

# The South African Bulb Group

Newsletter No. 18 -- January, 2011



**From the Editor**

**David Victor**

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2011 and a special welcome to all new Members to the Group.

I don't know about you, but I have found this a particularly difficult winter. The prolonged bitterly cold spell before Christmas not only made normal life difficult, it also caused major problems in looking after the winter growing bulbs. What's more, I hate to think how big my heating bills will be for the greenhouse. The weather this week was little better, with last night's temperature down to  $-7^{\circ}\text{C}$ . However, we are just entering February, the days are getting longer and it's only a matter of weeks until Spring. So, here's looking forward to brighter times!

In case you missed the Christmas note that I circulated, there are two issues I would like to bring to your attention. Firstly, Graham Duncan's new version of "Grow Bulbs" is now available. This is a truly valuable book for all growers of South African bulbs, based on Graham's long experience of keeping the bulb collection at Kirstenbosch Botanic Garden. Copies can be obtained via the Botanical Society Bookshop's web site which is at: <http://www.sanbi.org/> or from Silverhill Seeds.

Secondly, IBSA are holding their third International Symposium on South African bulbs from 28<sup>th</sup> August to 2<sup>nd</sup> September at Goudini Spa, near Worcester. Some of the leading experts on South African bulbs are taking part, including John Manning, Dee Snijman, Alan Horstmann and Rod Saunders and there will be some excellent field trips. The all-in, "Early Bird" package costs \$750 if you sign-up before 30<sup>th</sup> April and payment can be made via Silverhill seeds. As I mentioned before, if you are looking for travel companions please let me know and I will try to put you in touch with suitable contacts.

It is also worth reminding any IBSA Members that the annual membership fee is now due for payment.

Finally, a reminder that I am always looking for content for the newsletter. So, if you have anything that might be of interest to other Members, please let me have it. You can contact me on [davidxvictor@btinternet.com](mailto:davidxvictor@btinternet.com) or at my home address:

Chapel Leigh Farm House, Chapel Leigh, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 3RB

### **Rod and Rachel Saunders**

In recognition of their long and very valuable support to IBSA, Rod and Rachel have recently been awarded Life Membership of the organisation. I am sure that you would all wish to join us in congratulating them on their award.

### **Next meeting**

Our next meeting will be held on Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> March, at our normal venue in Winchester. Doors will open at 10.00, with our speaker taking the stage at 11.00. The meeting will close at 16.00.

Our main speaker will be Kurt Vickery who most of you will know as a Member of this group and, increasingly, as a supplier of bulb seed. Kurt will be 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. He maintains a very extensive collection of geophytes, particularly tulips, at his home in Somerset and offers a wide and varied seed and bulb list, based around his own and Mike Salmon's plants.

I am also hoping that we will have a contribution from one of our other Members, Andrew Lanoë, who is soon embarking on a second visit to the Eastern Cape, with Cameron McMaster. Bearing in mind that Andrew lives in Guernsey, he may find it impossible to be with us, but he hopes to be able to send slides and notes if he can't make it.

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**

Meetings are 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.

## **Autumn meeting 2011**

The date of the Autumn meeting has been changed to avoid a clash with the Frit Group meeting. It will now take place on Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> October at Winchester, starting at 10.00.

As you all know, IBSA are holding their third International Symposium in late August this year and a number of our Members will be attending. With that in mind we thought that it would be very appropriate to base the Autumn meeting around that event and the accompanying field trips. Our aim will be to give feed-back on the most important presentations that are given, as well as sharing our photographs.

## **Vitax Q4**

At our last meeting, Kit Strange from Kew gave us an extremely interesting talk on the way she manages the bulb collection at Kew. During her talk she mentioned more than once her use of the powdered form of Vitax Q4 as her main fertiliser.

Audrey Cain was so taken by Kit's enthusiasm for this product that she immediately went out to buy some. However, she found the same problem that I did when I pursued a similar thread: the powdered form is not easy to come by nowadays, most of it is in pellet form. In any event, she persevered but in the end could only buy a 25kg bag of the product.

I imagine that many of us would like to try using Vitax Q4 after hearing Kit's enthusiasm, but few of us would want to buy 25kg of the stuff. However, happy days are here, as Audrey has agreed to package up some 1kg bags which she will put on sale at the next meeting at just over three pounds a bag. If you are interested, please let her know at [audrey@cain.net](mailto:audrey@cain.net) before-hand so that she knows how much to pack.

## **Seed and bulb list for 2011**

Whilst we may still be in the depths of winter, we need to start planning for the next seed and bulb list. This is particularly true as Bill, who organises the event, will be attending the IBSA International Symposium. So, please note the following:

**Seeds/bulbs or a list of promises must be with Bill by 17<sup>th</sup> August**

This will allow him to produce the consolidated list and arrange for its distribution before he leaves for South Africa on 25<sup>th</sup> August. The list will be emailed to Members who have provided an email address to us. Those who have not done so but would like a list should send Bill a request for the list in an A5 sized stamped and self-addressed envelope in early September.

Bill's address is:

8 Benmoor Road, Creekmoor, Poole, Dorset, BH17 7DS

**Bulb Chat**

IBSA's "Bulb Chat" newsletter is regularly emailed to Members by Alina Hughes. Due to the cost and administration involved, we do not circulate it to those Members who do not receive their Group Newsletter by email. However, those Members can obtain copies by sending an stamped A5 self-addressed envelope to Audrey Cain at the following address:

101 Archery Grove, Southampton, SO19 9ET

**Equipment**

In our last Newsletter I made a plea for anyone who has a 35mm slide projector and is willing to bring it to future meetings to please let Audrey Cain know at [audrey@cain.net](mailto:audrey@cain.net). I'm pleased to say that one Member, Jon Evans, has offered to help, but he cannot make every meeting. So, if there is anyone else out there, please let Audrey know.

In the meantime, Audrey is also investigating the possibility of us obtaining a second-hand machine. So, if anyone has a machine that they are thinking of disposing with, please let Audrey know.

Its worth adding that we have considered the possibility of us purchasing a digital projector, but have quickly dismissed it due to the costs involved.

***Phaedranassa, Stenomesson and Clinanthus***

I know that a number of Members grow one or more species from these South American genera. However, many of the plants in cultivation appear to be wrongly named, due either to confusion as to identity or simply by the use of an invalid name. Reference books and papers covering the genera are few and far between.

As a result, I am preparing a paper that I hope might straighten out some of these problems. As a precursor to it, I am investigating what is currently in cultivation in Europe. So, could any Members who grow one or more of the species involved, please let me know which species they grow and the source of the material.

Any information you provide me with will, of course, be treated with confidence. My contact details are set out in the opening paragraphs of this newsletter.

*Ammocharis coranica*

**Bill Squire**



*Ammocharis coranica*

In April of this year my *A. coranica* put on new growth as usual and as it had flowered last year and normally only flowers every other year I didn't expect it to bloom and sure enough after about six weeks the leaves started to turn yellow so I stopped all watering.

Quite by accident in early June it was watered in error and to my surprise made new leaves so I took it along to our meeting at Exbury Gardens and Cameron McMasters made the comment that it is an unpredictable plant, he was right because a week later it flowered, sadly the flowers only lasted 5 days but I managed to take a photo. So I would advise anyone with this bulb to water again after 6-8 weeks you just might have a wonderful surprise.

*Albuca shawii*

**Bill Squire**

For some time now I have been under the impression that there are two clones of *A. shawii* in the UK. I say this for several reasons, one is that I have seen this plant twice as tall as my own stock and also because of comments made by friends say my plants are much smaller than theirs. After one such comment I begged a bulb of the “tall” clone, both lots were then potted up in the same compost mix and placed next to each other on the staging and sure enough this year as my photo shows my stock is 10inches tall while the other is 22inches tall, so do we have two clones here in the UK or is one a hybrid? Perhaps one of our South African members would like to make a comment whether there are two known clones in habitat or not.



*Albuca shawii* – two clones??

### **Downton Abbey**

Many of you will have watched the recent TV series of this name, much of which was filmed at Highclere Castle, near Newbury. What you may not realise is that Highclere is the family home of the Earls of Caernarvon. William Herbert, one of the major botanical authors of the early to mid nineteenth century and the author of many epithets applied to Amaryllids and Irids (abbreviated as “Herb.”), was the third son of the first Earl and was brought up at Highclere.

However, whilst Herbert would have known the estate well he would not have been so familiar with the building shown in the series as that was only built during the mid years of his life (in the 1840's): the building of his childhood was swept away to allow for the new building. Incidentally, the similarities between this building and the Houses of Parliament owe much to the fact that they shared the same architect, Sir Charles Barry.

## **Group Accounts**

### ***Income***

Account set-up loan	£50.00
Membership fees	116.35
Catering	50.33
Bulb sales	45.28
Book commission	0.00
Plant sales	257.60
Donations	0.00
Admission charges	335.00
Interest	0.09

***Total income*** **£854.65**

### ***Expenditure***

Account loan repaid	£50.00
Hall rental	136.68
Speakers	252.00
Catering costs	38.00
Postage	71.80
Stationery	30.97
Printing	72.10
Seed purchase	0.00
*Affiliation/insurance	183.00

***Total expenditure*** **£834.55**

***Excess income over expenditure*** **£20.10**

\* RHS Affiliation and insurance run from September to September next year. We took these out halfway through the year, hence the double payment.

The accounts have been prepared by our Treasurer, Rodney Sims. Should anyone wish a copy of the full accounts, please email him at [rodney.sims@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:rodney.sims@tiscali.co.uk) or send a self-addressed SAE to him at:

21 Nathaniel Walk, Tring, Herts., HP23 5DQ

I'm sure that all of you will join with me in thanking Rodney for managing our accounts so well.

**Your Committee**

Chairman

Membership Secretary & snail mail distribution

Group Secretary and IBSA on-line distribution

Treasurer

Bulb & seed exchange

Supported by

Web Master

Editor & speakers panel

Bill Squires

Audrey Cain

Alina Hughes

Rodney Sims

Bill Squires

Alice van den Bon

Richard White

David Victor