae: an annual and sub-tropical grower; start seeds in pots; need up to six months to grow; leave the fruit on the vine to mature and dry off and become the loofah; take off the outside coating; when young, can be eaten as a vegetable; flowers and buds can be eaten; vines grow up to 30’. Seeds are available from the Seed Box.

More information can be found on <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/home/gardening/a20706975/how-to-grow-your-own-loofah-sponge/>



**Meadowridge; wellpoint water**

*Ochna serrulata* "Mickey Mouse Bush" (IND) (below, left) – endemic to forest fringe on east coast; difficult to propagate.

*Veltheimia bracteata* "Forest Lily" (right) (IND) – Hyacinthaceae: flowers late winter in light shade; colour is very variable; native to forests of eastern Cape; bird pollinated; dormant in summer; later flowering than *V capensis* which is sun- and sand-loving, with lovely grey leaves. Lemon- and peach-coloured also available.



**JENNY'S CHOICES FOR AUGUST**

INDIGENOUS	EXOTIC
<p><b>Pinelands; only rain</b>  <i>Chasmanthe</i> ('gaping mouth' in Greek) <i>bicolor</i> (IND): flowers mid-winter! Known only from 3 sites near Robertson; 'conservation by cultivation'; pollinated by sunbirds; lovely in clumps in the garden; seeds germinate easily.</p> 	<p><b>Marina da Gama</b>  <i>Corydalis wilsonii</i> from China: sun/semi-shade. These will probably be available at the Plant Sale.</p> 

**ANNUAL PLANT SALE**

This takes place on **Saturday, 8 September, from 09:30 to 14:00** – just 2 weeks away!!

A request from our Plant Sale Co-ordinator, Melanie:

"There are work parties at our home on the Thursday and Friday mornings, September 6 and 7, starting at 09:00. On the first day, we sort, and on the second we put the prices on them. On the Saturday itself, we will also need help before the sale opens, as well as helping the public with choices, etc. Please let me know when you're available – tea, coffee and scones available!

Could you please label your plants? It makes it much, much easier, especially if we're not sure what they are!"

If you have plants to deliver, please call Melanie beforehand on 021 788 2840 / 082 550 2618.

## GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COMMITTEE

"I grew up with a garden that had the awful Cape Flats 'soil' and I'm still gardening on the Cape Flats – a bit further 'up the line' – but have learnt a thing or two about how to enhance the soil.

We had no sooner joined the CHS in 1997, when Andrew and I were co-opted onto the committee with a view to me becoming Show Manager. Laurie Powis showed me the ropes and when she retired in 1999 I organized four more shows (two a year at that time) which were held at Kirstenbosch Sanlam Hall. In September 2001 we made the move to the Alphen Centre where I was joined by Lyn, Wilma, Michael (Payne) and Andrew – and, together, we made up the Show Committee. After the 2014 show I stepped down as Show Manager.

Being around people who know so much and are happy to give of their expertise has taught me such a lot – not that I can remember everything – and hearing the botanical names constantly, they no longer sound foreign to me. I am also able to recognise plant families by their "look" even if I don't know the exact name. Anne Bean has tried her best to explain the hierarchy of genera, families, species, varieties, etc, etc, but it is still beyond me. I just love seeing new and different plants but don't really delve too deeply into their backgrounds. I can say that my awareness of things horticultural and botanical has vastly improved in the last 21 years. I don't really have 'green fingers' (I leave that to Andrew) but I love to potter in the garden, cutting back here and there, tidying up, re-designing and moving things around! I'm always surprised when things work out.

In 2004 I took on the job of secretary when Marjorie Starke decided to call it a day. It is what I have been doing most of my working life, but, as I am prone to do, I've made it into a full-time job! The job now includes managing the website, not keeping the Facebook page up to date very well, dealing with membership, fielding strange horticultural queries, publishing the newsletter, ensuring our meetings are advertised to the public, keeping members informed of all manner of events, being self-appointed custodian of the CHS's historical records, taking the minutes at meetings, and, most of all, keeping the Committee in check, who can be a very unruly bunch at times. But, I love every minute of what I do. When that changes I'll let you know, but if you're eager to take it on, feel free to talk to me. ☺

My years with the CHS have been most rewarding and I've gained so much knowledge. I enjoy all aspects of the Society, never missing a meeting or an outing, if I can help it. As they say, 'you're never too old to learn'."

*Glenda Thorpe*



## THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT

The glasshouses at Kew Gardens are so popular that they can be quite unbearably busy at weekends. And why shouldn't they be? They're beautiful structures and plants they shelter are so marvelous that they deserve the attention they get, whether from botany nerds, schoolchildren, or millennials dressed for Instagram and posing for selfies in the steamy leafy heat. But for the past five years, the biggest member of the Kew family has been closed to the public. Hidden under an enormous awning that the botanic gardens boasts could have covered three Boeing 747s (one of those area-the-size-of-Wales facts that mean very little), the Temperate House has been undergoing a lengthy restoration.

This isn't just the largest glasshouse at Kew, it's also the largest surviving Victorian glasshouse in the world. More pointless facts abound, such as the number of panes of glass (15000) that needed replacing, urns that needed removing and restoring (116) and litres of paint used (5280). The landscapers are still finishing off the area around the building, which first opened in 1863, and inside things don't feel quite complete either. Though a number of the older, larger plants had to stay put while the builders worked around them, many were moved, and so everything naturally looks very freshly planted. There are some rather municipal-looking relatives of the common Busy Lizzie (*Impatiens hawkeri*) planted in the beds as a tribute to the floral displays that the original Victorian gardeners planted, and the soil looks shiny and new. The plants, from temperate regions across the world, will look much more at home after a few months, when they have started sprawling over one another and covering the soil with leaf mould and discarded petals.

That's not to say the whole thing isn't glorious: one of the things that makes it feel so very new and shiny is the sheer scale of the glasshouse, and the amount of space it has, not just for the plants but also for people. Even a few days after its official opening, when two large groups of schoolchildren in bright orange reflective tabards trooped around the high galleries, peering down at the tree ferns and camellias, the place felt so light and airy. The roof is many times higher than the tallest trees. The main glasshouse has a large square in the middle. This means there is a space to marvel at the male *Encephalartos woodii* – known as the 'loneliest plant in the world' because no female partner has been found in the wild – without tripping over other visitors.

There are plenty of plants like the lonely *Encephalartos* whose stories are almost as marvellous as the organisms themselves. A Mauritian tree, *Dombeya mauritiana* was declared extinct in the 1990s, but 15 years later one wild specimen pitched up. Horticulturalists from Kew clambered through a guava thicket before forming a human ladder to collect cuttings from the 10 metre tall specimen. Its cone now lives in the glasshouse. The St Helena ebony plant needed a similarly adventurous botanist to save it: after 100 years of being extinct, two plants turned up near the fabulously named Asses Ears. They were propagated by Charles Benjamin, who carried a stem of *Trochetiopsis ebenus* back up a mountain between his teeth.

Quieter but nonetheless still very intriguing plants grow next to these rarities in the beds and alongside the waterfalls and streams. In fact, there are 10000 plants here, which is a more useful fact than how many panes of glass lie over them. Ferns with leaves divided many times, hoyas scrambling up poles, and the bright, unreal flowers of a bird of paradise.

The building was originally designed by Decimus Burton to solve the urgent problem of Kew's temperate plants dying off because they had no suitable home. Temperate regions aren't just where plants grow, but also where humans prefer to live, with a 'Goldilocks' climate that's not too hot or too cold. This makes the plants' lives rather difficult, as people keep building homes and roads on their habitats. In this building, though, everything gets on just splendidly.

The main atrium opens into two side conservatories where lines of potted pelargoniums and daisies lap up the sun, before leading visitors into two more large conservatories. Again, there is so much space that everyone rubs along quite happily. These buildings aren't meant to contain cutting-edge garden design, though the structures themselves and the contrast between the white painted frame and its lush green inhabitants are both so beautiful that they beat many of the more pretentious gardens at the Chelsea Flower Show hands down.

Kew is really less about design and more about plantsmanship. It often holds just one of each species in its collections, rather than using repetitive planting for an effect (though the naturalised pink, claret and white tulips in the orchard right next to the glasshouse are quite lovely), but its definition of plantspeople is wide: the educational signs about the fact that it is the camellia that produces our tea leaves, for instance, are for novices who may not yet know their tree fern from their Chilean wine palm. There's a space for children with sketchbooks and PhD students studying the flora of eastern Australia. And that's what really earns this Great Glasshouse its name: there are few places on earth where elderly experts and fizzy schoolchildren can stand side-by-side, all looking up in awe.

*Published in the 19 May 2018 issue of The Spectator | written by Isabel Hardman | [www.spectator.co.uk](http://www.spectator.co.uk)*

## LAUNCH OF NEW-LOOK CHS WEBSITE

Our current website is almost nine years old. Surprisingly, it has served the Society well, but it is in desperate need of a facelift. To this end I have been working on this for the last three months and the new-look website will go live by the end of August – fingers crossed.

We have some lovely photographs of our various events which I would like to use but many of them show our members. Protocol dictates that permission must be sought from anyone before putting their photo on the internet. Therefore, this is a blanket request to all members to let me know if you have any violent objections to having your photo on the website. I will not be using names. Please e-mail or phone me as soon as possible – preferably by 31 August – if you object. I will take your silence as consent.

Another feature, which I spoke about a few years back, will be a page of 'horticultural services'. I'm hoping this will help alleviate the many calls I receive requesting us to remove palm trees or give a quote to landscape. This will be a list of reputable local firms offering garden services, tree felling, landscaping etc. If you provide a horticultural service you'd like to have included, please let me have your name and contact details.

As always, constructive criticism of the website will be welcomed.

*Glenda Thorpe*

## JOURNAL OF A HAPHAZARD GARDENER – AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2018

I won the plant in the lucky draw at the August meeting. It was *Veltheimia bracteata* (forest lily) [see page 2]; a member of the Hyacinth family. This got me thinking about other plants that are easy to grow and add interest to the winter garden.

The *Veltheimia bracteata* grows wild in the forests and coastal scrub of the Eastern Cape. It is named in honour of a German patron of Botany – August Frederick Graf von Veltheim.

The flowers of the prize *Veltheimia* are a deep rose-pink colour while the ones in our garden are a pale pink [following page, left]. An added bonus is that the flowers are long-lasting; they stay around for at least a month. The leaves are a striking shiny, fleshy, green colour. The plants are bird-pollinated and so sometimes one sees sunbirds

fluttering around the flowers. The plant produces many long black seeds in a sac-like capsule. There are plenty of self-seeded offspring in the garden [below, second from left]. It grows well in the dappled shade of the trees in our garden. One self-seeded plant is in deep shade and so far has only produced glossy green leaves. Maybe it needs some fertilizer. The article I read suggests a 'general purpose slow-release granular type and/or a seaweed-derived liquid fertilizer'. The bulbs love neglect and have been left undisturbed for many years. They seem to grow best in humus-rich, well-drained soil. The plant doesn't seem to suffer from diseases but one year some caterpillars ate the flower buds.

Speaking of which, one of our annual favourites, the lovely *Zantedeschia aethiopica* (Arum lily) has suffered grievous bodily harm. [below, second from right and far right]



Three shrubs have brightened up our pavement this winter. They are purple-flowered *Polygala myrtifolia* (September bush), [above, left and centre] the striking *Euryops virgineus* (Honey euryops) [above, right] and aromatic *Salvia africana-lutea* (Brown sage) [below, left]. They all love the wind that rushes by in our street and are drought-resistant. The small dark green leaves of the Euryops look like miniature hands. It and the Salvia like to be pruned after they have flowered. It also keeps them in shape. The polygala produces many babies and is often covered in bees. The Euryops is self-seeded. All three flower for months at a time.



Three more particular favourites are this interesting Kalanchoe [above, centre], these beautiful Lachenalia [above, right] and the popular Chinchinchee [following page, left].

There are also some plants that return in their battalions every year. Guess what? [bottom, centre and right]



I used the following sources:

[pza.sanbi.org/veltheimia-bracteata](http://pza.sanbi.org/veltheimia-bracteata)

Wilkinson, Jenny *Gardens in the Sand: The Marina da Gama Garden Club Book*

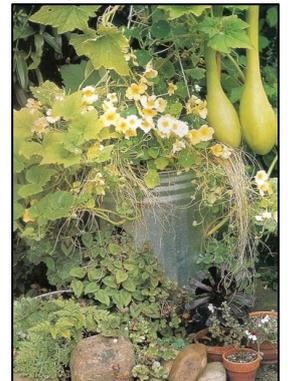
## COLOURFUL BINLINERS

Gardeners from around the country were given the same project: plant up a dustbin. Andrea Loom compares the final results.

Basic objects, used with flair and ingenuity, can make a valuable contribution to a garden. In this project, gardeners from different areas were encouraged to break the mould and create novel planting schemes in galvanized steel dustbins and incinerators.

The outcomes were amazingly varied and showed what can be achieved by adopting an imaginative approach with an apparently utilitarian object. Some used bright colours to emphasise the bin's bold, stark outline; others let the planting dominate, softening and partially concealing the container.

Prior to planting a vessel such as a dustbin, drill holes in the base for drainage and place containers in their final position to avoid heavy lifting. To reduce the weight and amount of compost, fill the dustbin between one and two thirds with polystyrene chips or scrunched-up compost bags and add perlite to the compost mixture. Top up with John Innes compost No. 2, or No. 3 for permanent planting and those vegetables that are greedy feeders. Use soil-less potting compost for annuals and other temporary plantings.



In a sunny position, metal containers can heat up and roots may become scorched, so place in part shade or grow trailing and broad-leaved plants to provide an element of natural shading. Feed plants with a liquid fertiliser in the growing season and water frequently – daily in dry spells.

As these examples show, there is endless scope for development.



*Published in the RHS's Journal, The Garden, in May 2003*

## THINGS TO DO

- **Sat, 22 – Mon, 24 Sept:** Calitzdorp's Vetplantfees 2018 – talks, walks, workshops (some of which require advanced booking and payment), exhibitions and plant sales are all on offer. Visit [www.vetplant.co.za](http://www.vetplant.co.za)

Photos: Andrew Thorpe, Peter Henshall, Tim Sandall