

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, 1 April 2019 at 20:00 at The Cape Town Athenaeum, Newlands

Entrance fee: Members – R10; Visitors – R30

GROWING SUCCULENTS NATURALLY IN YOUR GARDEN

Paul Green's interest in succulents started in his home city of Windhoek. His passion for these plants is to grow them as naturally as possible, so he has created a garden in Edgemean, which is totally natural. His ideas are gleaned from nature walks so the placement of his plants emulates the world in which they grow. We're hoping to visit his garden in winter when many of the aloes will be in flower.

NEXT OUTING

Thurs, 4 Apr at 14:00: Visit CHS member, Traudl Rohrer's small garden in Constantia and another mystery garden in Meadowridge. Limited to 12 members. Please let Glenda know, before 2 April, if you would like to attend.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS ...

... Hilary Southall, Fional Mauchan and Elna van der Merwe. We hope to get to know them and that their time with us will be beneficial.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

Thank you to those members who have paid their subscriptions. There is still a chance to make your payment at the next meeting. Please bring the renewal form (sent to you on 22 February with the February issue of CHS News) with your payment. If you choose to pay by EFT, please scan and e-mail the completed form.

REPORTBACK

Erratum in February CHS News (page 3): The *Carissa bispinosa* was actually *Carissa edulis*.

March Plant Table:

EXOTIC

Heliotrope: both colours (white and purple); very popular for landscaping.

Dracaena: normally popular indoor plant but this one makes a groundcover.

Aeschynanthus lobbianus "Lipstick vine" (relative of African Violet) – succulent trailer from southern Asia; warm humid position in semi-shade; plenty of water in warm weather growing season; watered from tank (right).

Zauschneria californica: evergreen; low water needs; 30 – 60cm high x 1 – 1.8m wide; red flowers.

Cochliasanthus "Snail vine": grown from seed (below, right).

Odontonema strictum: very hardy; regular flowerer

Pentas: from tropical Africa; attracts butterflies.

Hamelia patens: from Florida to Argentina; the genus *Hamelia* was named in honour of prominent French botanical author, Henry Louis Duhamel du Monceau (1700 – 1782). It is a very good plant for a drought situation.

Salvia guaranitica 'Black and Blue' from south America: does very well in Cape Town.

Chilli "Black Pearl"



Hibiscus mutabilis (? correct name unknown): very interesting, because it is forming seeds (right).

Citron – round form and “Buddha’s Hand”: watered once a week (far right).

INDIGENOUS

Plectranthus petiolaris

Plectranthus “Mona Lavender”: flowers more than once a year.



Gonialoe dinteri (? correct name unknown) from Namibia: marking and thickness of leaves look like *G dinteri* but thorns look fiercer. Probably a hybrid. (Below, left)

Haworthia limifolia from Mpumalanga and surrounds: just keeps flowering on window sill. (Below, second from left)

Duvernoia adhatodoides “Pistol Bush”: so-called because of the seeds ‘popping’ when ripe.



Crocosmia aurea “Montbretia”; in full flower now; needs water in summer; very rewarding; semi-shade or sun (left).

Justicia petiolaris: flowers for many months; very large shade-loving shrub; light blue flowers

Salvia chamelaeagnea: indigenous to Cape Peninsula and elsewhere: very, very waterwise; tough; large shrub.

Bunch of hybrid *Streptocarpus* blooms (left, below).



ISABELLA’S AND NICOLA’S CHOICE FOR THE MONTH



INDIGENOUS: *Agapanthus* ?? large flower head; always flowers late summer. (Left)

EXOTIC: *Paphiopedilum dianthum*: species of orchid which grows in nature in China and SE Vietnam; dappled light in cool to warm conditions; produces on average 3 or 4 flowers per spike during February to March in the southern hemisphere; this specimen is grown under a glass fibre roof and this is the first time flowering since its acquisition in Sept 2014. (Right)

MEDITERRANEAN GARDENING INTERNATIONAL FORUM

We would like to encourage people to explore and use the MGI Forum to communicate with other gardeners in Mediterranean climates and to read their posts. A link to the forum can be found at the bottom of the page on International Partners on our CHS website:

<https://capehorticulturalsociety.co.za/mediterranean-gardening-international/>

As this forum is limited to paid-up society members, the site has been set up to make it easy to login. All you need to do is put in your name and password – first and last name (eg. JoeBloggs) and click the *sign in* button. It is advised that you change your password to something of your own choice – but it's not obligatory. If you are new to forums and want to find out how to do things, there is a very good article called "How do I...?" There is also a post called "Getting started" which tells you generally how the forum works and how to update your profile.

PROPAGATION TIPS FOR POTTING UP PLANTS TO SELL AT OUR ANNUAL PLANT SALE

This is what Cherise had to tell us about taking succulent and *Streptocarpus* cuttings:

"Now is a perfect time to be doing succulent cuttings.

It really is one of the easiest things to do. You can do cuttings from leaves – you literally break off a leaf and you stick that in and the little new shoots will grow from the base. It's as simple as that. However, that will take a long time to get to a substantial sized plant.

What you really need to do is take the succulent cutting (any succulent), stick it in the soil – and you're done. It will root within 2 to 3 weeks.

Make a mixture of river sand, Perlite and Vermiculite. Don't try and use potting soil or compost. It's too rich, holds too much water and succulents want a well-drained medium.

You will then be ahead of schedule for our Annual Plant Sale at the end of August, which is what you will be growing these cuttings for. We need to raise funds for CHS and when our Treasurer talks to us about our funds, you will see that all you need to do is stick a few succulent cuttings in whatever soil you have and help us raise some money.

Streptocarpus propagation:

Take the leaf and place it in water or any medium but it is a very slow way of getting a single plant.

Traditionally, cuttings are taken along the mid-rib of the leaf – cutting out the main vein. Put the leaf in the soil and wherever there is a cut vein, something will grow.



This is not as successful as ...



... cutting the leaf horizontally into approximately 3cm wide pieces. Wedge the cut pieces into the soil with the bottom (check that it is not upside down) trapped in the soil and you will get babies forming all along. This works best. It takes about 6 – 8 weeks, sometimes a little longer.

Rooting powder always helps. It increases your chances of success and gives you more roots, but they can be rooted without."

Isabella continued with advice on how to pot up cuttings:

"I have done cuttings of *Streptocarpus* and they didn't really take that long. Maybe it's the time of the year? Do it in warmer weather. It's important for all your cuttings to not make them too wet because they rot very easily. They can't take up water if they haven't got roots.

Take a seedling tray or a pot. I put a sheet of newspaper at the bottom to stop the river sand running through. Pick your cuttings, preferably in the early morning.

Cherise pointed out that for a lot of plants, especially *Lamiaceae*, you need green as well as brown on the cutting stems for roots to form – a green top of the stem, going brown lower down; keep three or four leaves at the top and pull off the excess leaves. If the leaves are big, you cut them in half. Choose a rooting powder suitable for your plant – Number 1 for softwoods, No. 2 for semi-hardwood and No. 3 for hardwoods. Dip the bottom of the cutting into the powder and tap off the excess - too much of it will inhibit rooting.

Do not poke the cutting into the soil. Use a dibber to make a hole, open up the hole, insert the cutting and then press the medium around it. It is important to grow them in the shade – not in the full sun – and spray the leaves wet once or twice a day.

After 3 or 4 weeks, tug on them to see if they've got roots. If they have formed roots, you can gradually move them into the sun and then you can plant them out into bigger pots."

Cherise's instructions on using rooting powder: pour just enough rooting powder into the lid because the minute you put moisture into the container of powder, you've ruined it. You could also be contaminating your powder with plant diseases.

🌱 Advice on how to propagate by layering will be given at the April meeting.

TEST YOUR BOTANICAL/HORTICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

1. Name the vine from which vanilla (from cured pods) is obtained.
2. Vanilla is indigenous to which part of the world?

(Answers on the back page)

A DEVASTATING THREAT TO CAPE TOWN'S TREES

Our September 2018 issue made mention of this new beetle. The following is a notice put out by the City of Cape Town – a reminder of what to look out for:

"HAVE YOU SEEN SHOT-HOLE BORERS OR FUSARIUM DIEBACK?

1. Invasive Beetle Arrives – Polyphagous Shot-Hole Borer (PSHB)

PSHB is a tiny invasive black beetle from Asia that has recently arrived in South Africa. It is smaller than a sesame seed (2mm).

2. Beetles invade trees

The PSHB beetle makes tunnels, or galleries, in the trunks and branches of host trees and lay their eggs inside.

3. Fungus Sets In...

Fusarium Dieback: The female beetles carry a fungus (*Fusarium euwallaceae*) from tree to tree that grows in their tunnels. Adult beetles and their larvae depend on the fungus for food.

4. Trees are dying!

The fungus in the tunnels is really bad for trees as it disrupts the flow of water and nutrients to the tree causing branch dieback and ultimately the death of the tree.

5. Where do I report sightings?

Upload images and GPS coordinates of infested trees to the City of Cape Town Invasive Species Unit. Go to: www.invasivescapetown.org.za

What Trees are at Risk?

The beetles attack exotic and indigenous trees. Oak trees and old drought stressed trees are at high risk. For a list of species affected in SA to date, go to: <http://www.fabinet.up.ac.za/pshb>

What to Look for?

Look for these signs of attack:

1. Entry-holes to the beetle tunnels. Round and less than 2mm wide.
2. Tree symptoms. Dark, wet staining; thick gumming; streaks of white powder or fine sawdust coming from holes. Symptoms are unique to each tree species.
3. Dieback. Dead branches with wilting leaves may be a sign of infection by the Fusarium Dieback disease.

'A tree with dieback will have over 100 000 beetles in tunnels'

REPORT ALL SIGHTINGS USING THE DETAILS BELOW:

Invasive.Species@capetown.gov.za

Chandre.Rhoda@capetown.gov.za

Arborist@capetown.gov.za

Contact number: 0860 103 089"

ENDANGERED SPECIES FLOWERS AFTER 32 YEARS

In November 2017, the residents of Scarborough and Red Hill, on the border of the Cape of Good Hope section of Table Mountain National Park, fought to save their houses from the wildfires that swept through the area.

The following is an extract from '*Hesseea cinnamomea*: a million dwarf lilies rise from the ashes' by Callan Cohen, published in *Veld & Flora*, September 2018.

"AFTER THE RAINS

During May and June 2018, from the sands around the feet of the few remaining charred cone-bush skeletons, hundreds of thousands of delicate pink amaryllids emerged, some flowering for the first time in 32 years.

Hesseea cinnamomea, sometimes called the cinnamon *Hesseea* or Cinnamon Sambreeltjie (Afrikaans for 'little umbrella'), is a tiny cousin of the better known genera *Brunsvigia* and *Nerine*. This Endangered species, which is only found in the lowlands around Cape Town, is completely dependent on fire to flower and reproduce. It was a strong reminder that we in the Cape Floristic Region live on the edge of remarkable ecosystems for which regular fires are essential.

FIRE-DEPENDENT BEAUTY

After a summer fire has removed the dense overstorey, the parasol-shaped flowerheads emerge from the bare sand in mid-winter – each flower on the end of a radiating spoke. The flowerheads can have as many as 25 flowers, but stand only about 15cm tall and – perhaps because of the cool flowering season – the flowers all face in one direction, typically to the north (north-west in one population here). The very subtly pink tepals graduate to a strikingly darker pink as they dip downwards into the cup-shaped central part of the flower, where the nectar is secreted. A conspicuous feature is the crisply undulated edges of the tepals. *Hesseea cinnamomea* is named for its cinnamon-scented flowers, although I agree with Graham Duncan that the predominant smell was a sweet vanilla, and a more inclusive description might be a sweet, spicy fragrance.

FIRE MOSAICS IN FYNBOS

Each fire in fynbos is unique. Each fire creates a patchwork of veld of different ages, causing different flowering combinations over the next few seasons. The November 2017 fire, which extended from Red Hill and Scarborough to Olifantsbos and Sirkelsvlei, seems to have burnt an unusually large proportion of the Cinnamon *Hesseea* populations. Small clusters have burnt in recent years, but the last spectacular bloom was in 2007, when Graham Duncan reported 1000 plants in flower in *Veld & Flora*. Before then, Dee Snijman reported thousands in June 1986, while former park managers Howard Langley and Gerald Wright remember a big bloom in the early 1970s. One particular patch hadn't flowered for 32 years.

REMNANT POPULATIONS

My estimate of over one million plants is based on a calculated area of less than one quarter of a square kilometer (which is a tiny area overall). The total area covered by the *H cinnamomea* populations – within the Cape of Good

Hope section of the national park and immediate surrounds – is likely to be greater than my calculations. The populations visited might well extend beyond 200m from the road verge and there are other populations, thus the total area hosting this species in the southern Cape Peninsula is likely to be significantly larger than one quarter of a square kilometre.

When faced with such abundance, it is hard to understand how this species might be considered Endangered. However, the population in the lower-lying areas of the Cape Flats, such as at Kenilworth and Fish Hoek, have largely been destroyed by urban sprawl. Today, only small, scattered patches remain in the centre of Kenilworth Race Course, at Riverlands (south of Malmesbury), Joostenberg and near Paarl. Habitat destruction has destroyed much of this species' natural distribution and *Hessea cinnamomea* is thus now almost completely restricted to this section of the Table Mountain National Park.

A SEASONALLY WATERLOGGED HABITAT

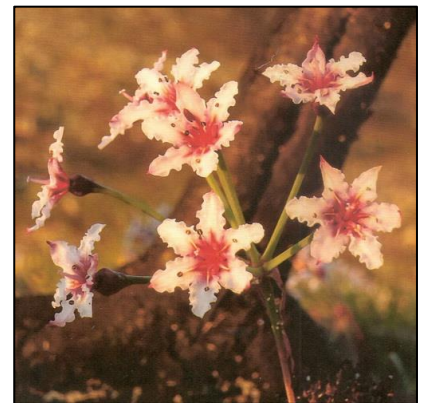
The species prefers sandy lower slopes, with a peaty element characteristic of areas that are seasonally waterlogged – the species will sometimes bloom directly out of the water in flooded (inundated) areas. The literature suggests an upper altitude limit of just 60m above sea level (asl), although one of the populations in the Shusters River valley was found from 84 – 92m asl.

A RICH RESOURCE AT A BLEAK TIME

In 2018, the *Hessea cinnamomea* flowered from late May to July, a cold time of year when relatively few other species flower. When temperatures allowed insect activity, the flowers were buzzing with Cape Honeybees (*Apis mellifera* subsp. *capensis*) which was by far the most abundant pollinator. During a bee's short visit to each flower, the anthers deposited pollen on the triangular forehead of the bee. Pollen was received by the stigma as an approaching bee directed its forehead towards the centre of the floral cup. A variety of other bees and flies from many families have been recorded on the flowers in low numbers, suggesting a generalist pollination system during a time of year when pollinators might be limited.

THE NEXT GENERATIONS

Once pollinated, the fleshy seeds ripen to a deep red over a few weeks. The floral stalk elongates and dries out and soon the dried, umbel-like flowerheads detach and cartwheel around, scattering seeds as they are driven by the wind. The seed-set was high in 2018, suggesting good pollination, or possibly even a degree of self-pollination. There is no seed dormancy and the recalcitrant seeds germinate almost immediately, depending on the winter rains and damp ground. Small contractile roots slowly pull the developing bulb further and further underground each year, keeping it safe from the fires that will eventually burn through the dense cover that develops in the moist habitat of the bulb. Once flowering is over and the flowerhead has blown away, two strap-shaped dark green leaves emerge over winter and spring, providing the energy store in the bulb to bloom again when the next fire comes."



MEMBERS' REQUESTS, ITEMS OF INTEREST AND DATES TO DIARISE

- 🌱 Yvonne has lost the 2 forms of *Justicia* "shrimp plant" which someone showed at a CHS Flower Show about 8 years ago. One had pale orange bracts and a red flower; the other had lime green bracts and cerise flowers. They should be flowering about now and she would love to get more slips. Yvonne would be happy to exchange for something from her garden, or buy if the grower is still a member of CHS and still has the plants. If you are that person, please make contact with Yvonne at yvonneksu@gmail.com.
- 🌱 If you want to read more about bees and see what wonderful fruit and veggies are grown in Bonnievale, visit Thys's blog <http://towerwaternaandebreedde.blogspot.com/2019/>. His photos are exquisite.
- 🌱 CHS AGM: 6 May 2019
- 🌱 Annual Plant Sale: 31 August 2019.

Photos: C Viljoen, C Cohen and A Thorpe

1. <i>Vanilla planifolia</i>	2. Central America
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