



**Fruit:** General term for the seed-bearing part of a plant that is eaten by birds or worms, drops off, rots, gets funny spots, isn't what was pictured in the catalogue, tastes like a glove or doesn't appear at all.

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

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## NEXT MEETING

**Monday, 4 March 2024 at 19:30 at The Athenaeum**

**Members: No entrance fee**

**Visitors: R30 per person**

## THE ROSE AND HER MANY SUITORS

Our speaker is Margaret Abbott.

Many, from Cleopatra to Josephine Bonaparte and Princess Grace of Monaco, have fallen under the spell of that most romantic of all flowers which spread from China around the world. Margaret will showcase cultivators and devotees, some famous roses and gardens like Chateau Malmaison outside Paris, Chart Farm in Wynberg, Princess of Monaco Garden, Montreal Botanical Garden and the Municipal Rose Garden of Rome.

## MEMBERSHIP vs PLANT SALE

The CHS Committee had a difficult decision to make. Should we hold a plant sale this year, knowing that propagating plants after the Christmas season yields mixed results, and also that the best time for a sale is in autumn when new plants can develop through the cool season? Or should we make a concerted effort to increase our numbers?

The latter took precedence as the Committee is concerned about membership numbers, which have declined from 250 to 130 in 12 years. If we extend this into the future, our younger members will be closing the Society in a decade. This would be a substantial loss for us as individuals, and also for horticulture and nature in our country.

We feel this must be addressed vigorously and have formed a sub-committee to work at growing CHS membership: Belinda du Rand, Cherise Viljoen and Chris Wren-Sargent. Our aim is to get 20 new members by September 2024.

We are also looking at encouraging greater attendance at meetings by our current members.

We know sticks will not work, so we will be using carrots to encourage current members to bring new members to meetings. The reward at the February meeting was a potted *Salvia muiirii*, and we are sure those slips are happily establishing themselves across the Peninsula already.

**Our March meeting features roses, and each of our members who brings a visitor (not a member) will get TWO rooted roses – one for you, and one for your visitor.**

We will also launch the Great Spring Pool next month: an opportunity to win some very generous prizes, both for new members and those who bring them into the CHS.

Please go through your list of friends and acquaintances, and ask yourself 'could this person possibly benefit from joining the CHS'? If the answer is 'yes', please pop the question, and get Glenda to send them an application form!

*Chris Wren-Sargent*

**President** Marianne Alexander | **Chairlady** Jenny Scarr | **Hon Treasurer** Vacant | **Hon Secretary** Glenda Thorpe

**Committee Members** Susan Armstrong, Gerald Robertson, Cherise Viljoen, Cherry Mann, Chris Wren-Sargent

**Honorary Members** Marianne Alexander, Mary Smith, Adam Harrower, Bill Elder, Ernst van Jaarsveld

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## IN THE MEANTIME, WE WELCOME ...

... John Hardie, Gianpaolo Gilardi, Antoinette Kolenic and David Wallace to the CHS. We hope their association with us will be a long and beneficial one.

## PLANT SALE

This will definitely resume in Autumn 2025.

The CHS Nursery Table at meetings will still accept any plants you may have to sell, but we will temporarily close that down in the middle of this year so all members can concentrate on potting on and nurturing plants for the sale. We will keep you up to speed around arrangements as they arise. Right now, let's grow numbers!

## NEXT OUTING

**Sat, 16 March at 10:00** to visit Mike Picker's garden which is almost wholly indigenous, with a number of ponds. He has a special interest in an unusual group of succulents belonging to the genus *Ceropegia*. Part of the garden tour will include a tour of the *Ceropegia* greenhouse, and a microscopic demonstration of their complex pollination system.

Limited to 10 members. An afternoon session (14:00) will be arranged if there is sufficient interest. RSVP to Glenda by no later than Tues, 12 March.



## SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

It's that time again – renewal of your annual membership.

**Membership fees** for 2024 are now due at R230 for single and R350 for family subscriptions. There are no renewal forms to complete but if any of your contact details changed during the course of the last 12 months, please advise so our records can be updated.

Payment can be made by EFT from home and proof that payment has been made can be e-mailed to [info@capehorticulturalsociety.co.za](mailto:info@capehorticulturalsociety.co.za) or faxed to 086-514-0998. Whether you do the EFT or ask a family member or friend to make the payment on your behalf, please ensure that your initial and surname is used as the Beneficiary's reference (this is very important) and Proof of Payment is sent to either the e-mail address or fax number above.

The other option is to pay by debit/credit card at a meeting.

Cash is also acceptable if you are unable to do either of the above, although bringing cash to a meeting will incur high charges to deposit the cash into the bank. We are still trying to keep costs down as much as possible, but we will accommodate you if you have no other way of making payment.

Please note that there will no longer be a 'snail mail' option for receiving newsletters.

Anyone needing a name badge, please add R75 for a badge with a pin, or R85 for a badge with a magnet.

We strongly urge all members to pay via EFT as it is the easiest and safest way.

## REPORT BACK

### February Plant Table



Once again there was a wide selection of specimens on the plant table. In future we will include a write-up every month on one or two of the lesser known \*specimens brought in.

#### Indigenous:

*Justicia adhatadoides* – previously *Duvernoia*

*Portulacaria afra* “Spekboom” – has flowered for the last 3 years – after about 30 years of doing nothing (right)

*Scadoxus pole-evansii* (far right)

\* *Ocimum labiatum* – growing quite tall; medium water

*Eucomis* (top, left)



#### Exotic:

*Murraya exotica*

Pomegranate and Hanepoot grapes – very old; Eureka lemon – requires deep watering weekly in summer; and ‘green’? grapes (top, right)

Dwarf *Alstroemeria* – has been in same pot for years; rather neglected but keeps coming back (top, centre)

\* *Salvia leucantha*, S Black and Bloom, Love and Wishes and Mealy Cup Blue – very easy to care for; a magnet for butterflies and bees; does not need much water; cut back after flowering and being a perennial, it lasts for years.

*Salvia gregii* (right)

*Amaryllis* (far right)





\* *Sage officinalis* "Common Sage" – used for cooking; very hardy and requires little water; bees and butterflies love the flowers; can get very woody so cut back after flowering

\* *Gloxinia*

Our horticultural whizzes, Anne Gleeson (*Salvia* and *Gloxinia*), Susan Armstrong (*Ocimum*) and Isabella Hayden are already in the swing of things and have produced the following information for you:

### ***Salvia Black and Bloom***

A showy shrub with a flower colour rarely seen in the garden. A cobalt blue with contrasting near-black calyces and stems. Attracts butterflies and bees. Grows to about 1.2m. Good for landscaping and mass planting. It is waterwise and has a long flowering period. Needs pruning after flowering and a heavier prune during the dormant period in winter.

### ***Salvia leucantha***

This salvia has a pale green leaf with a silvery-white underside and mauve through to purple and cream flowers on long sprays. It flowers prolifically in spring, intermittently in summer and then its best show is in Autumn. It is suited to mass planting and makes an impressive show. The greyish foliage complements other shrubs and greenery around it. It attracts butterflies and bees.

### ***Salvia officinalis***

*Salvia Officinalis* or common sage is a perennial, evergreen shrub with woody stems, greyish leaves and blue to purple flowers. The leaves can be used in cooking and they are full of antioxidants and therefore have health benefits. After flowering, trim it back to prevent it from becoming too woody.



### ***Salvia Mealecup Blue***

Mealecup sage (*Salvia farinacea*) - This perennial grows into a mound. It has grey-green foliage and spikes of violet-blue flowers all through spring and summer. The flowers look a bit like lavender in their bud form. This salvia is a very rewarding plant for the garden as it attracts bees and butterflies. As the leaves are more tender, it requires more water than the other salvia. Keep trimming the spent flowers throughout the growing season and give it a good hard prune during the winter months.

Left to right: *Salvia Black and Bloom*, *Salvia leucantha*, *Salvia officinalis*, *Salvia Mealecup Blue*

### ***Sinningia speciosa* "Gloxinia"**

I have this gorgeous pink Gloxinia (following page, left) and I can tell you a bit about the care from my experience so far. Just as Cherise said at the meeting, it must not be overwatered. Mine was flowering when I bought it and I am very happy that a couple of months later, I have another flower. At one point I had obviously overwatered a bit and I had one or two leaves that died off (rotted). Since then I have been very careful and literally wait for it to be very dry. It sits on an outside table with light but no sun. I bring it in at night and in windy or rainy weather. Now that I know how precious it is, I decided to keep it on a windowsill in the kitchen so I can keep an eye on it daily. I have only fed it once or twice with a half strength Nitrosol, from the bottom rather than over the top. I was also not good with African Violets and since using this method of standing the plants in water for a shortish period, I am having better results. The Gloxinia does not like getting its stem or leaves soggy at all.

A further Google search told me this: "*Sinningia speciosa*, commonly called Gloxinia, is native to Brazil and in the same family (Gesneriaceae) as African Violets. It grows from a tuberous, rounded rhizome. It is a perennial flowering plant that has a dormant period in winter. They flower through spring and summer. Gloxinia are available as hybrids and come in a wide range of colours – white, pinks, reds and purples. Some blooms fade from a lighter

to a darker shade of one colour. The leaves are velvety ovate to oblong in shape. They are delicate and tear easily. At the end of the blooming season, slowly reduce the watering until the leaves have died.



A good guide for their care is to treat them like an African violet (*Saintpaulia*) and *Streptocarpus*. They like a location near a sunny window but out of reach of the sun's rays. The watering is the most important and tricky. They must dry out quite a bit before receiving water. Too much water around the stem can cause them to rot. They do not like water on their leaves at all. Even a few drops left on the leaf can cause that leaf to turn brown. Feed with a liquid fertilizer during the growing season. They grow from seed, tubers, leaf or stem cuttings."

Follow this link for further information on Gloxinia <https://www.senior-gardening.com/features/gloxinias.html>

### ***Ocimum labiatum* (Indigenous)**

From Summer rainfall areas of N. South Africa.

An herbaceous, branched shrub up to 1½ metres, it produces purple/pink 2-lipped flowers, typical of the *Salvia* family, and borne in profusion during the Summer. The leaves are highly aromatic.

It can be planted as a single bush or as a mass planting or screening in a large garden.

Waterwise, it can grow from full sun to semi-shade. Though drought-hardy it thrives when grown in rich, composted soil and kept well-watered.

Every couple of years it can be cut back by a third when flowering is over. Mulch well and apply balanced fertilizer. Although it can be grown from cuttings, seedlings are very fast growing. Sow seeds in Spring in fine potting mix and cover lightly. Keep trays in shade until germinated (2 – 4 weeks) then pot up.

An attractive addition to the garden.



## **ATHENAEUM GARDEN**

Cherise Viljoen is the overseer of the garden at the Athenaeum. A number of plants have not done well in the weather we have experienced. These need to be replaced. We know there are members who are addicted to potting up each and every cutting that comes their way. Cherise is asking if you have any of these:

*Eurypos, Statice, Pelargonium, Eriocephalus, Tulbaghia, Cotyledon, Senecio, Salvia*

Because of the lack of water at the Athenaeum, please provide well-established plants that will survive the harsh conditions. Planting can take place in a month or two's time, so contact her at [cherise@cherishplants.com](mailto:cherise@cherishplants.com) to let her know what you have.

## SALVIA MUIRII

This is the plant gift received by attendees at the February meeting.

[Salvia muirii](https://plantzfrica.org/salvia-muirii) | PlantZAfrica ([sanbi.org](https://plantzfrica.org)) tells us that *Salvia muirii* is a small, twiggy, evergreen shrub that grows only about 30 cm high. It has a woody stem and an underground rootstock that gives it the ability to resprout easily after fires. The leaves are leathery, oval in shape and light green to almost grey in colour. When crushed, they are slightly sticky and release a light scent that is reminiscent of Vicks.

*Salvia muirii* is a delight to have in the garden, particularly during summer when it is covered with flowers. This little woody shrub is also long-lived, drought resistant and almost pest free. It is easy to grow with the most important requirements being full sun and well-drained soil. To encourage compact bushy growth it should be pruned lightly throughout the year and fed regularly with an organic fertilizer.

Visit the PlantZAfrica website to find out more.

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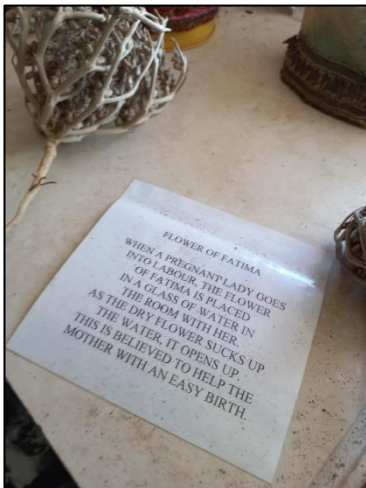
## AS A MATTER OF INTEREST ...

### Flower of Fatima

You are never too old to learn something new, especially in the plant world. I recently paid a visit to Amlay House in Simon's Town, a museum crammed full of amazing memorabilia, which serve as a reminder of the rich Muslim culture in Simon's Town. On the windowsill of one of the rooms I noticed what looked like the curled, dry roots of a plant.

Intrigued, I had a closer look – the label read 'FLOWER OF FATIMA' – and I wasn't looking at roots but at the curled-up branches and stem of a dried plant!

It is also known as 'The Flower of Maryam' (*Anastatica hierochuntica*) and is a small shrub harvested across the dry, sandy areas of North Africa, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Pakistan which has been used to ease childbirth for centuries. When a pregnant lady goes into labour the dried plant is placed in a bowl of water; as the plant softens and absorbs the water, it unfurls like a resurrection plant.



Images Reposted from District Six Museum

It's not known whether it is a powerful visualization tool for mothers or its medicinal properties which encourage and to ease the birth; it can also be burned as an incense during labour or made into a powder mixed with olive oil and honey.

It is also known as a resurrection plant as it is hygroscopic and in dry regions where it grows, comes to life when it rains.

Marianne Alexander

### AMLAY HOUSE HERITAGE MUSEUM, SIMON'S TOWN

<https://amlay.co.za/amlay-house>

The museum was created as a reminder of the rich Muslim culture that existed in Simon's Town from the time of the Dutch East India Company winter anchorage

until the forced removals of more than 7000 people under the Group Areas Act.

[The Flower of Maryam — Baraka Birth](https://barakabirth.com/)

[Barakabirth.com/ 2013/11/08/the-flower-of-maryam](https://barakabirth.com/2013/11/08/the-flower-of-maryam)