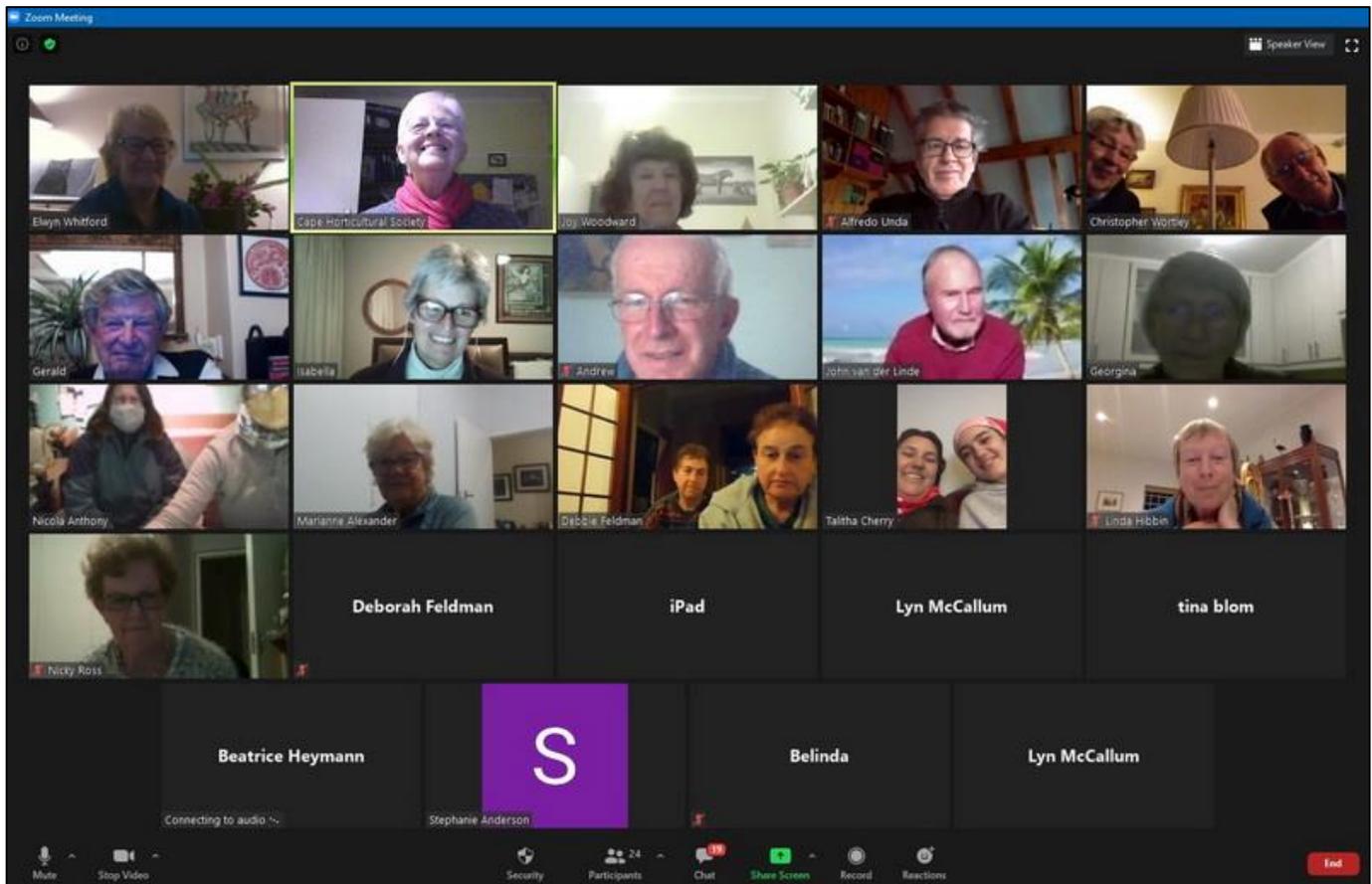




**President:** Michael Tuffin **Chairman:** Errol Scarr **Hon Treasurer:** Henry Diesveld **Secretary:** Glenda Thorpe  
**Honorary Members:** Laurie Powis, Marianne Alexander, Mary Smith, Anne Bean, Adam Harrower, Michael Tuffin, Bill Elder

## THE CHS GOES A-ZOOMING!!



The CHS has moved even further into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in this year of COVID-19, by venturing into the realms of virtual meetings. Meeting via Zoom is becoming commonplace and will soon be as acceptable as using a cellphone – something not necessarily wanted, but certainly very useful.

After the presentation on 6 July, taking a picture of the participants was an afterthought, so there were only 27 people (of the 39 who attended over the 40-minute period) still online for this photo opportunity. (Not everyone had a camera to show their faces.) Some appeared to be lolling on a desert island, while others relaxed in their sitting rooms, with the rest sitting in front of their computer in their home office. All in all, it was a great success for a first attempt at something new. It was lovely to have two members of Mediterranean Gardening Chile in attendance.

Our thanks to Jenny Scarr for offering to be the guinea pig for this occasion, as well as to her daughter and grandson for their invaluable IT expertise. After a few false starts, the presentation finally got pre-recorded and it all came together on the night. Thanks also to Hanns Bohle for sharing his knowhow on the ins and outs of Zooming.

If you missed out on watching our July presentation, then you're in luck. You can watch it on the new CHS YouTube Channel! The link to this is:

<https://youtu.be/EbX75Owqa9g>

Simply click on the link and it should take you right to the talk – no logging in, signing up or subscribing necessary. Please advise Glenda if you experience any problems.

In future, all our monthly presentations will be uploaded to the CHS YouTube Channel for members to access at any time. Each link will be provided to members once this has been done.

## NEXT MEETING

**Monday, 3 August 2020 at 20:00 – again, from the comfort of your home.**

### CLIVIA CONUNDRUM

Roger Stewart will explain how William Burchell serendipitously discovered the *Clivia* and relate the confusing story of the source of the plants that subsequently were described and named. In 1828, while Burchell was in Brazil, both William Hooker and John Lindley separately described and illustrated examples of a plant which was new to Europe. Each proposed a name for the plant, apparently supplied by James Bowie to Lady Charlotte Clive's gardeners at Syon House in London. *Clivia nobilis*, the name proposed by Lindley, survived. Both botanist authors ignored or suppressed Burchell's discovery of the plant in Albany in 1813. Nor did they mention the likely role of John Tate, with whom Burchell shared information in the location of the plant which he later imported and might have supplied to the Clives.

### To attend the meeting:

The link to this Zoom presentation will be sent to you prior to the "meeting". All you have to do is click on the link in the body of the e-mail message and you will gain access to the meeting on the night. Try and link in a few minutes before the time and wait to be admitted or wait for the Host to begin. Remember to "Mute" yourself. You can also switch off the video (bottom left corner) while the presentation is running. Too many videos on the screen can affect the quality of the presentation.

## HOW TO SOW CLIVIA SEED

Once the seeds have been cleaned of the fleshy covering, place them in a small dish or saucer on top of the medium (sharp sand with some organic matter) to keep it open, and add enough water to moisten them, without it leaving a puddle (they would then rot).

Put the dish in a plastic bag and watch for the emergence of the first root, which should take one to three weeks.

Remove the seed and place on the top of the growing medium (very fibrous and open medium with good mix of leaf mould / sharp river sand and fine bark) in a pot – or seed tray, if many. The root will start to grow down into the medium.

Keep pot in a shady, cool place and lightly water or mist over to encourage growth.

## FAREWELL TO A FYNBOS LEGEND AND GREAT CONSERVATOR

by John Yeld published by Daily Maverick 13 July 2020



*Anthony Hitchcock and colleague Carly Cowell planting out seedlings of threatened species as part of restoration efforts at Tokai Park, in August 2010. (Photo: John Yeld)*

Colleagues have praised Anthony Hitchcock as an 'an active botanical horticulturist, prolific plant gatherer, compulsive seed collector, accomplished gardener, and unstinting mentor'.

The international flora conservation community is mourning the loss of botanist, horticulturist and plant restoration specialist Anthony Hitchcock – widely acclaimed as one of the true *fynbos fynmense*.

This phrase derives from clever Afrikaans word-play to describe those "fine people" who help protect South Africa's rich biodiversity while also making it work for the economic benefit of communities.

The 60-year-old Hitchcock, who was the Nursery, Living Collections and Threatened Species Manager at Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden before taking early retirement in 2019, died on Tuesday 7 July of Covid-19 complications that he contracted while in isolation in a Cape Town hospital receiving chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant.

A “plantsman” with a very intimate connection with the Earth, Hitchcock spent his professional life steeped in the soil, collecting, growing and rescuing plants and having a special affinity for the restoration of threatened fynbos – particularly plants in the *Erica* genus with its 840 species. But he was just as happy burrowing deep underground when, particularly in his youth, he’d spent much of his leisure time pursuing his love of exploring and documenting cave systems, including all the known caves in the Table Mountain system.

Hitchcock grew up in Kalk Bay where he was introduced by his father at an early age to the local mountainside with its rich fynbos vegetation and many caves.

After achieving a BA in ancient history (his degree included one year of botany in his first year), he studied horticulture at the then Cape Technikon before joining Kirstenbosch, now one of the suite of national botanical gardens falling under the auspices of the SA National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). Here, during a 33-year career, he championed the garden’s programmes that included search-and-rescue of threatened plants; using the gardens as a tool for restoration ecology; developing the “garden of extinction”; maintaining the *Erica* collection, and managing other living plant collections such as cycads and pelargoniums, among many others.

Hitchcock’s deep passion for plants and his willingness to share his knowledge, allied with a gentle and humble demeanour and a well-developed cheeky sense of humour, endeared him to his SANBI colleagues who found him a patient, loyal, creative and inspirational mentor.

One of them was Dr Carly Cowell, now Senior CITES Policy Adviser based at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew in London. “He was passionate and willing to fight for his beliefs for plant conservation,” she says. “No matter who you were or what your background, if you showed an interest in plants and conservation, Anthony would take you under his wing and share all he had with you, usually learning himself along the way. It was such a pleasure to work with him... He’s left a very deep hole.”

*Anthony Hitchcock on Table Mountain collecting plant cuttings for Kirstenbosch, March 2013. (Photo: John Yeld)*



Despite serious health issues, Hitchcock was delighted to join Cape Town environmental education and indigenous greening non-profit group FynbosLIFE as a director in February in 2020.

“I feel strongly the need to continue contributing to conservation and this is a wonderful opportunity to do so. Conservation is my great passion and I feel a great void after having to retire early from SANBI because of politically motivated circumstances and decisions,” he told FynbosLIFE managing director Dr Caitlin von Witt, who calls him “my fynbos hero”.

Among many projects, Hitchcock worked closely with SANBI colleague Dr Tony Rebelo and others in early restoration efforts of critically endangered Cape Flats Sand Fynbos in Tokai Park, following the harvesting of alien pine plantations.

Here, in what’s acknowledged as one of the “hottest biological hotspots” on Earth for conserving threatened biodiversity, among the several plant species being restored is the magnificent *Erica verticillata*, or whorled heath. It’s for his pivotal role and determined detective work in saving this lovely indigenous species that Hitchcock will be particularly remembered.

Growing only in Cape Flats Sand Fynbos, *E. verticillata*’s beauty and popularity as a cut flower combined with habitat destruction led to its demise. It was last collected for a herbarium in 1908 and by 1950 was considered extinct in the wild. But, over two decades starting in the mid-1980s, Hitchcock and others managed to track down and obtain cuttings of this lovely erica from eight different locations all over the world, including collections in the Scilly Isles, Britain (including Kew gardens) and California. One “lost” mature plant was rediscovered in Kirstenbosch itself by then head foreman Adonis Adonis in 1990.

Arguably the most interesting discovery was of surviving *E. verticillata* in the Belvedere Palace Garden in Vienna, Austria. These plants were descended from late 18th century cuttings collected in the Cape Colony and sent to Europe by sailing ship somewhere between 1786 and 1799 for Emperor Joseph II of Austria’s botanical collection. Here they miraculously survived the Napoleonic Wars, the Franco-Prussian War and two World Wars that included devastating bombing of the Garden.

These rediscoveries sparked intense interest among conservationists who wanted to re-establish the species in its natural habitat, but only three suitable areas remained: Rondevlei nature reserve, Tokai Park, and the centre of Kenilworth Race Course.

At Rondevlei, Hitchcock collaborated closely with then manager Dalton Gibbs in pioneering restoration work. He had been “ecstatic” when, in 2001, the *E. verticillata* cuttings from the Belvedere Palace Gardens arrived, recalls Gibbs.

“There was a huge amount of red tape that he’d cut through to bring them back home. I remember the day that he gave me some of these precious plants that he’d worked so hard to get hold of – he definitely had a twinkle in his eyes!”

Plants were successfully cultivated at Rondevlei, but the crucial test came in 2013 when a controlled burn was deliberately put through the now fully mature stand as part of the regrowth strategy for this fire-dependent species. This intervention also proved successful, and two years later Gibbs could show Hitchcock 21 new *E. verticillata* seedlings: small, green and full of promise – the first natural generation in the wild for perhaps a century.

“I remember him stooping down in the field to touch these plants as if the holy grail had appeared in the ashes of the fire that had swept through the area. He was one of the few people who appreciated that the value of living things outweighs all the things that clutter our modern lives. We really have lost a great conservator,” Gibbs says.

There was similar success with re-establishing the species at Tokai, starting in 2004, and at Kenilworth, from 2005.



*Anthony Hitchcock and colleague, Ntsindiso Zide, at the Kirstenbosch living collections nursery, March 2013. (Photo: John Yeld)*

Rebelo says the hope is that Hitchcock’s work and legacy will continue to be an inspiration for other lovers of plants and conservation generally. “His passing is a huge loss for the restoration community. He was a huge champion of fynbos conservation and restoration, a wonderful man of great humility,” says Rebelo. And the now well-established stands of beautiful *E. verticillata* at Tokai and elsewhere will form a living memorial to Hitchcock, he believes.

Close Kirstenbosch colleagues Adam Harrower and Cherise Viljoen remember Hitchcock as “an active botanical horticulturist, prolific plant gatherer, compulsive seed collector, accomplished gardener, and unstinting mentor to so many”.

“His legacy lies not only in these wonderful things that many remember him for thankfully, but also in his life’s work as an internationally respected world expert and leader in the field of restoration and conservation of South Africa’s severely threatened fynbos.”

Hitchcock leaves his beloved wife Wendy, an environmental educator with a particular focus on fynbos, and adult children Jessica and Douglas.”

Below are photos taken in February 2018 when Anthony showed us around the Tokai Restoration Area. He named this *Erica verticillata* after Cherise Viljoen.



**SECRETARY’S SNIPPETS**



✿ Left: A new neighbour, renting a house with no garden to speak of, going home with a pram load of plants, cuttings, slips and bits and pieces from our garden. Street WhatsApp groups have their uses. She was one very satisfied novice gardener.

✿ Have our Baobab owners put their babies in a warm, dry place? These were the instructions given last year: “They must be kept absolutely dry through winter. When the tip of the stem sprouts some greenery, that is the time to start watering.” I hope they weren’t left out in the last storm. ☹️

✿ You have seen Melanie’s request for the number of plants you have for the proposed Plant Sale. Please get back to her as soon as possible in order for the Committee to make a decision.

✿ Shelley tells me that the Camellias at Boschenheuvel Arboretum are looking lovely at the moment. This can be found in Winchester Avenue, the road just below Protea Church (opposite the Stone Cottages).

✿ The calls for help I have received from various people over the past few months have elicited a good response from members. Thank you to everyone who takes the trouble to give advice or pass on contact details. The non-CHS public is very impressed with our willingness to share knowledge.

**TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ...**

... and even if you don’t know the names, be creative and give the plants a new name.

This Fun Plant Quiz comes from Marianne Alexander (apologies to any Garden Club members who have already done this) and is for the serious and not-so-serious among us.

The idea is to see how many of the botanical names you know. If your botanical knowledge isn’t what it should be, make up your own ‘botanical’ name. For example, a new name given to the first flower was “Offensus odorus”. Can you be even more imaginative? Send your answers to [info@capehorticulturalsociety.co.za](mailto:info@capehorticulturalsociety.co.za).

BOTANICAL NAME	YOUR NAME
1.	
2.	

3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.

