



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, 4 March 2018 at 20:00 at The Cape Town Athenaeum, Newlands

Entrance fee: Members – R10; Visitors – R30

LANDSCAPING TRENDS IN SA

Franchesca Watson, Garden Designer, was invited to give a set of presentations at the Western Australia Landscape Design Conference in Perth in 2016. She will share the presentation that closed the conference, which highlighted current trends in landscape design in South Africa, using pictures of her work taken by talented photographer, Heidi Bertish.

NEXT OUTING

Sat, 9 Mar at 09:00: Visit two members' gardens: the new water-wise Tokai garden of Eric Harley (the delights of vertical horticulture will be included), followed by Ninon Carrington's garden in Kirstenhof. Plants will be on sale.

Limited to 20 members. Please let Glenda know, before 6 March, if you would like to attend.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS ...

... Alison McLellan, who has graduated from regular visitor to member; Marion Ellis and Stephen Richardson; and Tony and Tina Penso. We look forward to getting to know them in the months ahead.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

Yes, it's that time of year again and we hope you will continue to be a member of the CHS. The members who attended the Special General Meeting on 4 February approved the increase in fees, as published in the January CHS News.

Enclosed is the renewal form which we ask you to complete (be sure to read it from top to bottom) and return, with your payment, to our March meeting. If you choose to pay by EFT, please e-mail the completed form or bring it with you to our next meeting.

ANOTHER ADDITION TO MEDITERRANEAN GARDENING INTERNATIONAL

We welcome Okanagan Xeriscape Association in West Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, to MG*i*.

Xeriscaping (landscaping designed specifically for areas that are susceptible to drought, or for properties where water conservation is practiced) in Canada? Yes, you read correctly. There is a small area tucked away in the rain shadow of the Cascade mountains, not far from the border with the USA and to the east of Vancouver. Because of this they have hot dry summers and low annual rainfall. According to their website (<http://okanaganxeriscape.org/>) "On average, the Central Okanagan receives about 12 inches (28cm) natural precipitation annually (Vernon, about 15 inches and Penticton, 11 inches)." Who would have thought?

Their President, Judie Steeves, on OXA being welcomed as a member of MG*i*, wrote: "*I've circulated the news to all our board members and everyone is very excited to discover we have partners doing similar work around the world; and that we are now part of your global organization.*"

Thank-you so much for including us. I hope we will be able to benefit you along the way, as I'm sure this membership will benefit us. Such collaborations make each of us stronger and better able to achieve our common goals.

My spring bulbs, the lavender, coreopsis, sedums and thyme are hiding today under a recent dump of snow, which will soon melt and provide them with a little winter drink."

MG*i* now has members in France, Portugal, the UK, Australia, Chile, the USA, Canada and, of course, South Africa.

Just to remind you, there is a separate mailing group for those members who have a keen interest in reading about the exciting outings and events that the MG*i* groups organize. If you would like to be included in this group, let Glenda know. There is also an MG*i* Forum which all members are invited to access, but more about that next month.

REPORTBACK

February Plant Table:

EXOTIC

Epidendrum – “Poor man’s orchid” (right): little borehole water; many colour forms; in south America they grow on the slopes of the volcanoes; does not have high nutritional needs



Dahlias (below, right) – farm water; lovely to see dahlias coming back into fashion

Catawba grapes from America: farm water; foxy taste – you either love them or loathe them; make lovely jelly.

Ceropegia sandersonii (Asclepiadaceae – 65 spp in SA) (below, far right): named after Scottish man who found it on the banks of the Umgeni River in 1867. Grows from KZN to Mozambique in scrub. Is a twining vine up to 4m. Is in a pot climbing up a wire. Needs frequent watering as originates in summer rainfall area.



Tarragon: herbaceous perennial from southern Europe; faces east; watered from a borehole. Uses: ingredients of a bouquet garni, flavouring sauces (tartare), essence of tarragon vinegar. Russian tarragon dies down in winter.

Selection of *Chlorophytum*: *C bowkeri*, *C modestum*, *C saundersiae*, *C comosum*. The dry, dry afro-

montaigne forest at Grootvadersbos two weeks ago was carpeted in Chlorophytums in flower, so they are very tough. Overseas they are used as pot plants and here as shade-loving groundcovers, particularly the variegated forms which are much slower growers because there is much less green leaf doing anything.

Dyschorista thunbergiiflora (right)



Gloriosa superba: from Zimbabwe; very poisonous



Salvia miurii (centre)



Hamelia sp

Heuchera sp (far right)

Fuchsia insulinde: semi-shade; pinching out tips helps to bush it out and produce more flowers; grows from cuttings

Bouquet of Heliotrope, Balsam, dwarf sunflower, dwarf Marigold, white ‘forget me not’, Pentas and Black and Blue Salvia

Asclepias tuberosa (right)



Limonium latifolium or *platyphyllum* (far right): recently acquired – growing in a pot at the moment. Have cut only a small sprig; dead stem shows full size

INDIGENOUS

Ledebouria floribunda: summer rainfall; bigger form than the *L. socialis*

Stapelia hirsuta? (below, left): minimal borehole water

Carissa bispinosa (below, second from left) – “Forest Num Num”

Amaryllis belladonna: no leaves until flowers are over

Indigofera frutescens: lovely small tree for a small garden

Aloe (below, second from right): grows on cliffs; from Ernst van Jaarsveld

Laportea grossa (below, far right): indigenous, but BEWARE – leaves are like stinging nettles



Turraea obtusifolia: does not get much water; with help from a trellis it behaves like a climber rather than a shrub

Liriope (variegated): has interesting, decorative purple seeds and *Liriope* (not variegated): well-point water (right)

Russelia equisetiformis (far right) from Mexico and Guatemala: gets very little water; rather straggly but might not be if it had more water

Eucomis comosa? – “Pineapple Lily: long leaves break easily; in shade

Pelargonium tongaense – shade-growing; doesn’t like wind.



<http://pza.sanbi.org/pelargonium-tongaense> says: “Material of *P. tongaense* was originally collected in 1955 by Mr. Jobe Mafuleka (a farm-worker), and he brought the plants to Mr Ian Garland who cultivated them. Reports indicate that in October 1973, the existence of these plants was known to botanists J.J.A. Van der Walt & P.J. Vorster and they expressed some doubts as to whether the plants were indigenous or not. The climatic conditions where these plants grow naturally in Tongaland were found to be somehow uncommon for the genus *Pelargonium*, and was then thought these plants were perhaps hybrids from *P. peltatum* & *P. inquinans*. It was only in November 1981, when Libelepi, young son of Mr Mafuleka took the above-mentioned experts to the natural locality where *P. tongaense* grows, that the two were then convinced that this was a separate species and it was formally described.”

PLANTS OF THE MONTH

EXOTIC: Beth’s *Jatropha multifida* (left) from central America: bears flowers throughout the year; growing in the garden.

INDIGENOUS: Yvonne’s *Peltophorum africanum* – “Huilboom”, “African Wattle” (right): farm water; summer rainfall; good tree for a small garden; deciduous.



GARDENING IN FEBRUARY

by *Life is a Garden* (<https://gosouth.co.za/february-in-the-garden/>)

Time to play around with heat-hardy plants and containers. Stock up on soil mixes, drainage chips, decorative pebbles, pots and start playing with lots of funky plants!

Trending: Bro's in the air

Air plants have fascinating forms and they grow without soil, attached to virtually anything from pieces of wood to fishing line to suspend them from the air – you can even glue them onto different objects. Air plants are members of the genus *Tillandsia* which descends from the pineapple family. Many of them grow naturally on trees where they attach themselves on branches and can often be seen hanging from trees, like the mystical old man's beard (*Tillandsia usneoides*). Contrary to popular belief, air plants actually do need moisture and nutrients to grow properly, and do not live on air alone. Buy some of these beautiful and collectable plants and care for them by using a mist sprayer. You can even soak the whole plant for a few minutes, but allow it to dry off well before displaying it again. Do this regularly in very hot weather as air plants like humidity in the atmosphere. Place them in a sheltered spot away from direct sunlight and ensure that there is good air circulation around them.



Get ready to plant the toughest!

One of the questions most often asked in a nursery is, "what can I plant in my pot?" Well, if you want something really pretty, dramatic, long-lasting and hassle-free, go for the following suggestions:

'**Lipstick**' is a succulent hybrid *Euphorbia* with large, bright pink flowers, distinctive lime green foliage and soft thorns. It can be used as a pot plant or in the garden in warmer areas. Lipstick will flower freely in late winter, spring and summer. It thrives in hot, dry areas of the garden.

'**Black Prince**' (*Echeveria shaviana x affinis*) is a dark and dramatic echeveria which form a dense rosette of chocolate-brown leaves with sharp tips. Full sun deepens the colour of the leaves, light shade will have a fading effect. This pretty succulent produces blood-red flowers in late autumn.

Desert spoon (*Dasyliion wheeleri*) is an extremely handsome focal plant for a large and smart container. This plant has a thick, short trunk. The leaves are a cool, grey colour with spiky, dry, caramel-brown split ends. It is drought and wind resistant, with a tolerance for extreme heat and low temperatures. A real water saver, this one!



Pork bush (*Portulacaria afra*) is a succulent shrub with small rounded leaves and a contrasting red stem. It is an evergreen and performs best in hot, sunny spots. Late winter and spring bring a flash of tiny pink flowers to this plant. These flowers are a rich form of nectar for insects, which in turn ensures your garden will be filled with birds. Extremely drought tolerant, and easy to grow. The pork bush is also popular as a bonsai subject.

Add some old-fashioned grace

The highly decorative **Fountain bush** (*Russelia equisetifolia*), is a garden in itself, with its slender arching stems spilling out like a waterfall. It's ablaze all year long with masses of bright coral-red tubular flowers, which attract butterflies. This plant can be used to spill over stairs and retaining walls, in mass planting, in containers and even in large hanging baskets. Mature size about 180 x 60cm and perfect for sun to light shade in fertile, well-draining soil. Heat and drought resistant once established.

Sedges for wet and dry

Ornamental grasses for the garden and in containers, and rush-like sedges that grow in ponds, will never go out of fashion. Try these...

- **Chinese water chestnut** (*Eleocharis dulcis*) – if you like Asian cooking, grow your own water chestnuts. This aquatic vegetable forms tufts of bright green, drinking-straw-like leaves that spread rapidly to form large stands. Tuber formation takes place in late summer to autumn; as the days become shorter, the plants prepare for their

winter hibernation. Harvest tubers in late autumn after the last of the leaves have changed to a straw colour, and died down. The tubers can be eaten raw or cooked, and are noted for their sweetness and distinct nut-like crunch. Chinese Water Chestnuts grow best in moist soil or shallow water up to 15cm deep, and prefer a sunny aspect.

- **'Eversheen'** (*Carex oshimensis* 'Eversheen') – this pretty ornamental grass forms a low cascading clump of leathery, lime-yellow leaves with dark green margins, and is a perfect choice to brighten up shady areas. The foliage colours are more intense with less sun. It is easy to grow, low maintenance and forms a neat mound. 'Eversheen's other good use is to plant it as a single specimen in a pot, or to use it as bright foliar texture with other pot mates. Mature plant size ± 30 x 30cm.

Basil all year long

Columnar basil or Greek basil (*Ocimum basilicum* var.) is a perennial plant that is strongly aromatic. It has a stately columnar appearance with lush green leaves.

Columnar basil grows in the full sun to part shade in well-drained moist soil. It has average water needs and one should be aware of overwatering as this will cause it to rot. It is a culinary herb that can be used in the same way as sweet basil and therefore goes well in Italian, Mediterranean and Asian dishes. It is an excellent herb to make pesto. Basil can be used to repel aphids, flies and mites, and it is a good idea to plant outside the kitchen door for this reason.

Columnar basil does not seed and die as other basil do. Ensure you make regular use of the leaves as this will encourage new growth and keep the plant fresh and happy. In frost free areas, you can harvest leaves throughout the year as it does not die down.

Love annual colour

Remove annuals if they are looking a bit sad, and deadhead others which are still willing to give you a second flush of colour. Annuals that can be planted for late summer and autumn colour include Petunias, Begonias, Marigolds, Vincas, Verbenas, Portulacas and especially Cockscomb (*Celosia argentea*), which will brighten up any area with their flame-like, feathery flowers in shades of red, orange, pink and yellow. With them in the ground, your flowerbeds will look fresh again!

Bug watch – red spider mite

Look out for red spider mites which are problematic in periods of drought and very hot weather – use the correct insecticides to control this pest properly on plants like fruit trees, roses and shrubs, but can destroy annuals like tomatoes if too heavily infested.

Think of natural deterrents: Bunches of herbs can be used as insect repellents in your home. Mints deter insects, including ants. Basil, rosemary and lavender keep flies at bay. Lemon scented herbs such as lemon balm, lemon grass and scented geraniums are great for keeping mosquitoes away. Tansy is good as a flea repellent.

Coastal gardening (*Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal*)

- Protect young plants and leafy veggies from the sun with 40% shade cloth.
- Feed deciduous fruit trees like apple, apricot, cherry, nectarine, peach, pear, plum and quince with a general fertiliser and water well.
- Feed your palms with a nitrogen-rich fertiliser and Anthuriums with a slow-release fertiliser.
- On hot days mist-spray houseplants like ferns and orchids to provide extra humidity.
- Keep ponds and bird baths topped up.
- Big leaf and big flower to eat – find young globe artichoke plants in pots in the herbs section of nurseries to plant in mixed borders. This large, gourmet perennial vegetable should be used all over the garden – it's an elegant feature plant with stunning silvery foliage, further enhanced with a very ornamental crop of edible flowers in its second and third year.
- Watch out for hawk moth caterpillars feeding at night on Impatiens, Arum lilies and Fuchsias – remove them by hand.
- Control lawn caterpillar infestations.
- Plant Lachenalia, Veltheimia and Belladonna bulbs



ANNUAL CHS PLANT SALE

This will be held in Marina da Gama on Saturday, 31 August this year. For us to have a successful sale with a wide variety of plants to sell, all members are asked to start propagating now. If you have no idea what can be potted up now, here is a list of suggested plants for you to start with. If you have these in your garden, now's the time to do some pruning and potting.

- Succulents, including Euphorbias
- Begonias
- Brugmansia
- Buddlejas
- Camellia
- Daisies (indigenous and non-indigenous)
- Eriocephalus species
- Escallonia
- Fuchsias
- Greyia species e.g. sutherlandii, flanaganii, radlkoferi
- Hebenstretia
- Helichrysum
- Heliotrope
- Herbs, including Lavender, Rosemary
- Hibiscus
- Hypoestes aristata, forskaoli
- Jasminum nudiflorum ("Winter Jasmine")
- Lavender
- Leonotis species e.g. leonurus, ocymifolia
- Mackaya bella
- Mahonia
- Pelargoniums
- Philadelphus coronaria ("Mock Orange")
- Plectranthus
- Poinsettia
- Salvias
- Senecio and Cineraria "Dusty Miller"
- Ursinia sericea
- Veltheimia bracteata

Tips on how to propagate various cuttings will be demonstrated at our March and April meetings.

LIBRARY

Peter Henshall, who took on the task of CHS Librarian in June 2017, has moved from the suburbs to the deep south – in Noordhoek. He single-handedly accessioned every donated book we have on the shelves – now numbering 232! We thank him very much for all the time spent to get our library up and running.

Debbie Feldman will be filling his place at the back of the hall on a meeting night, so please speak to her should you wish to borrow a book or two until the next meeting. The library is open for about half an hour before every meeting and again during tea time.

NOTICES, REQUESTS, ITEMS OF INTEREST

🌱 Wilma Tindall, who has re-located to a smallholding near Philadelphia, has sent in this request:

"I would love to start up my worm farm again. I wonder if anyone would like to donate a handful of red wrigglers in exchange for a handful of Cosmos seed for meadow scattering, or some Loofah seed, or some annual non-invasive, beautiful Morning Glory seed (yes, they do self-seed a bit) – I have Grandpa Ot's really rich dark purple with red central star morning glory, or crimson Scarlett O'Hara or sky blue Heavenly Blue, or blue and white candy-striped Carnival. Please let me know by SMS 083 645 2468 or on wilmatindall@gmail.com."

🌱 Extract from "the little book of quick fixes for the IMPATIENT GARDENER" by Gay Search:

It starts out by saying, "If you are one of those people who hasn't got time to hang around waiting for your garden to mature, then this is the book for you." Under the section "Plant Magic", the chapter called "Wigwam effect" says: "Make a tall wigwam of copper piping tied at the top with a leather thong or strong jute and stand it in the border. This will become a dramatic focal point straight away. Around the base, sow bright orange California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) seed. Then plant young plants of rich blue morning glories (*Ipomoea tricolor* 'Heavenly blue') at the base of each leg, and encourage them to latch on. By midsummer they should be producing a profusion of lovely trumpet flowers, each one lasting only for a morning – hence the plant's common name."

🌱 **Request from the Editor:** Please send in any articles, snippets of news and items of interest for publication in the issues of CHS News during the months ahead.