

# CHS NEWS

## NEXT MEETING

### Monday, 1 May 2023 at 19:30 at The Athenaeum

Bring excess potted plants to sell at our CHS Nursery table.. Please remember to take your plants home if they do not get sold. Cherry, who mans (pardon the pun 😊) the table, is not able to look after leftover plants until the next meeting.

The 2023 Annual General Meeting, preceded by a short SGM, will take place on **1 May** even though it is a public holiday. The relevant documentation has been e-mailed to you.

**Notice is given of the 118<sup>th</sup> AGM of the CHS to be held on  
Monday, 1 May 2023 at 19:30 at The Athenaeum,  
Campground Road, Newlands**

#### Agenda

1. Signing the Register
2. Confirmation of Minutes of the AGM held on 2 May 2022
3. Chairlady's Annual Report
4. Treasurer's Report with Financial Statements
5. Election of President
6. Election of Committee
7. Appointment of Auditor for the ensuing year
8. General

Has it ever occurred to you that the plants you buy in the nurseries nowadays may not have started life in the once tried and trusted way? You may remember, earlier this month, Morné telling us that many of the plants today come out of tissue culture laboratories.

**ANDY HACKLAND** of Frontier Laboratories, who is our next speaker, is the person to tell us more about the work he is doing in his tissue culture lab. He will probably be able to answer all your burning questions.

## NEXT OUTING

**Saturday, 13 May at 10:00 to visit Neville Wyllie's Constantia garden**

Having moved from Johannesburg to Cape Town in 2011, a new house needed to be built and the garden landscaped. The garden is now about 10 years old. Neville has had some of the plants for 60 years!

Limited to 20 members. Please RSVP to Glenda by Wednesday, 10 May, if you want to join the group.

## REPORT BACK

**Membership fees** for 2023 are now due at R200 for single and R330 for family memberships. Payment can be made by debit/credit card at meetings.

If payment has not been received within the Merry Month of May, your name will be removed from the membership list until such time as you renew your membership for the coming year. 😊

APRIL 2023

#### President

Marianne Alexander

#### Chairlady

Jenny Scarr

#### Vice-Chairlady

Isabella Hayden

#### Hon Treasurer

Henry Diesveld

#### Hon Secretary

Glenda Thorpe

#### Committee Members

Susan Armstrong Gerald Robertson

Cherise Viljoen Natalie Michie

#### Honorary Members

Laurie Powis Marianne Alexander

Mary Smith Anne Bean Adam Harrower

Michael Tuffin Bill Elder Ernst van Jaarsveld

*"I'd rather have roses on  
my table than diamonds on  
my neck."*

*Emma Goldman*



**120 YEARS**

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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cape-Horticultural-Society/779615695489381>

Instagram – capehortsoc

### March Plant Table – read this in conjunction with the Plant Table video which gives more explanation

#### Exotics:

*Dipladenia*: growing in a pot against a wall; gets afternoon sun.

*Antigonon leptopus* “Coral Creeper”: trailing over an archway and into adjacent trees.

*Cerastostigma willmottianum* “Chinese Plumbago”: growing in dappled light.

*Abutilon* (yellow): small shrub/tree; very decorative; needs pruning for shape; and feeding.

*Tricyrtis hirta* “Toad Lily” – Japan: bulb; semi-deciduous; needs water; also a white form.

*Salvia uliginosa* “Bog Sage” from Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina: very sticky stems; can be grown in quite dry conditions; grown mostly in sun; 1.2m tall x 1.5m wide; suckering.

*Salvia* “Purple Spires”: has been growing for years.

*Salvia* “Black and Blue”

*Anemone japonica* – Ranunculaceae family: flowers in Autumn in semi-shade; also like to jump out of the beds and grow in the paving or on the steps – wherever they are happy; these perennials grow from wiry feeder roots and hard, short rhizomes.

*Impatiens* “Bubblegum”: growing in semi-shade; only gets afternoon sun.



Left to right: *Dipladenia*; *Antigonon*; *Abutilon*



Left to right: *Tricyrtis*; *Salvia uliginosa*; *Salvia* “Blue Spires”



Far left: *Anemone*

Left: *Impatiens*



### Indigenous:

*Azelia quanzensis* “Pod Mahogany”, a protected tree in South Africa: massive deciduous tree which can grow up to 20m in height; summer rainfall; seen in the northern Kruger National Park; this one, from a seed from Silverhill Seeds, is growing on the kitchen window sill.

*Selago* sp. Possibly *canescens*: quite tall; self-seeded in a hanging basket.

Glomerata: an herbaceous perennial; Fynbos companion plant.

*Plectranthus ecklonii* – Lamiaceae family: comes in blue, pink or white; flowers in Autumn; a very large shrub; 3m tall x 2m wide so be careful where you plant it; does well in shade areas; plant at the back of a bed. Lamiaceae has square stems and very fragrant scent.

*Plectranthus* varieties.



Left: Afzelia



Right: Selago



Left: *Plectranthus ecklonii* selection



Right: *Plectranthus* – mixed varieties

### Members' plants

Wilma shares what is growing at the moment, *Haemanthus coccineus* (indigenous) and *Zephyranthes candida* (from South America); and Rodney has an Easter Cactus which was actually flowering at Easter time:



Left to right: *Haemanthus*; *Zephyranthes*; *Schlumbergera* (Easter Cactus) “Limelight Dancer”

**From the Chairlady**

*Tea Duty:* We would like to get back to pre-COVID days and have a few more members helping with making and pouring the tea at meetings. If you can spend a bit of extra time only a few times a year, please speak to Susan Armstrong either at a meeting or on 072-369-6826 who will have a roster for you to choose a month that suits you.

*Plant sale:* There is a strong possibility that we will hold another sale in September this year. This will be confirmed soon. In the meantime, please continue potting up any extra plants you have. Look after them now so they will be well-established come September.

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## PLANTS CRY OUT WHEN THEY NEED WATERING – BUT HUMANS CAN'T HEAR THEM

*Scientists find recordings of plants show they make occasional ultrasonic popping noises  
likely heard by insects and mammals*

by Sarah Knapton

Published in TELEGRAPH SCIENCE EDITOR on 30 March 2023

(Submitted by Gerald Robertson)

“Plants were generally thought to be an uncomplaining bunch, silently enduring the ravages of neglect, drought or disease with stoical forbearance.

Now scientists have discovered that they cry out when distressed or need watering, even though humans cannot hear their high-pitched emergency calls.

Recordings of tomato, tobacco, wheat, corn and cactus show that they make occasional ultrasonic popping noises - similar to bubble wrap - which ramp up when under stress.

The sounds are comparable in volume to normal human conversation but are too high for human ears to detect. However, it is likely they can be heard by insects, other mammals, and possibly other plants.

‘An idyllic field of flowers can be a rather noisy place, it’s just that we can’t hear the sounds,’ said Professor Lilach Hadany from the School of Plant Sciences and Food Security at the Wise Faculty of Life Sciences at Tel Aviv University.

‘Our findings suggest that the world around us is full of plant sounds, and that these sounds contain information – for example about water scarcity or injury.

‘We assume that in nature the sounds emitted by plants are detected by creatures nearby, such as bats, rodents, various insects, and possibly also other plants - that can hear the high frequencies and derive relevant information.’

**Listen to a recording of grapevine sounds**

<https://cf.eip.telegraph.co.uk/store/bin-media/3d88b00a-13b2-4750-9d02-6de22c6520e0/3d88b00a-13b2-4750-9d02-6de22c6520e0-original.mp3>

The notion that plants emit sounds has been controversial, with some studies suggesting they “scream” when they are cut or uprooted. Vibration detectors have also picked up pulses emanating from plants, but it was unknown if they actually became soundwaves which could be picked up.

To find out, the team placed plants in an acoustic box in a quiet, isolated basement with no background noise.

Ultrasonic microphones recording sounds at frequencies of 20-250 kilohertz were set up at a distance of about four inches from each plant. The maximum frequency detected by a human adult is around 16 kilohertz.

The plants were subjected to different treatments. Some had not been watered for five days, while others had their stems cut. A control group was left untouched.

The recordings showed that the plants emitted sounds at frequencies of 40-80 kilohertz with unstressed plants making a click less than one sound per hour, on average, while the stressed plants – both dehydrated and injured – emitted dozens of sounds every hour.

Water-stressed plants began emitting noises before they were visibly dehydrated, and it was also possible to identify the plant, as well as what type of stress it was suffering from.

For example, a dehydrated tomato plant made a different pattern of clicks to a dehydrated cactus. Happy plants tended to be very quiet.

#### Watch and listen to a recording of tomato sounds

<https://cf.eip.telegraph.co.uk/store/vid-media/27402371/27402371.mp4>

The team hopes that in future it may be possible to monitor plants and determine if they are struggling based on the pattern of noises. For example, sound recordings could be used in agricultural irrigation systems to monitor crop hydration and help distribute water more efficiently, the authors say.

‘The fact that plants are making these sounds opens a whole new avenue of opportunities for communication, eavesdropping, and exploitation of these sounds,’ said co-senior author Yossi Yovel, a neuro-ecologist at Tel Aviv University.

How the plants are making the noises is still unclear, but the researchers suggest the popping may be caused by the formation and bursting of air bubbles in the plant’s vascular system, a process called cavitation.

Other plants could also be listening in and benefiting from the sounds, the researchers believe. Previous research has shown that plants increase the concentration of sugar in their nectar when they “hear” the sounds made by pollinators.

‘It’s possible that other organisms could have evolved to hear and respond to these sounds,’ added Prof Hadany.

‘For example, a moth that intends to lay eggs on a plant or an animal that intends to eat a plant could use the sounds to help guide their decision.’

The research was published in the journal *Cell*.”

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## THE MAGIC OF HERBS

by Margaret Roberts

Published in the South African Garden & Home, June 1989

(Submitted by Jenny Scarr)

### HEALING BULBINELLA

This common, indigenous rockery plant is one of my favourite herbs and has remarkable healing properties besides its other uses

I am often asked what is my favourite herb – and I can never really make up my mind. I seem to have so many. But the common indigenous rockery plant that so many of us grow with such ease, surely comes into my list of favourites. The common name bulbinella is not really botanically correct as there is a great group of plants with similar flowers to this variety which fall under the name bulbinella. “Bulbine” is more correct, but most of us have grown up with the name bulbinella in our minds, so here we’ll stay with that name. There are several varieties of bulbinella, some have thick succulent leaves with bright yellow flowers, some have thinner, deeper green leaves, some have orange flowers, and some growing in the Eastern Cape have butter yellow flowers. According to the Kirstenbosch Herbarium they fall under the heading *Bulbine frutescans*.

The plants make excellent rockery plants. They grow into a cushion of juicy leaves and flower virtually all the year round – long thin stalks topped by a tuft of bright star shaped flowers in shades of yellow – and last beautifully in a vase. Being indigenous they need very little water, manage to survive long periods of drought, and do well in the poorest of soils. Where they do get good soil and water they form huge, vigorous cushions of spikey leaves that tend to become a bit straggly with age. To have my edgings constantly looking good I break off bits, root the trimmed bits by heeling them into the ground, and so extend my plantings. Bulbinella is one of the easiest plants of all to grow. Each piece you break off will grow into a decorative cushion of succulent leaves.

They grow well in tubs and pots, and are important as a living medicine chest at the kitchen door or on the patio. They need full sun, and are one of the rare plants that don't mind being baked in the sun on hot patios and against west facing walls.

#### *Uses in the Garden*

Probably bulbinella is best known as a rockery plant. Because it needs very little water it seems to be one of those survivor plants that need little attention. I have also found it to be a useful plant for covering unsightly banks and slopes as it seems to adapt to all areas. Try it as an edging plant too. If it is kept trimmed you will find the bright green cushions of spikey leaves a continual pleasure. The flowering heads, once they have bloomed, need to be cut off to encourage new blooms. Be sure to have a pot or two growing on the patio and one at the kitchen door for easy picking as a first aid plant.

More uses of this plant to follow next month.

**"GARDENER'S LAMENT"**, written by Sean O'Kelly who is described as the 'mad Irish poet' of Greytown. A reminder of the warfare that gardeners wage against the creepy crawlies that are so grateful for what we serve up to them on a plate.

There are naughty nuns noshing on my naartjies  
And cutworms really cutting up my spuds.  
While my roses in their beds have been chewed to shameful shreds  
By an anarchy of aphids on their buds.

There are caterpillars creeping up my creepers  
While a lot of locusts lunch upon my lawn,  
And a cricket in the thicket thinks he's on a jolly wicket  
As he stuffs his ghastly gut from dusk to dawn.

Hordes of goggas gaily gobble on my guavas  
And centipedes leave footprints in my shrubs.  
Those connoisseurs – the snails – are indifferent to my wails  
And my glads are gobbled up by grotty grubs.

There are coddling moths that munch my juicy apples  
And a borer moth that's fond of quince and pears.  
Every ant and bug and slug believes I'm just a silly mug  
(An opinion which each thrip and sawfly shares).

So I'm waging war on wireworms and on weevils,  
A war on insects that I hope I'll win.  
For if I lose I'll have to spend my future  
Eating all my fruit and veggies from a tin."

Published in the Daily Dispatch, East London on 22 June 1995  
(Submitted by Henry Diesveld).

## FOR YOUR HORTICULTURAL SENSES

- **Tygerberg Orchid Group Show:** Sat, 6 May from 09:00 – 18:00 and Sun, 7 May from 09:00 – 15:00.
- **Chrysanthemum Show in Pniel:** Sat, 6 May from 09:00 – 14:00. Also food and craft stalls. R10 entrance fee.
- **Calitzdorp Succulent Society's Vetplantfees:** Fri/Sat/Sun, 15 – 17 Sept from 09:00 – 17:00 (15:00 on Sun).