CHS NEWS

NEXT MEETING

Monday, 6 November 2023 at 19:30 at The Athenaeum

Members: No entrance fee **Visitors: R30 per person**

RESTORING LIVES AND LANDSCAPES

Lousie Nurrish would like to share with you about the project, Living Roots, which she now manages. This is a social enterprise of UTurn Homeless Ministries.

As the title suggests, Living Roots restores lives by training and equips formerly homeless clients with a range of horticulture skills and restores landscapes by growing, selling and planting locally indigenous plant species.

End-of-Year Party for all members
Please diarise **Mon, 4 December at 18:00** (note the earlier starting time). You are asked to bring a plate of snacks (preferably 'finger' food), so start thinking about what culinary delight you will be able to contribute.

Full details in next month's newsletter.

NEXT OUTING

Fri, 17 November at 10:00 to visit Tokara, Stellenbosch

Wendy Attwell, Tokara's garden manager, will take you on a guided tour of the garden.

You may wish to make a donation to one of Tokara's selected charities. Glenda has details.

The Tokara Deli is open if you would like to have refreshments before driving home.

Limited to 20 members. RSVP to Glenda by Tues, 14 November.

PLANT SALE REPORT BACK

The plants that were not sold have been donated to Flandorps and Helen Keller Society.

A message from Cherise:

"Dear members

Thank-you to all of you who contributed plants to the really successful plant sale last month, either by buying, babysitting, growing, or even propagating plants – some only 2 or 3, and some more than 20 or 30. But each contribution was much appreciated and most certainly added to the success of the sale, now our only CHS public event, and so even more important to us than ever before.

We would like to make a special appeal for our next plant sale, based on the feedback we got by asking what we could improve on.

Here are a few ways we could do even better next time, as requested by our enthusiastic buyers/supporters of our sale:

OCTOBER 2023

"Hose: Crude, but effective and totally safe, type of scythe towed through gardens to flatten flower beds and level vegetable plantings."

Henry Beard and Roy McKie from "Gardening: A Gardener's Dictionary"

120 YEARS

Tel: 021-531-5713
Fax: 086-514-0998
Post: 22 Rustenburg, Pinelands, 7405
info@capehorticulturalsociety.co.za
https://capehorticulturalsociety.co.za
https://www.facebook.com/pages/Cape-Horticultural-Society/779615695489381
Instagram – capehortsoc

1. Could we please propagate even more of the unusual plants, or less readily available plants? If you don't feel up to doing it yourself, bring me plant material and I'll root it for you.
2. Our plants need to have roots! (not just cuttings freshly made).
3. The fuller a plant is in the pots/containers, the better, which means starting to grow a little earlier, even now!, for the next sale.
4. If not in flower, please add a photo/picture along with the expected name label.
5. More plants!

If these supporters are *that* invested in our efforts, let's double them to make an even better event, and even more of a contribution to our selected charities. Well done everyone!"

SHOT HOLE BORER IN OUR ROSEBANK GARDEN

PSHB (the polyphagous shot hole borer) is a tiny borer beetle from Southeast Asia, introduced to many countries (including Israel, California, Australia and since 2017, South Africa), possibly in untreated wood used to make pallets. It's thought to have arrived in SA via the ports in KZN and is confirmed to be present in 8 out of the 9 provinces (as of 2021, Limpopo hadn't reported any).

In 2021 SA was regarded as having the largest outbreak globally of PSHB. (South African Journal of Science – http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0038-23532021000600013).
See also https://www.fabinet.up.ac.za/index.php/research/7.

Early in 2023 the first infected trees in Cape Town were found in Newlands and, within months, my neighbourhood (Rosebank/Mowbray, along the Liesbeek River) was found to be a hotspot. In late August, I noticed borer holes in a ragged stump on our *Acer negundo* (Box Elder) where a branch had broken off. A dead beetle fell out into my hand while I was poking at the stump. I sent photos to the City's invasive species unit, and two of their inspectors came out. They looked for signs of gum exudates on the bark of all the trees favoured by the beetle in that row, and confirmed PSHB in the Box Elder and a Chinese Maple.

The beetle itself drills into the wood and carries with it the fungi (introduced with beetle from Southeast Asia) which are its food source. In reproductive host trees, channels called breeding galleries are created in the vascular system of the tree, and the adults line the galleries with fungi in order for their larvae to feed. This prevents the vascular system from functioning properly, which is what usually kills the tree in time. Non-reproductive host trees can sometimes co-exist with the borer in it.

I contacted two arborists to get their advice. Sean Maasch of Topfell came and did his own tests.

This is how Sean checked for the beetle – he looked at the bark for signs of gum oozing, cut deep rectangles down to the sapwood and exposed entry holes and tea-coloured fungal staining.

Acer negundo (Box Elder) is the favourite host tree for the beetle, and it's infested with PSHB. Also, two Liquidambars, and a Chinese Maple (*Acer buergerianum*).

Notice the black bead of gum oozing out of the hole (right).

The trees don't seem to be heavily infested yet, but they are all reproductive hosts for the beetle and as such are termed 'amplifiers' of the outbreak.

Now that the weather is warming up, the beetle will reproduce at an exponential rate – a single female beetle lays an average of 32 eggs at a time and is capable of reproducing several times a year. Her eggs can produce adult beetles in around 22 days, and they will mostly be females which will also lay eggs, leading to an exponential growth in numbers. Once their population numbers become too high to sustain in that particular host tree, they will disperse to the nearest suitable host.

In time the infected tree will show wilting and dieback, with branches breaking off and sometimes the death of the entire tree. While some species seem to live on despite infestation, maples and Liquidambars are not known to survive. English Oaks are also on the hit list, and it's thought that by 2030 all of them in affected areas will be wiped out.

I suggested to our body corporate trustees that we have them removed before they incubate massive numbers of eggs, larvae and adults of the beetle. They will have to be cut down and removed by arborists with the necessary experience and equipment, as the felled tree must be chipped on site and removed under cover to a drop-off point designated by the City for PSHB-contaminated wood. The cut stump is treated with herbicide to prevent it re-sprouting, and it's then covered with heavy plastic to prevent any beetles remaining in the wood from dispersing.

Unfortunately, my suggestion met with some resistance amongst the trustees and owners, who feel this is too drastic and would prefer to wait until the trees are heavily infested, or to find a treatment to save the trees. In the early days of the outbreak, it was thought that treating infected trees with injected fungicides and insecticides might be effective, but it doesn't work. It isn't possible to inject into all the vascular tissue around a tree stem, and the vascular system can't transport the chemicals if it's blocked by the fungus already.

I only know of two tree felling companies who are properly equipped to take out trees with PSHB – Krige Tree Services and Topfell. The two quotes we got were R11 000 and R18 000 respectively.

We can't stop the spread of PSHB, but we can slow it down by taking out infected reproductive hosts, which are going to die at some point. If we don't, our indigenous forests will also become infected.

Isabella

REPORT BACK

October Plant Table – read this in conjunction with the Plant Table video link, https://youtu.be/bGQHmPmFIQs, which gives more explanation.

Indigenous:
Lachenalia liliiflora – from Paarl to Somerset West.
Pelargonium betulinum alba – makes a small 1m x 1m shrub; easy to strike cuttings.
Pelargonium 'hot pink' with chocolate leaves – growing in a pot on a sunny deck; flowers all through winter; covered in flowers.

Exotic:
Aeonium tabuliforme – endemic to Tenerife; will grow upwards of 45cms in diameter.
Heliotropium arborescens alba – originally from Peru; the most fragrant.
Dendrobium kingianum "Australian Orchid" – grown indoors at a window receiving sun in winter; less sun in summer; quite forgiving if forgotten to be given water.
Japanese Iris – short flowering period; only gets rain water.
Weigela – from Asia; full sun to part shade; leafy green shrub with pink flowers in spring; needs to be cut back a bit after flowering; flowers on new growth.
Azalea – in shade under trees; get filtered sun; like acid soil' given a general fertilizer and acid compost; flower in spring; must not dry out, especially in the hot summer months.
Rocket – grown on a deck in a large pot; lovely in salads; bees love the flowers.






Top row: *Pelargonium betulinum alba; Pelargonium 'hot pink'; Aeonium tabuliforme*
Bottom row: *Dendrobium kingianum; Weigela; Azalea*

CATCHING UP

In June 2015, the CHS joined other member societies of Mediterranean Gardening International. I met Christine Daniels then and have been corresponding with her – and others – ever since. Some may remember Christine giving us a talk, exactly 7 years ago, on 'Creating a Garden in Mediterranean France'.

At the beginning of this month, Christine and her husband, Anthony, visited South Africa for work and to make the most of our wonderful flora (see below).

Andrew and I were fortunate to have the opportunity to spend a wonderful afternoon with them before they flew back home.

Glenda

KAROO DESERT NATIONAL BOTANICAL GARDEN

120 km north-east of Cape Town, in a spectacular setting near the city of Worcester, lies the Karoo Desert National Botanical Garden. It comprises 154 hectares of semi-desert vegetation, 11 of which are cultivated, the rest being natural mountain side with rocky outcrops, covered in bushes and succulents.

Opened in 1921, the garden was the second National Botanical Garden to be established after Kirstenbosch. In 1945, it was moved to the present site, with a number of the plants being relocated, including several quiver trees, *Aloe dichotoma*, still surviving today.

We were very fortunate to be taken there by two knowledgeable locals, Leon Kluge, landscape designer, plantsman and writer, and Tristan Woudberg, artist and botanist. Arriving first in the 'developed' garden, the Day-Glo colours of the mesembryanthemums are startling, especially to a European eye. Mounds of bright pink, red and orange flowers carpet the ground.

Whilst these mesembs had been planted, as we climbed higher up the 'shale trail', named after the Malmesbury shale which characterises the landscape, plants of the *Mesembryanthemaceae* family were growing in their natural habitat, alongside other plants with brightly coloured flowers such as *Gazanias*.

Interesting rock formations along the shale trail

Drosanthemum speciosum

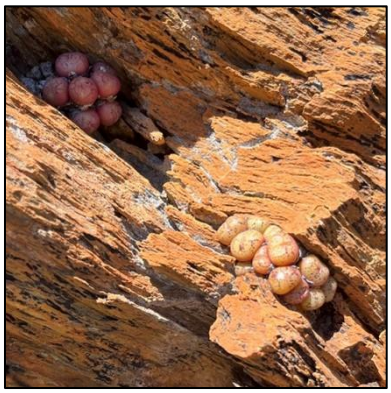
Lampranthus haworthii

Gazania krebsiana

Leon and Tristan explained that the petals of the paler coloured mesembs were shiny in order to attract pollinating insects and that red flowers are attractive to the Mountain Pride butterfly (*Aeropetes tulbaghia).*

The rocky slopes were also home to a huge variety of succulent plants. Some, such as the haworthias, were to be found tucked under shrubs, known as 'nurse' plants as they provided protective shade for the smaller plants beneath. Other succulents, like *Conophytum ficiforme*, locally known as 'baby's toes', were happy in full sun.

Haworthia sp.



Conophytum ficiforme

Cheiridopsis denticulata

Returning to the cultivated garden, Leon and Tristan introduced us to many plants that were new to us, some of which had intriguing local names due to the traditional uses of the plant. 'Bushman's candle' (*Monsonia spinosa*) has developed thorns to protect it from being eaten and its waxy stems can be used as a bush firelighter. The hollowed-out stems of the tree aloe, *Aloidendron dichotomum*, or quiver tree, were used to make quivers to hold arrows. It was clear why *Sansevieria cylindrica,* a member of the *Asparagaceae* family, got its local name of elephant's toothpick.

Monsonia spinosa

Aloidendron dichotomum

Sansevieria cylindrica

This was a great day out in a stunning location, with its interesting mix of botanical garden displaying southern African desert and semi-desert plants, and trails through the natural veld reserve with over 400 naturally occurring plant species. Thank you, Leon and Tristan, for being wonderful guides.

Christine

Photos: A and C Daniels, I Hayden, A and G Thorpe