CHS NEWS – LOCKDOWN EDITION 9 November 2020

THE YEAR THAT IS BEST FORGOTTEN!!!

This past year has been most frustrating for everyone and we value the support which members have given to the Society. The Committee's main concern has been the safety of you, the members, as the last thing we wanted was to open you to the possibility of infection.

We hope that we will be able to return to the Athenaeum in February but that will be dependent on the level of infection in the New Year. We are all anxious to get back to 'normal' meetings with real plants and people. The January newsletter will confirm if this can happen and under what limitations. Currently we could only have about 40 people present at the Athenaeum.

The recent garden visits, although only attracting limited numbers of members, have been the only times we have been able to enjoy plants and fellowship together.

The last meeting of the year 2020 will not be our usual Christmas function but we would like you all to feel festive – so out with your Christmas hats or tinsel and have your glasses charged for a toast at the conclusion of the talk and notices. Before that point we also hope those who join us will have a plant to share with the rest of the participants. Please let Glenda know, by 5 December, if you wish to show and talk about a plant on the night (you will have to decide on one).

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you all a virus-free holiday period and look forward to a more normal year in 2021.

With best wishes, Errol

FINAL VIRTUAL MEETING OF 2020

Monday, 7 December 2020 at 20:00 – seated in front of your computer.

At the 2016 Summer Meeting of Mediterranean Plants and Gardens, Timothy Walker asked the question:

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT PLANTS IN MEDITERRANEAN-TYPE CLIMATES?

Join us to find out what he had to say.

Timothy Walker is a British botanist. He was the *Horti Praefectus* (Director) of the University of Oxford Botanic Garden and Harcourt Arboretum.

From 1977–1980, Walker studied for a BA degree in Botany at University College, Oxford. From 1980–82, he was a trainee gardener at the Oxford Botanic Garden. He studied for a National Certificate in Horticulture at Askham Bryan College in North Yorkshire during 1982–83. Then during 1983–84 he was a trainee gardener at the Savill Garden in Windsor Great Park. He was a diploma student at Kew Gardens during 1984–85. From 1986–88 he was General Foreman at the Oxford Botanic Garden; then from 1988–2014 he was *Horti Praefectus* of the Garden. He also holds a lectureship in Plant Conservation at Somerville College, Oxford and is a lecturer in Biological Sciences at the Department of Plant Sciences, University of Oxford. He has won four gold medals at the Chelsea Flower Show in London.

In June 2011, Walker presented *Botany – A Blooming History*, a series of three television programmes broadcast on BBC Four, covering the history of botany.

Attending a Zoom meeting:

The link to this Zoom presentation will be sent to you prior to the presentation. Click on the link in the body of the e-mail message to gain access to the meeting on the night. Please link in between 19:55 and 20:00 in order to be admitted (this is for security reasons). On entering the meeting, please "mute" yourself and "stop video" – both functions are on the bottom left of your Zoom screen when sliding your mouse/cursor over the area.

If you haven't given this zooming business a try yet, why not do it for our final meeting of the year?

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

FINAL OUTING OF 2020

Thurs, 19 Nov at 10:00: Take a walk around the Grootboschkloof Fynbos Circle with Dr Caitlin von Witt.

This is a 1 000m² flower mandala planted with locally indigenous flora – an educational and recreational space for all. Bring a flask of tea and stay on to enjoy the tranquility and fresh air. There are socially distanced logs to sit on.

RSVP to Glenda by no later than 18 November. Limited to 15 suitably sanitised and masked members.

REPORT-BACK

Garden Visits

Clockwise from top left: Belinda's unusual *Argeranthemum* and colour-coordinated bath planting; verge planting; Belinda explaining the changes she has made; on the footpath along Wildevöelvlei; another colourful verge

The Athenaeum Garden

A quick visit to our meeting place in September revealed a flourishing garden.

Jane Robertson took on the revitalising of the Athenaeum garden in 2016 and started with the borders, which were cleared and planted up. By 2018 the beds had taken shape and the plants were beginning to show signs of healthy growth.

The grassed area was not in good shape, but a weeding session by members helped to make it look a bit better. Unfortunately, the bare patches did not recover, and Jane replaced the area to the left of the entrance with a variety of indigenous plants, a continuation of the border beds.

Before – taken in October 2018

Front bed, from the path

After – taken in September 2020

Front bed, from the opposite side

'Lawn' outside the Drawing Room

The same patch

Right-hand side front bed

The same bed with the new garden in the foreground

The Scarrs visited the **Noordhoek Open Gardens** and found these lovely artistic embellishments:






Mystery Plant

In February we visited the McLeod garden and every single person was stumped by the plant below (there were only leaves to be seen).

Since then the Scarrs have been on the hunt for this plant's name. With the help of Elsa Pooley, it has been identified.



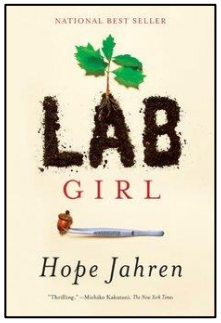
It is *Helichrysum cooperi* from KwaZulu Natal (see PlantZAfrica website).

Left to right:

- The unidentifiable leaves in February.
- The flowers in October, on the February growth.
- The new growth this October.

SEEDS

Extract from Lab Girl by Hope Jahren [Fleet Publishers] – submitted by Gill Knight



Chapter 3

A seed knows how to wait. Most seeds wait for at least a year before starting to grow; a cherry seed can wait for a hundred years with no problem. What exactly each seed is waiting for is known only to that seed. Some unique trigger-combination of temperature-moisture-light and many other things is required to convince a seed to jump off the deep end and take its chance – to take its one and only chance to grow.

A seed is alive while it waits. Every acorn on the ground is just as alive as the three-hundred-year-old oak tree that towers over it. Neither the seed nor the old oak is growing; they are both just waiting. Their waiting differs, however, in that the seed is waiting to flourish while the tree is only waiting to die. When you go into a forest you probably tend to look up at the plants that have grown so much taller than you ever could. You probably don't look down, where just beneath your single footprint sit hundreds of seeds, each one alive and waiting. They hope against hope for an opportunity that will probably never come. More than half of these seeds will die before they feel the trigger that they are waiting for, and during awful years every single one of them will die. All this death hardly matters, because the single birch tree towering over you produces at least a quarter of a million new seeds every single year. When you are in the forest, for every tree that you see, there are at least a hundred more trees waiting in the soil, alive and fervently wishing to be.

A coconut is a seed that's as big as your head. It can float from the coast of Africa across the entire Atlantic Ocean and then take root and grow on a Caribbean island. In contrast, orchid seeds are tiny: one million of them put together add up to the weight of a single paper clip. Big or small, most of every seed is actually just food to sustain a waiting embryo. The embryo is a collection of only a few hundred cells, but it is a working blueprint for a real plant with root and shoot already formed.

When the embryo within a seed starts to grow, it basically just stretches out of its doubled-over waiting posture, elongating into official ownership of the form that it assumed years ago. The hard coat that surrounds a peach pit, a sesame or mustard seed, or a walnut's shell mostly exists to prevent this expansion. In the laboratory, we simply scratch the hard coat and add a little water and it's enough to make almost any seed grow. I must have cracked thousands of seeds over the years, and yet the next day's green never fails to amaze me. Something so hard can be so easy if you just have a little help. In the right place, under the right conditions, you can finally stretch out into what you're supposed to be.

After scientists broke open the coat of a lotus seed (Nelumbo nucifera) and coddled the embryo into growth, they kept the empty husk. When they radiocarbon-dated this discarded outer shell, they discovered that their seedling had been waiting for them within a peat bog in China for no less than two thousand years. This tiny seed had stubbornly kept up the hope of its own future while entire human civilizations rose and fell. And then one day this little plant's yearning finally burst forth within a laboratory. I wonder where it is right now.

Each beginning is the end of a waiting. We are each given exactly one chance to be. Each of us is both impossible and inevitable. Every replete tree was first a seed that waited.

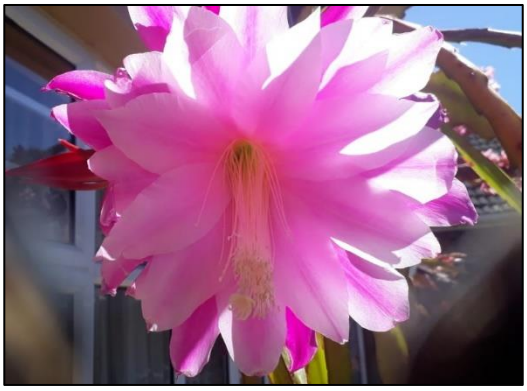
http://sciencenetlinks.com/lessons/lab-girl/

MEMBERS' NOVEMBER PLANTS

Extract from https://www.gardensonline.com.au/GardenShed/PlantFinder/Show_3158.aspx

Epiphyllum hybrids feature leafless, flattened, green stems (cladophylls) which allow it to grow by providing the photosynthethis normally performed by foliage. Comments: Although referred to as Epiphyllum hybrids they are, in fact, generally hybrids of Nopalxochia, Heliocereus, Disocactus, Pseudorhipsalis and Selenicereus. The Greek word Epiphyllum means 'upon a leaf'.

Below: A few of Rodney's beautiful varieties.


The flower growing out of the leaf can be clearly seen in the photo on the left, grown by Andrew and Glenda.

Far right: Rodney's pots of ***Rhipsalidopsis*** varieties



Extract from https://laidbackgardener.blog/tag/rhipsalidopsis-gaertneri/

This plant has given taxonomists a great deal of trouble. As a result, its name has changed many times, among others from *Epiphyllum gaertneri* to *Schlumbergera gaertneri* and more recently to *Rhipsalidopsis gaertneri*. But it appears it should now be called *Hatiora gaertneri*. Let's hope this latest name hangs around for a few decades!

In the wilds of Brazil, this cactus blooms in the austral spring, that is, in October or November, certainly not at Easter. It only took on the common name of Easter cactus once people started growing it in the northern hemisphere. With day lengths being reversed north of the equator, the Easter cactus switched to blooming from March or April until May, more or less at Easter time, usually for a good month.

Extract from https://candidegardening.com/ZA/plants/36601dfa-f6f8-4e71-bd18-02a000c32d74

Sinningia is a genus of around 75 species in the Gesneriaceae family of flowering plants. Members are tuberous herbaceous perennials or shrubs from Central and South America. They are often cultivated as houseplants for their large colourful bell or tubular-shaped flowers that in the wild are pollinated by hummingbirds, bees, bats and moths. They need a period of winter dormancy and protection from frost.

Extract from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poppy

A **Poppy** is a flowering plant in the subfamily Papaveroideae of the family Papaveraceae. Poppies are herbaceous plants, often grown for their colourful flowers. One species of poppy, Papaver somniferum, is the source of the narcotic drug opium which contains powerful medicinal alkaloids such as morphine and has been used since ancient times as an analgesic and narcotic medicinal and recreational drug. It also produces edible seeds. Following the trench warfare in the poppy fields of Flanders, Belgium during World War I, poppies have become a symbol of remembrance of soldiers who have died during wartime.

Sabina and Mikes bed of poppies, very appropriately flowering in November.

DATES TO DIARISE

- **Monday, 1 February 2021**: We hope this will be a return to the Atheneaum for our first meeting of the new year.

Photos: Greenfly Aviation, C von Witt, M Alexander, A and G Thorpe, S Armstrong, J Scarr, R Hahn, S and M Wortley and Google