

CHS NEWS

NEXT PRESENTATION

Monday, 1 March 2020 at 20:00 – a double bill

A BIT OF FROTH ON THE BIRD'S MILK

John van der Linde will explain the origin of the name, and give us some background, of the genus, *Ornithogalum*, which consists of over 200 species of bulbous plants found mainly in Mediterranean regions, such as Southern and Eastern Europe, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, the Caucasus, Northern Iran and South Africa.

This will be followed by a presentation on the

GIFBERG AND GOEGAP

a trip taken by Jenny and Errol Scarr in 2018.

NB: This talk will be followed by our Virtual Plant "Table" – now known as our Monthly Plant Show and Tell. Please send in photographs of plants flowering in your garden now, with its name and a short description. You may elaborate on the night, when called to do so. Photos should be at least 500 KBs or more and must reach Glenda by no later than the morning of Saturday, 27 February.

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 to check on your settings for sound etc. 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.

OUTINGS FOR 2021

Your Committee is in the process of organising visits and you will be advised in due course. Suggestions for garden visits would be welcome.

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

The Honorary Treasurer produced a preliminary Financial Statement for the 2020/21 financial year which ends on 28 February 2021. This indicated that a loss in the order of R10 000 should be expected. The loss included an amount of about R6 000 resulting from the cancellation of the MGI Conference which was to have been hosted by CHS in August 2020.

The disruptions to our activities caused by the Covid-19 pandemic were the main cause of this loss. These disruptions have resulted in members getting less value for their subscriptions last year and this is likely to continue for some time yet. Despite this, the Committee hopes that you felt adequately informed and entertained with the online presentations, the monthly newsletter and the many gardening video clips supplied by members and will consider renewing your membership of the CHS for a further year.

FEBRUARY 2021

LOCKDOWN EDITION 21-02

President

Michael Tuffin

Chairman

Errol Scarr

Hon Treasurer

Henry Diesveld

Secretary

Glenda Thorpe

Committee Members

Melanie Stewart Jenny Scarr
Susan Armstrong Isabella Hayden

Honorary Members

Laurie Powis Marianne Alexander
Mary Smith Anne Bean Adam Harrower
Michael Tuffin Bill Elder

*One does not simply
stop getting plants
because there is no more
room in the garden!*



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The Committee has, therefore, decided that, in order to retain our membership, and as a compensation for the reduced benefits received, member's subscriptions for 2021/22 should be subsidised from the CHS's accumulated funds. A subsidy of between 25 and 30% was decided on which will result in the 2021/22 subscriptions reducing from R210 to R150 and from R140 to R100 for Family and Single members respectively. These values, will, in terms of our constitution, have to be ratified by members. The monetary value of the subsidy should not exceed about R5 500, which is less than 5% of the market value of our accumulated funds.

In the meantime, your renewal form is attached and if you have no violent objection to this year's decrease, we hope that you will complete the form (take note of the changes to it), make a payment via EFT and return the documentation by e-mail. Please contact Glenda if you have any problems regarding this.

MEMBERS' FEBRUARY PLANTS

We visited the Imhoff's Gift garden of Belinda towards the end of last year. Four months later, this is what is blooming in her garden.



This is what she has to say about her plants above, from left to right:

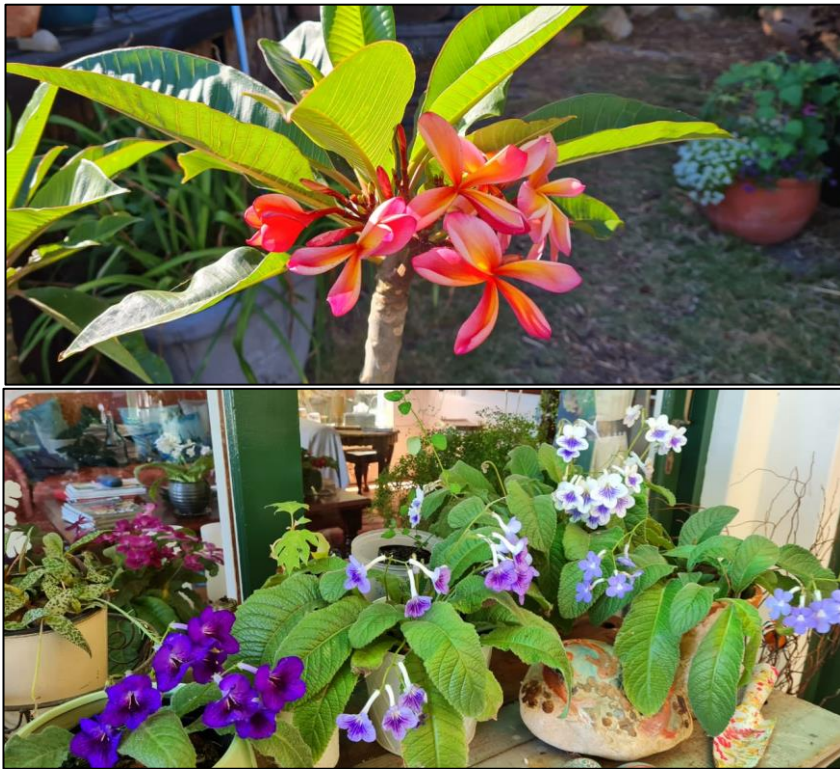
- 🌱 Black leaved *Lagerstroemia* "Pride of India" from The Pink Geranium. They have the license for these in SA.
- 🌱 Aloe "bushwhacker". I love the way the sunlight is illuminating the leaves.
- 🌱 *Euphorbia tithymaloides* or *Pedilanthus tithymaloides* "Devils Backbone". This is the story of this plant, with advice from Bronwyn at Starke Ayres, where I bought it a couple of years back. It comes from dry tropical forests in Florida, so probably a bit of shade isn't bad, but might prefer the temperature changes outdoors. Try planting it into a sandy mix. It comes from Malanseuns in Pretoria and sometimes the soil medium doesn't work in Cape Town. Classified as a succulent shrub – Euphorbia family – it needs well drained soil, indirect sun/partial shade, It hasn't done well, but now regenerating and seems to be thriving with very little water, and lots of sun/heat. I put it at a sunny window, then moved it outside, and it is looking so much better on my bedroom balcony in full sun.
- 🌱 This *Maurandya* (formerly *Asarina*) or *Lophospermum erubescens* (not sure if this is the same family) just came up in the side of a pot. Doing very well climbing all over the frame and has lovely pink flowers.
- 🌱 I pruned the back portion of this *Callistemon* "Bottle Brush" and now has many more flowers than the front section, which wasn't. Bees love it!

And here are a few more of her flowering beauties as well as her trio of indoor 'pets':



Above, left to right: *Yucca*; *Hemerocallis* – cream, burgundy and yellow; *Bidens*; *Mandevilla*.

Below: *Frangipani*; *Streptocarpus* collection; Chameleons having a run of the desk and indoor plants.



AN AUTUMN CHELSEA

Why the Chelsea Flower Show shake-up is good news – an article by Isabel Hardman, published recently in The Spectator, and submitted by John van der Linde

Is it really such a bad thing that the Chelsea Flower Show has been postponed to the autumn because of Covid?

Yes, we'll be missing out on the blousy, frothiness of early summer gardens that we see every year - not so many umbellifers, alliums or delphiniums - and yes, the Floral Pavilion will be strange without the heady scent of roses from the David Austin and Peter Beales stands. But the show will benefit enormously from a shake-up that forces designers to stop using the plants listed above until it seems there is nothing else you could possibly grow in your garden.

Every year, a presenter or commentator gushes about how 'on trend' foxgloves are now, as though it's a strange coincidence that they flower around the same time as the show, rather than being bankers for a designer hoping everything will come together.

All gardeners know that a May plot is so wonderfully clean and busy and easy. The warming weather and the influence of shows like Chelsea mean many of us put in huge plant orders at this time of year to bulk up our gardens even more. But by mid-summer, gaps have started to appear in even well-planned borders, and plants that were throbbing with life early in the year are starting to look tired. Fennel, which is over-used by Chelsea designers, goes from having wonderful plump clouds of new foliage to being a rangy flowering plant. Not unattractive, but it completely changes the way a border will look.

An autumn show will encourage a little more honesty about what follows the energy of May gardens. Come autumn, there's the harvest from the veg plot – but the main garden is often looking a bit forgotten. British gardens often collapse into boredom once September's best weather is out of the way, which is a tremendous shame and a waste, given how many plants are at their very best in the colder months. It's not just the late summer/early autumn flowers like dahlias, Japanese anemones and hydrangeas that deserve more attention, but the foliage, barks, and textures of the plants at this time of year.

Forget the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness: autumn is all about foliage fireworks. Acers, Liquidambars and Cotinus make you feel glad that the seasons are turning. Berries like the unnaturally purple Callicarpa, or alien blue Lonicera 'Blue Pearl' have nothing mellow about them at all. The range of colours in the barks of birch and acer species stops winter from ever feeling bleak. There is even an autumn-flowering snowdrop, Galanthus reginae-olgae subsp. reginae-olgae.

Besides, we've already had a preview of how wonderful an autumn Chelsea Flower Show will be. In normal years, the RHS puts on an autumn show in its Horticultural Halls in London. You don't get celebrities or models wearing floral garb wafting around: this is a quiet, gentle show for people who really, really love plants. But the stands at these shows are spectacular and inspiring. They encourage gardeners to think about how their garden might lift their spirits at just the very time when they need it.

So, it's easy for designers to think of yet another cottage garden, or to bring a few later-flowering plants on with the help of a hairdryer, as sometimes happens at Chelsea. More of a challenge is to create a garden for all seasons, or at least for the seasons when many of us start to feel a little more miserable.

The CHS held Autumn Shows as far back as 1971 (the earliest records available) and included a few classes for members to exhibit the berries and foliage of their plants but especially the roses which bloom at that time. Over the years, the CHS combined forces with the Western Cape Rose Society and our members had the opportunity to exhibit what, besides/apart from roses, was growing in their autumn gardens. Sadly, this joint Rose and Flower Show came to an end in 2003. From 2005 to 2009 the CHS continued to hold a show in autumn and it had quite a different 'look' from the Spring Show – lots of foliage and berries, and, of course, the wonderful autumn-flowering perennials, bulbs, and shrubs. The CHS never aspired to be a Chelsea-type show – and it turns out our show was more in line with the RHS's autumn show – so we are glad to hear that the pandemic has brought about some good changes. Our Show Committee of the time would definitely agree that autumn was every bit as successful as spring for holding a flower show to showcase the range of wonderful garden plants available to gardeners throughout most of the year.

KNOW THEM, GROW THEM, ENJOY THEM

by Wilma Tindall

Every now and then I become particularly interested in one plant family. Sometimes it's a passing fancy; sometimes it becomes a continuing interest and sometimes a short-term obsession! One year it was *Pelargoniums* – but they proved to be trickier than expected; another year it was *Plectranthus*. I still enjoy both of these but don't buy any new ones now.

The one that has continued to interest, beside the indigenous bulbs, is my succulent collection. I am fascinated by the infinite variety of leaf and plant shape and colour and the amazing flowers – some quite insignificant where the beauty is all in the plant, while others have the most amazing flowers that are often quite unrelated to the plant size. The *Lithops* (stone plants), for example, have flowers that completely cover the surface of the plant. Some look like *Aloes* but are not; others don't look like *Aloes* but are; and some are so well camouflaged that they are difficult to spot in the veld.

The definition of a succulent plant is one that is full of juice or sap – ones that have fleshy stems or leaves that store water. Ours have adapted to little available water by having deep root systems, waxy or hairy leaf surfaces, small leaves, thick skin. Our succulent genera (families) cover a large range from the tree aloes (like the Kokerboom) to the small *Lithops*.



Succulents are native to most parts of the world. They come in an endless and fascinating variety of shape and leaf form and genus. Succulents (from the Latin word "succulentus," for juice or sap) are defined by their moisture-storing capacity and come from many botanical families. Medicinal Aloe Vera (not indigenous to SA) is another example of a succulent with which many of us are familiar.

In terms of shape, I must include *Glottiphyllum depressum* (left) – a ground hugging (or trailing/cascading) succulent that flowers off and on for most of the year. "Glotti" from the word for tongue. Doesn't it just look like a lovely bright green one?

South Africa is one of the hot spots for succulents but has only one indigenous cactus – *Rhipsalis baccifera*, commonly called the mistletoe cactus – that you may not even recognise as a cactus. Cacti are exotic plants. I get particularly irritated when nurseries label our succulent plants as “cacti”. I really want to know what I’m buying. All other plants in a nursery are correctly labelled. Why not the succulents?

You may ask “so what’s the difference between a succulent and a cactus?” Cacti have small, round, cushion-like structures called areoles from which spines, branches, hair, leaves and even flowers grow. Many succulents may look like cacti in every other respect but **if they don’t have these circular areoles, they are not in the cactus (*Cactaceae*) family** (right). All cacti are succulents, but not all succulents are cacti!

The incredible variety of whimsical and fantastic succulent shapes (and cacti) makes choosing one – or even five – exquisite torture. Although I enjoy my *Anacampseros*, *Haworthia* and *Gasteria*, my most favourite family is the Stapeliad tribe with magical family names like *Orbea*, *Huernia*, *Duvalia*. While I prefer indigenous succulents, I also like the very large and showy *Echeveria* family from Mexico and NW South Africa and the *Aeoniums* from the Canary Islands, Morocco, and East Africa. I also have quite a few large Aloes and some smaller ones and particularly enjoy the grass aloes (smaller in height and flower size).

Another great thing about succulents is that they grow very easily from leaves or stem cuttings pressed into sharp sand before being potted up later.

(Below, 1st and 2nd left) *Orbea variegata*: light and dark varieties;
(2nd from right and right) *Aloe ciliaris* - called ‘ciliaris’ because of the “eyelashes” where the leaf joins the stem. A very showy climber for a fence in winter.



(Far left)
Delosperma echinatum, commonly known as the “Pickle Plant”, is a quirky ground cover.

(Left)
Echinopsis chamacereus “Peanut Cactus”

(Below, left and centre) *Cotyledon orbiculata*: This cotyledon comes with a variety of leaf shapes – pale grey, rounded ones, grey-green long thin fingers, even ones like antlers and all with beautiful bell-shaped flowers.

(Right) *Faucaria tigrina*. 'Faux' means "jaws", 'tigrina' means "of the tiger". *Faucaria* come in several leaf shapes. An interesting one, called *F. tuberculosa*, has bumps on the tips. All have yellow flowers that open after about 15.00 in the afternoon.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

You may or may not know that the CHS rents the garage of a private house in Plumstead where all the CHS equipment viz. vases, posters, gazebos, trophies etc, etc, has been stored for many years.

In order for the Committee to make an informed decision on whether to re-house part of the equipment, dispose of everything, or simply leave it where it is, an inventory needs to be taken. If you are interested in helping with this, please advise Glenda by 15 March. A date to do this will then be set.

TAKE NOTE

- Leon Kluge, our new man at Chelsea, will be featuring in a new eight-part series called "Leon Kluge Plant Safaris" and this will air on Monday, 1 March at 18:00 on DStv channel 180/Openview channel 115.
- Quercus suber* "Cork Oak", tree number 18 on Arderne Gardens' map of Champion Trees, has fallen. Branches were trimmed, the root-ball covered in tons of compost-enriched soil and the whole tree kept damp with 24-hour irrigation. Shortly shade-cloth will be installed over the horizontal canopy to protect it further from the heat. The FOTAG Committee are hoping for a good recovery.

Sound familiar??

