

The South African Bulb Group

Newsletter No. 16 -- Summer, 2010



From the Editor

Welcome to the Summer edition of our Newsletter and a particularly warm welcome to new Members since the last edition.

The Committee

As you will probably all know by now, since the last edition that have been a number of changes to your Committee, mostly spurred on by Mick's decision to resign from the many tasks he had undertaken from the start. Also we have gained some extra support. In case you missed the news, the new Committee is as follows:

Chairman	Bill Squires
Membership Secretary & snail mail distribution	Audrey Cain
Group Secretary and IBSA on-line distribution	Alina Hughes
Treasurer	Rodney Sims
Editor & speakers panel	David Victor
Bulb & seed exchange	Bill Squires
Supported by	Alice van den Bon
Web Master	Richard White

Bill asked me to advise Members that requests from the bulb/seed exchange will be filled on his return from holidays towards the end of September.

Speakers

One discussion that we have had in recent months concerns speakers for meetings. There is a limited pool of potential speakers on African bulb subjects, so we have agreed to include speakers on bulbs from other areas of the world, though aiming to limit them to every other meeting. Of course, when opportunities arise to hold special meetings with visitors from South Africa, such as the recent event with Cameron McMasters, we will continue to grab them with both hands.

All that having been said, we are always looking for speakers, so if you know of someone who would be appropriate, please let someone on the Committee know.

Member's interests

Many Members are interested in a particular genus and we think that it may be helpful to be able to put them into contact with others who may share their interest. So, we have in mind to publish through this newsletter the names and contacts of such Members if they so agree. This would, of course, be a totally voluntary issue, but we think that quite a few of you might be interested.

If you are, please contact me with a list of your bulb interests and I will consolidate the information for publication at a later date.

IBSA Symposium 2011

This seems to be a good time to remind Members of the upcoming IBSA Symposium to be held from 28th August to 2nd September 2011 at the new Slanghoek Conference Centre at Goudini Spa near Worcester. This consists of two days of conference and three days of field visits to see Western Cape bulbs, in habitat, during their flowering season. As IBSA pointed out in their newsletter:

“The spectacular views across the beautiful Worcester valley between the Hottentots Holland and Waboomberg mountain ranges and proximity to many preserved areas of spring-flowering bulbs will ensure a very interesting stay. The Karoo Botanical Garden in Worcester, and the Fernkloof Nature Reserve and Harold Porter Botanical Garden of Hermanus and Betty’s Bay respectively along the East Coast are also within easy reach, and further to the renosterveld areas of the fascinating Overberg region, rich in geophytes. Whale-watching in Walker Bay in Hermanus is the best in the world!”

As one who attended both of the previous symposia at Goudini I can vouch for the above.

I have a pdf based brochure giving more details if you are interested in attending and would be happy to forward it to you, if requested. I should warn you that it is some 6MB in size, so might take a while to download. Please let me know.

If you are looking for travelling companions for this event, please let me know and I will publish further information in the next newsletter.

Meetings

Cameron McMaster

In late June we had the pleasure of being given a brace of lectures by Cameron McMasters at Exbury Gardens. Cameron as ever provided a wonderful insight into

the winter rainfall bulbs of the Western Cape in the morning, turning to a review of the genus *Nerine* in the afternoon. As always, Cameron talks were based on his own extensive experience and were supported by magnificent photography. Everyone present was deeply impressed and thoroughly enjoyed the day.

As well as our thanks to Cameron, I would also like to offer our thanks to Nick de Rothschild for the use of the superb facilities at Exbury.

Autumn Meeting, 2010

Our next meeting will be held on Sunday, 17th October at Winchester. Doors will open at 10.00 as usual, with our speaker taking the stage at 11.00. The meeting will close at 16.00.

Our speaker will be Kit Strange, the keeper of many of Kew's bulbs, most particularly from our point of view, those from South Africa. She will be giving us an insight into those that she grows at Kew and the techniques she uses there. Kit will be happy to answer any questions that you may have following the talk. If you would like to know more about Kit, there is a Horticulture Week article available on the internet if you enter "RBG Kew Kit Strange" into Google. As normal, Bill will introduce the meeting and our speaker.

As in all meetings, there will be a display table for any plants that you care to bring along to show Members. We hope to organise one of our informal discussions periods during the afternoon, so that Members can show their plants and answer any questions other might have. If any of you have slides or jpeg's of plants that you would like to show, please bring them along.

There will also be a sales table where you can offer material for sale on a 80:20 Member to Group basis. Please include double labels on pots, showing the price so that we can settle up easily at the end of the day.

There will be a lunch break from 12.30 until 14.00. For those of you that have not come before, it's worth adding that many Members bring their own food so that they can have the opportunity to chat to others. Alternatively, the Sainsbury's supermarket is based on the same site.

As usual, the charge for the meeting will be £3.00 each, payable at the door.

Directions to the meeting hall

As before, the meeting will be held at the Badger Farm Community Centre, near Winchester and, for those of you using satnav's or Google Earth, the post code is SO22 4QB.

By road, leave the M3 at junction 11 and proceed towards Winchester. At the first roundabout follow the sign to Winchester. At the second roundabout take the second exit up the hill towards Badger Farm. At the third roundabout

take the third exit to the superstore (not the second exit marked Badger Farm). Follow the road right round the edge of the car park until you see the doctor's surgery. Next to it is the Community Centre.

Meetings in 2011

Our first meeting in 2011 will be held on Sunday, 27th March, when our speaker will be one of our Members, Kurt Vickery, talking about his visits to Central Asia and his particular interest, species tulips. Kurt has twice visited Kazakhstan, as well as visiting Iran and Armenia, particularly in search of the species tulips, most of which originate in those areas. He maintains a very extensive collection of geophytes of all types at his home in Somerset and offers a wide and varied seed and bulb list.

The Autumn meeting will be held on 9th October but, as yet, I have not arranged a speaker for that day. Incidentally, if any of you has suggestions for particular speakers, please let me know; I am always looking for new candidates that will interest Members.

Bulb News

“Grow Bulbs”

The good news is that I've recently been in touch with Graham Duncan who tells me that the new edition of *“Grow Bulbs”* is well advanced, although there's “a bureaucratic delay” in its printing. As soon as I hear from him when it will be available I'll pass on the information, as I'm sure you will all be keen to get your hands on a copy as soon as you can.

Harry Hay

The bad news is that we have lost two of our leading plantsmen in the last couple of months: Harry Hay and Jim Archibald.

Over a period of some thirty years, Harry developed a very large and interesting garden along the side of the M25; it must have been one of the noisiest gardens anywhere, but contained one of the most extensive collections of wild collected plants anywhere outside the major botanical gardens. One of the main sections of this magnificent collection, was a collection of bulbs from the four corners of the world. His many plant collector friends well understood his outstanding abilities to germinate and raise almost unknown taxa, which he then re-distributed through an outstanding Index Seminum which he circulated world-wide for over 30 years. I'm very pleased to say that a group of us managed to have the International Bulb Society award their Herbert Gold Medal for 2011 to Harry shortly before he died in June.

Jim Archibald

Very recently Jim Archibald died, a man famed for his wonderful seed lists which regularly thumped down onto the front-door mat. And what wonderful things they contained, many of them “bulb” of every type and interest. Many of the seeds he had collected during long trips to many corners of the world up until recent times. He also maintained connections with other collectors, through whom he obtained further material to delight his customers. In earlier times, Jim had been a more conventional nursery-man, running The Plantsman nursery with one of our Members, Mike Salmon, another widely travelled collector. Jim was also an outstanding public speaker about plants and collecting: his collection of slides, many taken in the wild, was absolutely outstanding. I understand that Jim, total professional to the last, completed his final list within days of his death.

These are two very great losses to our plant community, but I am sure that we will all remember them for all that they did for us.

Trip to the Eastern Cape

One of our Members, Andrew Lanoe, is currently organising a 2 week long Botanical Tour for the last two weeks of February 2011, their late summer/ early autumn. The tour will start and finish at Port Elizabeth and will travel deep into the country, as far as the Drakensbergs.

The party size is limited to six, other than Cameron and Andrew. Whilst only average fitness and mobility are required, travellers can expect to leave South Africa fitter than when they arrived.

The tour will be led by Cameron McMaster, who many of you will know from his talks to this group and the Nerine Group over the past couple of years.

With the current uncertainties regarding exchange rates, Andrew cannot yet give exact costs for the tour, but you should budget for an on the ground cost of around £110 per day, which should cover everything apart from the airfares. If you are interested, please call Andrew on 01481 264483 or email him at zee@cwgst.net for further details.

As someone who has enjoyed such a trip with Cameron in the past, let me whole-heartedly recommend this trip to you. The plants are wonderful and the countryside is magnificent.

Bulb Chat reference to Massonia

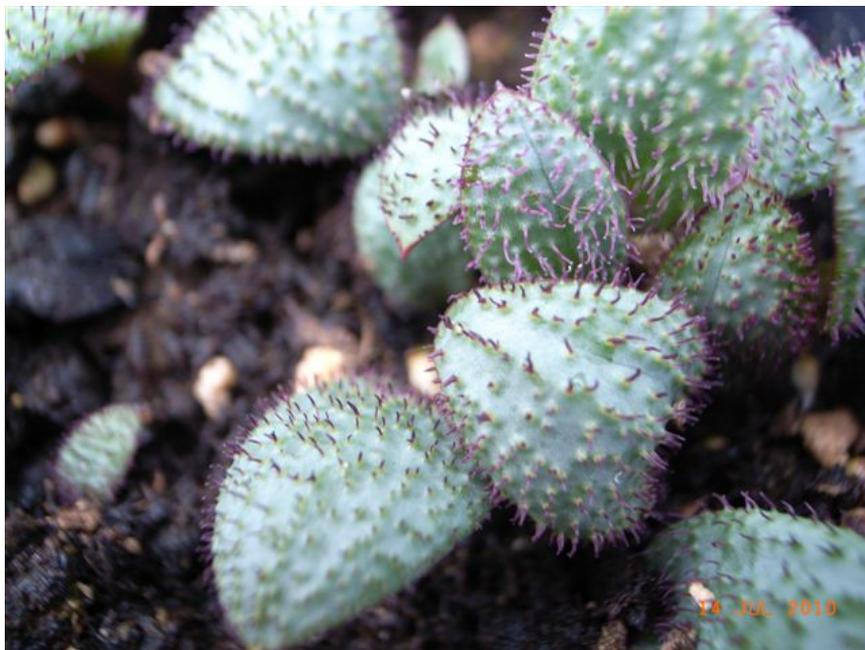
In the last newsletter, Mick included a photograph of a thought to be new species of *Massonia* and the following comments were received from Paul Cumbleton, who is a keen grower of that genus:

The photo you included with the recent newsletter of a new species of *Massonia* looks very much like the summer-growing *Massonia* that is found in the Black

Mountains of Lesotho. Gordon Summerfield tells me that it has also been found at Naudes Nek, just east of Rhodes in the Eastern Cape (which is really the foothills of Lesotho). Some mentions of this plant on the web call it *M. echinata* but this is clearly wrong. It seems to key out to *M. jasminiflora*, which Gordon agrees with, though I suppose it could be a new species.

I have a few bulbs of this plant and am trying to produce more from seed. It is interesting in being summer growing (it is just emerging from the gravel as I write, in the middle of May), but it is not one of the most decorative - it has small leaves and small flowers. Under glass, the leaves tend to stick upright and rather hide the small flowers. Ones kept in sun outdoors open better and the leaves lie flat under these conditions.

Andrew Lanoe has also sent in two pictures of seedlings in their second year, from seed which was collected at Naude's Nek in February 2009.





In case it's not clear, the coin in the second picture is a 20p piece.

Some experiences with *Scadoxus multiflorus* by Andrew Eames

For several years I have bought bulbs of *Scadoxus multiflorus*, but frustratingly I couldn't get them to grow. They would just sit there and eventually go rotten. This year I decided I had really got to try to 'crack it' so bought a total of ten bulbs from three different sources. I tried some at a steady 25°C, as in previous years; some with a month cold spell in the fridge; and some I 'smoked'. Nothing happened.

In early June I got fed up and put two of the 25°C ones in a bag of moist vermiculite in the back of the airing cupboard- I guessed it would be 25°C or more, but- immediate signs of growth. Checking the temperature it was 30°C and often more. So I put them all in a heated propagator in the greenhouse. Checking the temperature over the next few days I thought I had cooked them- it went up to 40°C several times! The outcome is that all are growing and three have flowered. The flowering does not seem to relate to the previous treatments either. I believe they are supposed to respond to varying temperatures, and to be fair they were all cooler to start with and the temperature in the propagator varied between about 25°C and 40°C.



Another oddity; last year I ‘chipped’ a *Scadoxus multiflorus* bulb because it wouldn’t grow, and it worked well- several nice baby bulbs resulted. Again this year they didn’t grow even in the hot weather, so I investigated; nice little shoots were there just below the surface (as they had been for months). I uncovered one shoot tip and within 24 hours it was an inch tall. So I uncovered the rest, and they all seem to be doing the same thing. Looks like they need to see the light!

It’s worth adding that, since giving them the “heat treatment”, they have been successfully grown on at normal greenhouse temperatures.