

The Southern African Bulb Group

Newsletter No. 4

Autumn 2005



The Southern African Bulb Group was initiated by a group of enthusiasts on April 4th 2004. The objective of the group is to further the understanding of the cultivation of Southern African bulbs, where 'bulbs' is used in the broad sense to encompass bulb-, corm- and tuber- possessing Southern African plants, including 'dicots' such as Oxalis. In the first instance the group will be run on an informal basis, with an initial subscription of £5 invited from participants.

Committee: Robin Attrill (Membership secretary and Newsletter editor), Margaret Corina (Treasurer), Stefan Rau and Terry Smale

Editorial

This issue of the newsletter contains a report of the meeting of the group held at Rupert Bowlby's Nursery on April 9th 2005, an article on *Crinum moorei* by David Corina, information on recent literature of interest to growers of Southern African bulbs, and an updated list of suppliers of seed and bulbs/corms of Southern African geophytes. In addition a balance sheet covering the first year of operation of the group is attached. With respect to the supplier list, please let me know if you are aware of other sources which should be included. As I have previously stated the group welcomes articles, and suggestions, for inclusion in future newsletters. Contributions (hand/typewritten and electronic are acceptable!) are urgently required and should be sent to the newsletter editor at 17 Waterhouse Moor, Harlow, Essex, CM18 6BA (Email Robin@rpattrill.freeserve.co.uk) Publication of the next issue is scheduled for December 2005.

Report on visit to Rupert Bowlby - Saturday 9th April 2005

by **David Corina**

About 20 members attended the event, and the Group would like to thank Rupert for his hospitality at the event and for opening his collection to the public gaze. A few plants had been brought along for identification, and members also had brought a few plants for sale. After a 'picnic' lunch accompanied by much earnest discussion on such topics as how to define a species, we moved on to the lecture.

We thank Terry Smale for standing in at short notice. Terry's talk was entitled 'South African Amaryllids' and covered the major sections and species of the family (although Terry did not claim to be comprehensive, he did not have slides of all the genera).

Terry started with a general survey of the three tribes where the division is based mainly on the fruit and seeds - *Cyrtantheae* (seed flat and hard), *Haemantheae* (fleshy berry) and *Amaryllideae* (fruit dry). The plants come from areas with varied rainfall – summer or winter rainfall, a bit all year, and thus some species go into rest while others stay evergreen. Seeds –*Cyrtanthus* seed can be stored, but the seed of most other species does not keep and should be sown as soon as obtained. In most cases germination is rapid; the plants should be kept growing 'out of season' before being allowed to go dormant at the appropriate time of year. Bulbs are difficult to obtain 'European grown' i.e. in growth in the correct season, while those obtained from S. Africa will be in the 'wrong' phase and need care in settling them into the northern hemisphere.

Terry then guided us through his slides of a comprehensive selection of most of the genera of S.A. Amaryllids. Several were considered in some detail (e.g. the genera *Cyrtanthus*, *Haemanthus* and *Brunsvigia*) and flowers and/or plants, mostly photographed in habitat, illustrated each species. Brief discussions on cultivation requirements followed most species illustrated. I do not intend to go into detail so I have appended this report with a list of the species covered and I have asked Terry to add information on whether the plants are winter (W) summer (S) growers and evergreen (E) at the end of each entry. Bear in mind that there is no unanimous agreement on the identity (naming) of the plants discussed!

After the lecture there was further discussion about producing one's own seed – Terry commented that there is not a good set with *Haemanthus*. It is not always necessary to cross-pollinate. Recommended to try the 'wet paper towel' method of germination; germination is usually quick, and does not usually need light. There was a call to produce more seed of our own, to get more species into distribution in the U.K.

Appendix - Plants depicted in S.A. Amaryllid talk

No locality, cult, or ex plus locality indicates a photo taken in cultivation; others were photographed at localities indicated, mostly in April. All recognized southern African genera are mentioned below.

Tribe: Cyrthantheae (scape hollow, seeds flat with hard testa)

Cyrtanthus elatus 'Delicatus' (E, mainly S)

Cyrtanthus o'brienii (E, mainly S)

Cyrtanthus suaveolens (S)

Cyrtanthus spiralis (S)

Cyrtanthus falcatus (S)

Cyrtanthus obliquus (E, mainly S)

Cyrtanthus herrei (Harras) (E, mainly W)

Tribe: Haemantheae (scape solid, fruit a fleshy berry)

[Also includes *Cryptostephanus* (clivia growth form but flowers have corona) and *Apodolirion* (similar to *Gethyllis*) in southern Africa]

Clivia miniata (E, mainly S)

Scadoxus puniceus v. *magnificus* (S)

Scadoxus puniceus (E, mainly S)

Haemanthus paucifolius (E, mainly S)

Haemanthus humilis ssp. *hirsutus* (June – Dec in UK)

Haemanthus carneus (almost E, dormant Aug in UK)

Haemanthus coccineus (Scarborough) (W)

Haemanthus sanguineus? (East foot of Pakhuis Pass) (W)

Haemanthus sanguineus (Scarborough) in fruit (W)

Haemanthus unifolius (West of Bulletrap) (W)

Haemanthus graniticus (W)

Haemanthus crispus (Nardousberg) (W)

Haemanthus dasyphyllus (W)

Haemanthus pubescens ssp. *leipoldtii* (Klawer) (W)

Haemanthus pubescens ssp. *arenicola* (ex Spitskop, Rosh Pinah) (W)

Haemanthus namaquensis leaves (Kosies) (W)

Haemanthus canaliculatus (Betty's Bay) (W)

Haemanthus barkerae (W)

Haemanthus amarylloides (West of Bulletrap) (W)

Gethyllis namaquensis? Dormant bulbs (Harras farm) (W)

Gethyllis spec. (Groot Graafwater) (W)

Gethyllis verticillata (ex Vanrhynspas) flower (W)

Gethyllis villosa flower (W)

Gethyllis villosa fruit (South of Calvinia) (W)

Gethyllis verticillata (ex Vanrhynspas) cataphyll (W)

Tribe: Amaryllideae (scape solid, bulb tunics with extensible fibres, fruit dry)

Fruits indehiscent (i.e. not splitting):-

Boophone disticha (cult.Kirstenbosch conservatory) (S or W depending on wild origin)

Cybistetes longifolia (Strand) (W)

Cybistetes longifolia leaves (Tinie Versfeld Reserve) (W)

Ammocharis coranica (S)

Crinum x powellii (*bulbispermum x moorei*) (S)

Crinum variabile (Nieuwoudtville waterfall) (W, but mainly autumn and spring)

Fruits dehiscent (i.e. soon splitting to reveal seeds):-

[Also includes *Amaryllis* in southern Africa]

Brunsvigia orientalis (South-west of Het Kruis) (W)

Brunsvigia orientalis (Scarborough) (W)

Brunsvigia bosmaniae (Klawer) (W)

Brunsvigia herrei (Harras) (W)

Brunsvigia herrei (W)

Brunsvigia pulchra (Kosies) (W)

Brunsvigia striata “minor” (Vanrhynspas) (W)

Brunsvigia gregaria (cult. Kirstenbosch conservatory) (W)

Brunsvigia namaquana (ex Pofadderkop) (W)

Brunsvigia marginata (Du Toits Kloof) (W)

Crossyne flava (Nieuwoudtville) (W)

Nerine sarniensis (Kirstenbosch, semi-wild) (W)

Nerine humilis (W)

Nerine bowdenii ‘Zeal’s Giant’ (S)

Nerine masonorum (almost E, S)

Nerine filamentosa true (not Broadleigh hybrid) (S)

Nerine rehmannii (S)

Hessea breviflora (Koeriesberg) (W)

Hessea breviflora (ex 7km west of Steinkopf) (W)

Hessea speciosa (North of Varsputs farm) (W)

Strumaria (*Carpolyza*) *spiralis* (ex near Calitzdorp) (W)

Strumaria truncata (W)

Strumaria truncata? upright flowers (South of Kosies junction) (W)

Strumaria hardyana (ex Spitskop, Rosh Pinah) (W)

Strumaria discifera (ex Klawer) (W)

Strumaria karooica (ex Komsberg Pass) (W)

Strumaria watermeyeri (ex Vanrhynspas) (W)

Strumaria watermeyeri ssp. *botterkloofensis* (Botterkloof) (W)

Strumaria merxmulleriana (West of Bulletrap) (W)

Recent literature of interest to growers of South African bulbs and corms

by **Robin Attrill**

A recent issue (vol 6 No.1) of *Bulbs*, the Bulletin of the International Bulb Society (see <http://www.bulbsociety.org/>) contains several items of interest:-

A Synopsis of the Biosystematic Study of the Seven Minor Genera of the Hyacinthaceae by Alison Summerfield (pages 24 -36). This gives a background to the recent revision, is well illustrated, includes useful keys to *Daubenyia*, *Polyxena* and *Massonia*, covers the distribution and ecology of the species, and contains a detailed synonymy. Altogether, a very useful paper.

Creating the Right Environment and Conditions for Cultivation by Gordon Summerfield (pages 37 -38). Describes Gordons views and experiences of winter growing southern African bulbs and corms in South Africa.

Seed Collecting in Africa by Rachel Saunders (pages 18 -23). An entertaining, and well illustrated, article from one of the principal suppliers of South African geophyte seed.

...and for those who prefer their bulbs and corms hybridized.....

The Elusive Fragrant Summer Flowering Gladiolus by Joan Wright (pages 14-17). A historical description of work aimed at obtaining improved fragrance in summer-growing Gladiolus hybrids by incorporation of *G. callianthus v murielae* (syn *Acidanthera bicolor v. murielae*) in the parentage.

If any member comes across useful literature relevant to the subject matter of this group, please let me know so that I can include it in the newsletter.

The Saga of the *Crinum moorei* Seed

by David Corina

Here is a little tale. The ‘old hands’ amongst you will probably say “Oh, yes, didn’t you know?”

Last spring we bought a plant of *Crinum moorei*, which was kept, in our cold greenhouse, well away from other *Crinums*. The plant set three ‘fruits’ which developed into hard, crab apple like objects. All of the information we could garner on this species, and many years’ observations on *Crinum x powellii* grown outside, suggested that the seed capsule should be typical *Amaryllidaceae* with multiple seeds inside. Even our bulb books gave no clues.

Anticipating some seeds inside, Margaret carefully dissected one of the fruit. It was all firm and fleshy, just like a hard apple. No obvious seeds, but at one end there was a different structure which in retrospect was probably the ‘embryo’. A sudden lateral thought came to mind. Earlier in the year we had also purchased some *Hymenocallis harrisiana* (hush! these are South American!), and had set fruit on these –they were similar to the *Crinum* fruit but smaller, marrowfat pea size. We had germinated these and each pea formed a new mini-bulb and a single small leaf, before going into a winter rest.

So we left the other two *Crinum* fruit on the conservatory table to ‘ripen’ (possibly?). After a few days a ‘thing’ emerged from the side and rapidly grew downwards – it was producing a root! (Fig. 1) The fruit was placed on a pot of compost in December 2004. The root continued to grow down into the compost and the join between the root and fruit started to thicken and turn green. The thickening progressed to soil level, a bulb started to form (Fig.2), and the pod was lifted off the surface. Part way down the connecting ‘umbilicus’ a split appeared (Fig. 3) and a leaf emerged.

About a month later, the whole thing looked like a sizeable (even precocious!) new plant with a bulb and three leaves and a dried up pod on the end of the umbilicus. (Fig. 4) This after only three months!

Further investigation suggested that *C. moorei* may behave like *C. paludosum* (Sandhof lily) in southern Namibia which flowers during floods, so presumably the ‘pod’ is carried away by the receding flood water, germinates quickly and grows into a sizeable new bulb while moisture is still available. Indeed the third pod did float – but unfortunately did not germinate. I also think that another clue to this type of seed distribution is the fact that the flower stems collapse to deposit the fruit on the ground (or in the water?) once the pod is ripe.

Finally, a familiar plea – a call for newsletter items, even if only a paragraph of an observation or a tip on growing. I can thus feel smug on having made a second contribution to this newsletter!



Figure 1



Figure 2

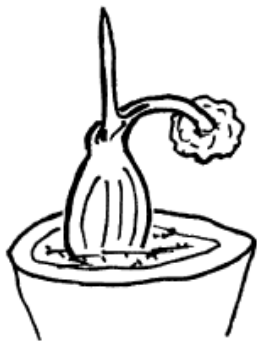


Figure 3



Figure 4

Updated list of Suppliers of Southern African Bulbs

An updated list of sources is given below. Once again I would ask that if you have experience of other reliable sources please send details for inclusion in a future expanded list.

UK based suppliers

- **Jim & Jenny Archibald** (‘Bryn Collen, Ffostrasol, Llandysul, SA44 5SB, Wales, UK)
(Seed of selected species. catalogue online at <http://www.jjaseeds.com/>)
- **Rupert Bowlby** (The Bulb Nursery, Gatton, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 0TA)
Bulbs &corms of selected species. Catalogue available on request from Rupert at Rupert.Bowlby@care4free.net . Website <http://www.rupert.bowlby.care4free.net/>
- **Great Western Gladiolus** Email: clutton.glads@btinternet.com
Listing includes a number of South African taxa.
- **Monocot Nursery** (St Michaels, Littleton, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 6NT, UK)
(Seed and bulbs of selected species)
- **Terry Smale** (28 St. Leonards Rd, Epsom Downs, Surrey, KT18 5RH, UK)
An interesting selection of Southern African taxa offered by a member of this group - Catalog online at <http://www.smale1.demon.co.uk/index.htm>
- **Springbank Nurseries** (Springbank Nursery, Winford Rd, Newchurch, Sandown, Isle of Wight, PO36 0JX)
A considerable range of hybrids, and a few species, are listed in the catalogue.

South African suppliers

- **Silverhill Seeds** (PO Box 53108, Kenilworth, 7745, Cape Town, RSA)
(Extensive range of seed, catalogue online at www.silverhillseeds.co.za Please note that the paper catalogue has been continued after all, but the nursery is suspending sales during the mid winter months. The focus of the listings will, in future, place more emphasis on Western Cape taxa)
- **Rust-en-Vrede Nursery** (PO Box 753, Brackenfell, 7561, RSA)
(A very good list of seed and corms)
- **Gordon Summerfield** (PO Box 5150, Helderberg, Somerset West, 7135, RSA)
(A fine list of seed and corms, many with provenance data)
- **African Bulbs** (P.O. Box 26, Napier 7270, RSA)
(Catalogue of selected Eastern Cape and Western Cape bulbs and seeds online at www.africanbulbs.com/ Formerly known as The Croft Wild Bulb Nursery)

USA suppliers

- **Telos Rare Bulbs** (P. O. Box 4147, Arcata, CA 95518, USA)
This US based nursery has recently advertised that it is resuming overseas shipments. The catalogue, which contains an extensive range of Oxalis, is on the web at <http://www.telosrarebulbs.com/index.html>

In addition to the above a number of society seed distribution schemes, including those of the International Bulb Society, the Indigenous Bulb Association of South Africa, the Alpine Garden Society and the North American Rock Garden Society can be productive sources of material.

A formerly useful source, the Botanical Society of South Africa, has withdrawn seed distribution to overseas members. Purchasing from the Kirstenbosch seed list is still possible but the range of species available is limited

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS – YEAR ENDED 30.04.05
(supplied by David and Margaret Corina)

INCOME

Members fees	295.00
Donations	290.00
Total	585.00

EXPENDITURE

Photocopying membership forms	12.00
Treasurers expenses (some postage)	17.73
Total	29.73

Balance at bank £555.27

The Group is grateful to Robin Attrill for donating the cost of Newsletter production and circulation.