

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, Bill Elder

NEXT MEETING

Monday, 4 November at 20:00 at The Cape Town Athenaeum, Newlands

Entrance fee: Members – R10; Visitors – R30

Anthony Hitchcock will continue his September talk on

EXPLORING GARDENS AND PLANTS OF SOUTH-CENTRAL ITALY

There was so much to tell, that Anthony ran out of time long before he got to the end of his Italian journey.

NEXT OUTING

Sat, 2 Nov at 14:30: Visit the Tokai garden of Noleen McMaster who says, "My garden is 25 years old and it is NOT water wise! There is a stream at the bottom which never runs dry so it is basically an English garden with lots of roses, wisterias, day lilies etc. There is also a vegetable garden and an eco pool. I am not able to be hands on any more so my very able gardener does all the work. I have to go with the flow!"

Limited to 15 members. Please let Glenda know, by 30 October, if you would like to attend.

SUGGESTION BOX

A Suggestion Box has been implemented for those members who have a bright idea or suggestion but feel too intimidated to speak out. Write down your suggestion and place it in the box at a meeting. It will be taken to a committee meeting for consideration.

REPORTBACK

October Plant Table:

EXOTIC

Fuchsia "Prodigy": one of the most floriferous; grows about 2m tall. (Below, left.)

Passiflora flower

Hypericum "St John's Wort": grows in shade; occasional watering in summer.

Eranthemum sp from India, Himalaya and West China – "Blue Sage": usually a gentian blue but this is almost lavender; west-facing; plenty of sun; hardy! (Below, right.)

<http://www.igarden.com.au/plant-type.jsp?t=eranthemum> says: "In recent times, I have been given a variant that has much deeper blue flowers than the usual form, which is very appealing when in bloom. In my garden, it flowers a few weeks earlier than the pale blue version and seems a more open, slightly gawky shape. Possibly it is a different species: *Eranthemum wattii*."

Impatiens zombensis from Malawi and Mozambique: has grown throughout winter.

Antirrhinum "Snapdragon"

Heliotrope – blue variety does not have the same strength of fragrance as the paler, white one.

Impatiens niamniamensis "Parrot Impatiens".

Calceolaria integrifolia from Argentina and Chile: annual that looks like a weed and self-seeds; very cute, but has lovely flowers; most other *Calceolaria* species have very big flowers and they are grown as pot plants.



Acanthus mollis: grows in sun; occasional watering in summer; Jenny warns that this is very invasive and we need to be responsible about growing it and not allow it to spread.

<https://www.kalliergeia.com/en/bears-breeches-the-corinthian-columns-capital-plant/> says: "Origin: Bear's Breeches is a native plant of southern Europe and the regions of the Mediterranean Basin and its islands. Its habitats are mainly calcareous soils in brushwood forests as well as rocky slopes and stony hillsides sheltered from the north."

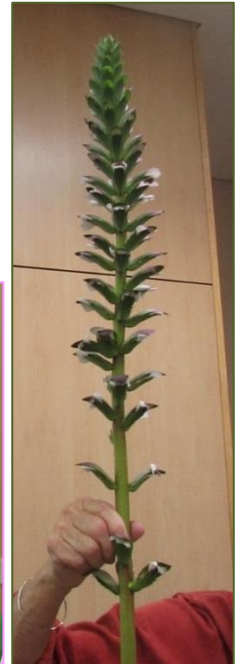
<http://architecturalplants.com/plants/id/acanthus-mollis> informs us that: "... The carved leafy bits are so characteristic of the capitals on Corinthian columns. Not surprising really as *Acanthus* grows everywhere around Corinth and evidently did 2500 years ago too."

Lychnis coronaria 'oculata': an old 17th C plant; very attractive grey foliage; self-seeds.

Salvia "Black and Blue": pruned annually and keeps growing; regular watering, but not too much.

INDIGENOUS

Dombeya rotundifolia: ideal small tree for gardens; grows in most provinces and Namibia



Cyrtanthus elatus "George Lily" from Knysna to Humansdorp; flowers in the Spring, especially if it's a bit pot-bound. (Far left, above.)

Streptocarpus ayla: grown in shadehouse; discovered by Ernst van Jaarsveld on a cliff in the Eastern Cape (middle two above showing the flower, and leaves hanging down the cliff face) about 25 years ago and named for his daughter.

Pelargonium capitatum: 5 years old; a bit straggly – should have been pruned more. (Far right, above)



Dipogon lignosus

<http://pza.sanbi.org/dipogon-lignosus> says: "... an herbaceous perennial with a climbing habit, becoming woody below. Its green softwood stems climb up nearby structures, shrubs or trees, sometimes growing more than 2 m tall and extending far sideways when given the chance." and "... but it should be cultivated with care as it is known to be invasive in some areas." (Far left.)

Pelargonium – variety of blooms. (Left.)

Freesia laxa from Eastern Cape to Mozambique: very vigorous; seeds itself; makes a lovely groundcover.

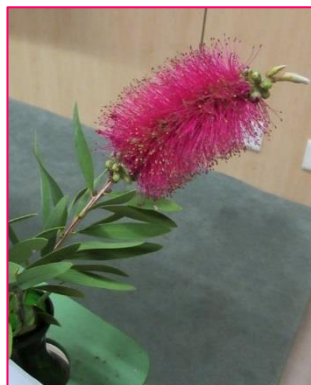
Psychotria capensis: slow growing and straggly; after 4-5 years, it is less than 1.5m tall; lovely shiny leaves; attractive tree for a small garden.

Clivia nobilis

JENNY'S CHOICES FOR THE MONTH

EXOTIC:

Susan's *Callistemon salignus* "Perth Pink" – Bottlebrush: very slow; after 20 years is about 2.5m high.



<https://www.gardeningwithangus.com.au> says: "Perth Pink is double the colour value – with pink flowers mainly in spring and autumn, and the new foliage growth is flushed pink as well. A trouble free shrub to 4 metres, this is a great hedge or screen plant which can be left to grow unpruned, or trimmed to tidy the growth or decrease the size if needed. Pruning after the blooms have finished will encourage new growth and the next flowering will be improved.

Does best in a well drained soil and with some watering in dry spells. Fertilise in spring if desired with a good general purpose or native fertiliser. Best in temperate and Mediterranean climates. A great bird attracting shrub."



INDIGENOUS:

Shelley's *Cyrtanthus falcatus* – like the forms of species in the Eastern Cape; summer rainfall; has flowered for the last two years.

<http://pza.sanbi.org/cyrtanthus-falcatus> tells us "*Cyrtanthus falcatus* is a deciduous, summer-growing bulbous plant producing a large, pear-shaped bulb with a distinct neck. It has four arching, leathery, strap-shaped, bright green leaves and a pendent inflorescence of numerous long, narrowly trumpet-shaped flowers. The flower buds appear in mid-spring together with the new leaves. The sturdy, maroon flower stem grows rapidly to a height of up to 300 mm and is distinctly curved in the uppermost part, resembling a shepherd's crook. Due to the unusual horizontal or downward-facing position of the bulbs in habitat, the flower stem bends upwards into an erect posture.

Cyrtanthus falcatus is only known to occur in Grassland of the Drakensberg mountains in the KwaZulu-Natal midlands, South Africa, usually below 1800 m. The bulbs are found on vertical cliffs, either hanging downwards or lying in a horizontal position, with the roots securely anchored between rock slabs."

GARDENING IN OCTOBER

A few tips on what we could be doing in our gardens now:

<https://www.lifeisagarden.co.za/october-garden-3/>

- 🌱 Freshen up garden containers containing specimen plants like lollipop standards, by pruning them neatly once again to maintain a round shape. Plant some bright red bedding begonias around the stems this month and you will have a great festive look in December.
- 🌱 Feed the garden every month with general fertiliser, for optimal growth and water early in the morning, on wind-free days.
- 🌱 Plant out a last crop of lettuce and coriander before the summer heat starts.

<https://www.essentials.co.za/diy/october-in-the-garden>

- 🌱 If gardenias, brunfelsias, star jasmines and lemon trees appear yellow and tired, feed them with a microelement mix — ask your nurserymen for the right product.
- 🌱 If your lettuces have disappeared overnight or your newly planted petunias (now that it is dryer) have been chewed into slimy sticks, chances are that you have been invaded by snails — prevalent after a wet winter. Place shallow saucers of beer strategically in areas with high slug and snail activity. Gastropods (like some humans!) love beer and will often drown in it if given the chance, helping to rid your garden of part of the plague. A cabbage leaf placed over the saucer of beer apparently attracts even more of a crowd — and with cabbages you don't have to worry about brand, either!

Hot tip:

- Commercial snail pellets are always very effective if used correctly. Do not scatter the snail pellets over the whole area. Instead, place it in small heaps around susceptible young seedlings or under leaves in the early evening, on wet soil.
- In the veggie garden, sow herbs like sweet basil, coriander, dill, nasturtiums, Italian parsley and chives. You can also sow cabbage, spinach, rocket, carrots, beets, beans, eggplants, sweet peppers and tomatoes.

Hot tip:

- Do not sow a whole packet of seeds in one go. Rather do small succession sowings every four 4 to 6 weeks

BOTANICAL ISSUE

For those of us who still remember what postage stamps are, the latest issue from the SA Post Office depicts "Cycads – Trees of Myth and Legend".

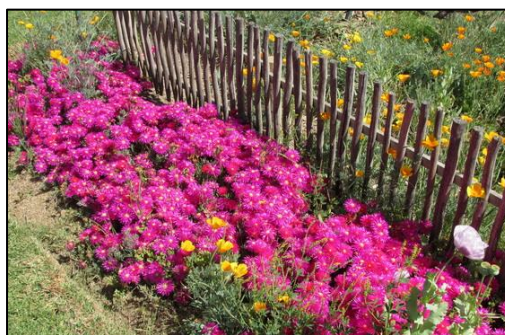
This abstract from the chapter on Cycads by Anil K. Goel and J. S. Khuraijam in *Plant Biology and Biotechnology* gives some background to these ancient plants:

"Cycads are regarded as the "Living Fossils" and belong to a specialized group of plants having ancient lineage possessing great significance from the evolutionary point of view. During excavations, the cycad fossils located and accepted as related to the similar lineage as the present-day cycads have been known from the early Permian period, ca. 280–320 Myr ago. They had been popularly known as "Plant Dinosaur" and were generally known as the most dominant plant group in the Mesozoic period. The relict group of the seed plants was worldwide in their distribution and dominant in the plant world as the dinosaurs were then at the peak in the animal world. They were eaten by some herbivorous dinosaurs, such as *Stegosaurus*. During that period the plant group Bennettitales or cycadeoids was in abundance which had superficial resemblance with cycads but was more similar and closer to the angiosperms. The Jurassic period is generally called as the "Age of Cycads" because they were very common at that time. In fact the cycads represent the basal living lineage of the present-day seed-bearing angiosperms.

The taxonomic isolation and extreme antiquity of cycads have attributed them intrinsic interest and conservational importance which is disproportionate to the paucity of members because of their limited and disjunct distribution. The cycads are dioecious and very slow-growing plants; as a result they are getting extremely rare in the natural habitat. Due to their rarity, very attractive foliage and beautiful cones, cycads are considered as the prized collections in private and the public gardens leading to over exploitation from natural habitats and illegal trade in the international market. Therefore, international trade and the movement of cycads are regulated strictly under the rules governed by CITES. Botanic gardens have been recognized as prime custodians to play a vital role in maintaining the germplasm collection for the furtherance of taxonomic and ex-situ conservation studies on the cycads."

BARRYDALE IN BLOOM

A group of 25 descended on Barrydale on Friday, 11 October. Here are a few photos and members' comments.



Lotus berthelotii; Vygie patch; Gelsemium gone wild.



The gang at Whitsend; Mix of Irises, Poppies and Statice.



"Wonderful break in a town I have only ever driven past. Community seem very involved and having the township gardens was a new special inclusion. Lovely lunch and good wine added to the delights. Hildegard was phenomenal."

Ninon Carrington



Dry garden of succulents; Cactus found in Smitsville township.



"It was a weekend of wonderfully varied inputs and experiences, the township gardens not least of all. I even came home with a Bletilla striata from Clarence Jonas!"

Shelley Brown

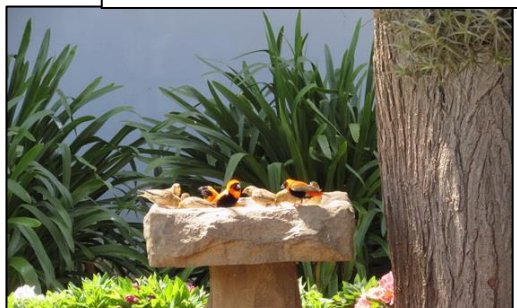


Hildegard telling us how she got to be in Barrydale; The dry garden.

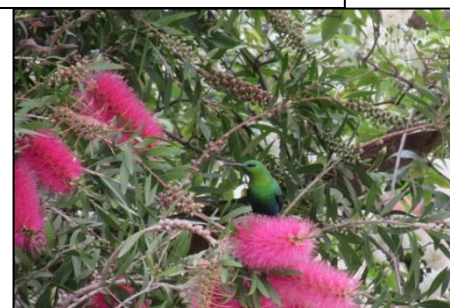


"Outstanding weekend in a very attractive town."

Jenny Scarr



Red Bishops and canaries feeding; Malachite sunbird on a pink Bottlebrush; A group in the boma built from the shale that abounds in the area (below).



"The people we met were as fascinating as the gardens."

Hannie van Wieringen

"Fabulous."

Marie-Lou Gillespie



"We are exhausted, but 15 gardens in 1 day is quite impressive!"

Belinda du Rand

... to be continued

REMINISCENCES OF A BYGONE ERA – Part 2

"The Floral Art Judges"

An important part of many of our shows was the Floral Art section which allowed participating members to submit their entries in designated classes. Their creativity was then assessed according to international standards by a panel of appointed qualified Floral Art judges.

The arrival of the team of Boland Floral Art Judges drawn from Paarl, Robertson and Worcester usually caused quite a stir. These charming ladies, all beautifully dressed and with stunning large-brimmed hats, were our country cousins visiting their big city relatives and keen to show us how flowers should be arranged. Judging was strict but fair and their comments on entry cards were appreciated and valued. These Judges sometimes presented examples of their own work and one of the most striking was when we had a class for "Hanging Basket of Mixed Flowers". A judge from Robertson brought with her, for display only, two massive arrangements in large vineyard baskets used for picking grapes. Each one was approx. 1½ metres in diameter and 2 metres in height and appeared to contain every flower that was open in her garden at this time! The City Hall employees involved rose to the challenge and provided suitable heavy duty sky hooks from which to suspend these enormous arrangements – fabulous examples of what could be achieved in a class "Hanging Basket of Mixed Flowers".

Support for our Shows – City of Cape Town

The Department of Parks and Gardens were responsible for providing plants to beautify the City Hall and were often invited to also participate in our one-day Shows. They would arrive with a variety of tropical pot plants selected from the Hothouse in the Public Gardens. These plants would be displayed near the Show entrance with the main focus on a giant plant of 'Phalaenopsis schilleriana', an Orchid from the Phillipines. This magnificent species, at least 25 years old, was grown suspended over the water feature inside the heated greenhouse and was usually covered with hundreds of soft pink flowers – A real Show Stopper!

VIPs flying with British Airways (BOAC)

In 1958 Orchids in South Africa were rather scarce and when exhibited were much admired by the flower-loving public. John Minnitt, the CHS secretary, had formed good relationships with two famous international Orchid nurseries – Stuart Low Company of Sussex, England and Vacherot & Lecoufle of Paris, France. At show-time these nurseries would pack, very securely, 12 specially selected Cattleya Orchid hybrids which were in full flower. These were flown to Cape Town in the personal care of a BOAC co-pilot who ensured that the plants were delivered directly to John Minnitt. The following day they were an additional highlight at our CHS Show.

This was all possible when "Handle with Care" meant exactly that and was not just an advertising slogan. There was no charge for this generous and wonderful Public Relations gesture from BOAC.

Keep your eyes on the African Violets

In the post WW2 1950s many new *Saintpaulia* hybrids were being introduced into South Africa for pot plant lovers eagerly looking for something new.

However, a specialist Plant Nursery in Diep River, which was open to the public, had a problem. Many folk who would not dream of stealing a plant did not think anyone would notice a missing leaf – Wrong! When entering this nursery's African Violet greenhouse you were greeted with a sign and a verbal instruction not to touch the plants, to view with your eyes and adopt a 'Prince Charles' stance – hands behind your back. Those misbehaving were dealt a firm rap across the knuckles with a bamboo cane accompanied by a friendly smile.

This was, of course, an ongoing problem with new varieties displayed at Shows and these plants were staged out of the reach of wandering hands."

Mike Byren is a born-and-bred Capetonian, as is Sylvia, his wife of 62 years. Although Mike has been a member of the CHS for many years, his passion has been the growing of orchids. He is a Founder Member (last man standing) of the Cape Orchid Society (1957), a National Orchid Judge since 1960 and Past-president of the Cape Orchid Society and the South African Orchid Council.



Sylvia in all her finery at an Orchid Show in 1961 (courtesy of The Argus)

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

1. What is the botanical name for the "George Lily"?

(Answer on page 2)

2. Where did the *Phalaenopsis schilleriana* orchid originate?

(Answer on page 6)

THE BRIGHT SIDE OF HORTICULTURE

TOPIARY: BONKERS OR BEAUTIFUL?

Flicking through most recent gardening and lifestyle magazines, it's almost impossible to avoid seeing a somewhat unnaturally shapely figure appear every few pages – and less frustratingly than some publications, this time I'm talking about topiary! Although this craft has been around for millennia, dating back to Rome and further even to ancient gardens of Asia, it faded out of fashion and has almost gone extinct in the modern garden; but not for long! Slowly outgrowing the stuffy, rather pretentious nature of topiary, once reserved for lavish Italian renaissance gardens, shaping with shears is having a come-back, and is bringing with it a whimsical element into the everyday garden and a fresh and contemporary way to add structure.

Still not convinced? Let me show you a few examples of how cool and crafty topiary can be...



Topiary pudding domes in a bed of lavender for height and structure, and again in a mixed border for structure, depth and an eye catching shape. bloglovin.com

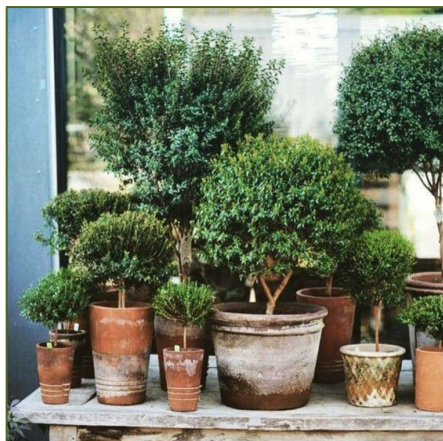


Left: Here topiary balls have been used again for an artistic yet contemporary look. However, here the shapes are used to keep the area neat and clean, and green, without it being boring or too simple. The shapes add something playful.

Awesomehome.org

Below: Various topiary shapes in pots can add some artistic flare to your balcony herb planters, different heights add interest too. Rosemary and Bay are fun to shape, especially at this size! The herbs, or any small plants you decided to shape in table top pots, don't need to be manicured or perfect. If you prefer a rustic or creative look, keep the pretentious at bay by leaving some rough and fluffy edges.

Sanctuaryhomedecor.com and thecrownedgoat.com



Simply because one cannot talk about topiary without mentioning these, I have to add some of the world famous topiary collections to ogle at:

Jardins de Marqueyssac – Vezac, France



Marqueyssac.com

Showing off over 150,000 carved and shaped boxwood trees, this exquisite display of topiary boasts all shapes and sizes, some dating back to the 1860's. Shaped to mimic the surrounding hills, the boxwood patterns are designed to also resemble the backs of grazing sheep when viewed from above!

Church of San Rafael – Zarcero, Costa Rica

Created by Don Evangelista Blanco, an untrained topiary enthusiast, these arches of cypress line the path leading to the historical Iglesia de San Rafael Church, the main tourist attraction in Zarcero. Don Evangelista Blanco also sculpted various animals and figures in the gardens behind the church, and can still be seen today roaming the gardens ensuring the impeccable upkeep of his art.

Govisitcostarica.com



Stellenberg Gardens – Kenilworth, South Africa



stellenberggardens.co.za

Because this is a local garden, I thought I'd have to add two pictures. I am sure most local garden enthusiasts may have visited this local treat – even if they are by appointment only! I am ashamed to say I have not, and I was intrigued to learn more, and I am now desperate to see for myself.



stellenberggardens.co.za

Sandy Ovenstone took to this garden in the mid-1980s with experimentation at the forefront of her method; creating room-like garden structures using the gardens topography and ancient walls. Creating different moods as one moves through the 16 sections of the garden, this magical space incorporates modern trends (when necessary) with a historical homestead to form a place truly unique. With organised tours of the garden available between September and April, it's the perfect time to book and see the wonder for yourself.

In hopes that this article has inspired you to give it a go, I have pulled up a step by step from the Royal Horticultural Society to see you through (I have, however, found that going by feel or following your green nose does the job too):

Starting your own topiary:

1. Decide upon the shape you wish to create. Balls, pyramids and cubes are a few of the easiest shapes to start with. Large or horizontal shapes may need more than one stem
2. Choose which plant you would like, and whether it is to be grown in the ground or in a pot, and then plant it
3. To encourage strong, healthy growth, apply an annual dressing of feed and a mulch of organic matter in the spring
4. For standard specimens (e.g. lollipops), select one upright shoot to act as your main stem, tie this to a cane or stake and remove all others. Gradually clear the lower part of the stem of shoots and foliage, continuing until the desired height of main stem is reached (which could take several years)
5. Begin clipping it into shape. You could do this by eye or make a template or a wooden frame to ensure the shape is clipped uniformly
6. As the plant matures, it will bush out and the branches and leaves will become tightly knitted together to give the solid appearance. This can take many years, depending on the plant selected and the ultimate desired size
7. Allow for the plant to grow to the desired height before its main leader is trimmed.

If you've decided that you are ready to tackle the hedge outside and shape it for Christmas, or maybe even sooner, I wish you luck – and hope for some luck in return for my rosemary pom-poms.

I'll finish off with a quote I found, which I think plays well with my idea of the role topiary plays in a garden:

"Architectural lines such as those from hedges, walls, paths or topiary are the bones of a garden. But it is the artist who then allows dishevelment and abandonment to evolve.... It is far more difficult to achieve than a contrived garden. It requires intuition, a genius for letting things have their head"

– Mirabel Osler, garden designer and writer

Information from:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=720>

<http://stellenberggardens.co.za/our-gardens/>

<https://marqueyssac.com/?lang=en>

<https://www.govisitcostarica.com/region/city.asp?CID=100>

Stacey Bright

BAOBAB BRIGADE cont.

When these three-year old Baobab (*Adansonia*) "babies" were handed over, they looked like dry sticks that needed to be thrown out. But, within the month, Tony has reported that his "baby" has started to sprout a bit of greenery, as has Jean's. They have been re-potted and watered because now is the time to water them. Isn't nature wonderful?

<https://balconygardenweb.com/how-to-grow-a-baobab-tree-everything-about-baobab/> gives information on how to care for your new tree:

"Taking care of a baobab is simple. The sturdy exotic plant loves warm, sunny and bright location. Larger specimens survive longer drying sessions. Seedlings, on other hand need more water and should be kept moderately moist. Baobab tree if grown successfully, rewards you not only with its ornamental thick trunk and rich green leaves, but also with large white flowers and edible fruits.

Repotting

If you are growing baobab trees in a pot, repotting is necessary. The growth of baobab roots is very strong. Therefore, the tree requires enough space to unfold. Repot baobab when plants seem root bound, roots start to appear on upper surface.

Pruning

The baobab tree can be pruned throughout the year except winter. It's easy: simply remove the shoots, which are located under the main crown. If possible, make a cut near bud. So a new bud of the branch will be ensured.

In order to cut individual branches summer is the ideal time."



Left: The 3-year old "stick"

Centre: Tony's baby

Right: Jean's baby – Barnaby

DATES TO DIARISE

- 🌱 Elgin Open Gardens: Sat/Sun, 26/27 Oct and 2/3 November for 10:00 to 17:00.
- 🌱 Franschhoek Open Gardens: Fri-Sun, 25-27 October from 09:00 to 17:00.
- 🌱 Stellenberg Estate Open Gardens: Sat, 9 and Sun, 10 November
- 🌱 2020 International Conference: Fri, 28 – Mon, 31 August 2020. This will give us an opportunity to meet members of Mediterranean Gardening International.

APPEALS

- 🌱 Vera School is looking Penny Royal plants for their school. If you can help, please call Cecil Reed from the school on 082-864-5222.
- 🌱 Member Nicola Anthony runs a nursery from home in Kirstenhof and sells a whole range of plants: indigenous/exotics; sun/shade plants; herbs and spinach; trees and shrubs; groundcovers; succulents; Day Lilies etc etc. Nicky. You are more than welcome to contact her on 021-701-2847 or 076-838-6161 (with WhatsApp) to arrange a time to visit.

Photos: A Thorpe, Google, The Argus, T Penso, J Sleigh, G Thorpe