

# HERBS

**No. 99**

**March 2011**

This pictorial newsletter gives you the latest Hermanus Botanical Society news and views on the fynbos scene. It also appears on our website [www.fernkloof.com](http://www.fernkloof.com)



## BOTANICAL SOCIETY AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Hermanus Botanical Society was held on 14<sup>th</sup> January. Chairperson Pat Miller addressed a packed Fernkloof Hall reporting on the activities of the Society over the past year. Members enjoyed a light snack and a glass of wine after the meeting. A full report can be obtained from the Fernkloof Office.

The new Committee elected for 2011 –

Pat Miller	Chairperson	028 313 0093
Anthony van Hoogstraten	Vice-Chair	028 314 0470
Michael Clark	Treasurer	028 312 1456
Margaret Stanway	Membership Secretary	028 312 2575
Lee Burman		028 312 3011
Peter Finlayson		028 312 3515

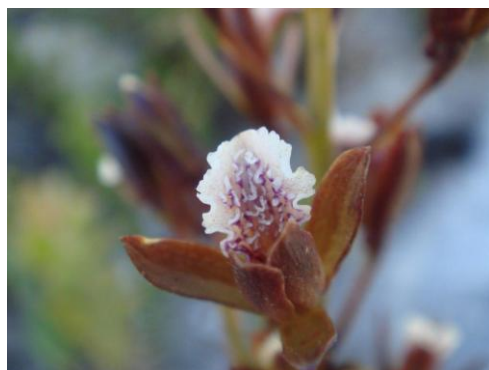
The BotSoc welcomes Margaret and Peter as new members to the Committee. Lee Burman is the contact for Fernkloof Hall bookings and 'night stays' at Galpin Hut.

## OUR FERNKLOOF ORCHIDS

Not often seen, but very beautiful, three orchids spotted recently by walkers in the Reserve!



*Holothrix villosa*



*Acrolophia lamellata*



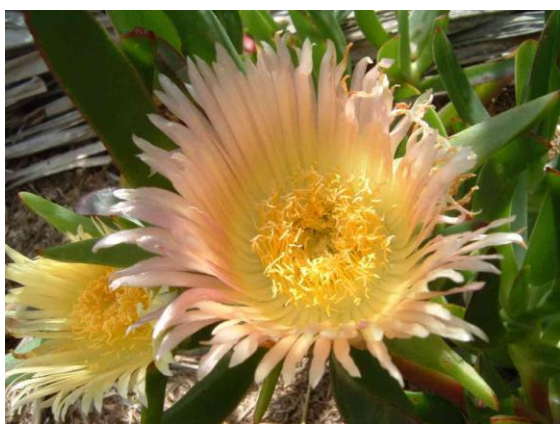
*Disa filicornis*

## SUCCULENTS OF FERNKLOOF

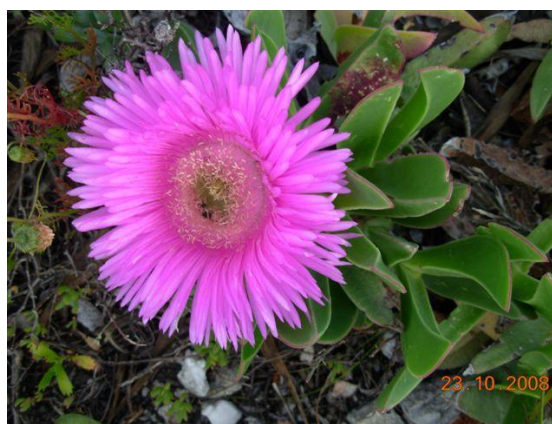
We were privileged to have the international succulent expert, Frans Noltie, as our evening speaker in November and as a result, we were spurred on to have a closer look at the succulents of Fernkloof. There are a surprising number, considering that mountain fynbos is not normally regarded as succulent territory.

But it is not surprising that most of our succulent plants are found either in deep sandy soil with good drainage or in rock crevices where they can take advantage of small amounts of rain without getting their roots waterlogged.

The plants which immediately spring to mind when one mentions succulents are the vygies, members of the Mesembryanthemaceae family. Some botanists include the Mesems in with the Aizoaceae family but to date we have kept them separate as in appearance they form two natural groupings.



*Carpobrotus edulis*



*Carpobrotus acinaciformis*

The Mesems are the typical vygies with thick succulent leaves and here we have two species of *Carpobrotus* (sour fig) – creeping plants, great for binding the soil and in the case of *Carpobrotus edulis*, having delicious fruits as well. The other, *Carpobrotus acinaciformis*, may not have edible fruits but makes up for it in the brilliance of its magenta flowers.



*Delosperma guthriei*



*Lampranthus* sp.

Another succulent ground cover is *Delosperma guthriei* frequent along the Cliff Path, particularly at Westcliff. It is a good garden subject and produces its white flowers throughout the summer. Fortunately it is protected in Hermanus since the Cliff Path is part of Fernkloof but in other areas its habitat is being taken over by housing leading to its having been listed as "**Vulnerable**" in the latest Red List.

We also have numerous species of “pink vygies” of the genus *Lampranthus*, although our present tally of 9 species is likely to be reduced as the genus is in the process of revision and some are to be lumped together.

Of course Aloes are also succulents, with their thick spine-edged leaves. Hermanus has only one species, which may be seen on Hoy's Koppie and a few other places on the mountain – this being *Aloe succotrina*.



*Aloe succotrina*



*Crassula coccinea*

One of the largest groupings of succulents is the Crassula family, of which there are quite a number in Fernkloof and the coastal area. The most conspicuous of these are the “Plakkie” *Cotyledon orbiculata* and the brilliant red *Crassula coccinea* found flowering in the rocks in mid-summer. A Crassula found after the burn on the Cliff Front is the dainty *Crassula glomerata*.

One that always gives me a special lift on the infrequent occasions I find it in flower is *Orbea variegata*, which tucks itself into cracks in the rocks along the cliffs and can be very difficult to see. The flowers are creamy yellow covered with maroon spots and they exude a strong carrion scent to attract their pollinator, the blowfly.



*Crassula glomerata*



*Orbea variegata*

Some of the most unlikely plant families, such as the Asteraceae, have succulent members such as *Othonna dentata* with its yellow daisy flowers found along the Cliff Path and *Senecio serpens*, found in rock cracks both along the shore and on mountain cliffs.

Another family which is regarded as being largely succulent is the Euphorbiaceae. We are all familiar with the strange-looking *Euphorbia caput-medusae*, which may be seen in the Aloe Garden at Fernkloof but has not been recorded in the wild in this area. Whilst we have a number of other members of this family in Fernkloof, strangely, none of them can be classed as succulent.

**Lee Burman**

## WHAT'S FLOWERING IN FERNKLOOF



*Gladiolus brevifolius*



*Empodium plicatum*

*Gladiolus brevifolius* 'Pypie, Herfspypie' can be found on the lower sandy to stony slopes and flats. The flowers are occasionally scented with the foliage leaves dry at flowering. The flowering stem bears sheathing leaves, the lowermost often rust-tipped.

*Empodium plicatum*, 10-20cm, has the very apt common names of 'Ploegtydblommetjie' and 'Autumn star', its flowering time coinciding with the autumn ploughing of farm lands in the Western Cape. The basal leaves are pleated lengthwise, hence the species name *plicatum* meaning 'folded into pleats or furrows'. Found on lower slopes in seasonally damp sites and often seen alongside the cliff paths at the base of rocks.



*Paranomus sceptrum-gustavianus*



*Erica galpinii*

*Paranomous sceptrum-gustavianus*, or more impressively known as 'King Gustav's Sceptre' is a sturdy shrub belonging to the Proteaceae family. The leaves are dimorphic (having two forms), those directly under the flower heads being wedge-shaped and entire, the lower one's dissected. The striking flowers have an overpowering sweet scent. Plants can be seen in Fernkloof on the southern slopes below Galpin Peak.

*Erica galpinii*, also on the southern slopes below Galpin Peak, can usually be seen on the right hand side of the path going up towards Galpin. If undisturbed by fire the Erica can reach heights of 1.8m bearing beautiful pale yellow flowers at the tips of the branches. *E. galpinii* is described as **Endangered** in the Red List and being a reseeder is adversely affected by frequent fires. The Red List of South African Plants describes the subpopulation of the Galpin Kop/Aasvoelkop plants as having declined from around 700 plants before 1980 to less than 200 plants in 2001! It is known in only two locations in the Kleinrivier Mountains of Hermanus.

## A CAMOUFLAGED INHABITANT OF FERNKLOOF !



This charming 'praying mantid', photographed in Fernkloof by Vic Hamilton-Attwell, has been identified by entomologist Denise Schemel as *Harpagomantis tricolor* of the family Hymenopodidae commonly known as 'Flower mantid'. They mimic flowers and will sit motionless on flowering plants patiently waiting to ambush visiting insects. This species is found widespread in Southern Africa.

Reference: Griffiths, Picker, Weaving. 2002 Field Guide to Insects of South Africa.

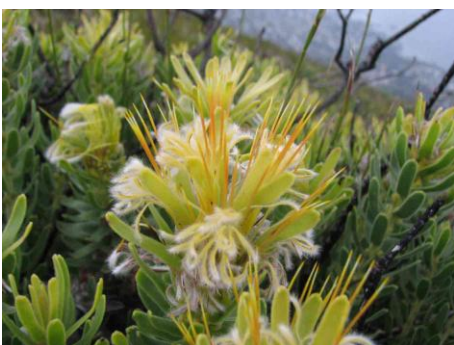
## SPECIAL MIMETES ARE GROWING IN THE FERNKLOOF GARDENS



This silver-leaved beauty is *Mimetes hottentoticus*, a member of the Proteaceae family which is growing and flowering happily in our Fernkloof gardens. In the wild its status is described in the Red Data List as **Critically Endangered**. It is largely confined to Kogelberg Sandstone Fynbos. Thanks go to Rob Thomas of Betty's Bay who gave us a number of these special silver Mimetes plants which he has propagated by grafting on to Conocarpodendron stock. He supplies Harold Porter and Kirstenbosch primarily but never forgets our small but special gardens. He has also donated more recently two other species from the silver Mimetes group, *Mimetes argenteus*, a delicate vision of mauve and pink when it flowers, and *Mimetes splendidus*, golden and splendid. Look out for them in two years' time!

Geraldine Gardiner, Photos: Christine Wakfer

Fernkloof has three species of Mimetes, *Mimetes cucullatus* (below left), *Mimetes palustris* (middle) and *Mimetes hirtus* (right).



## HAVE YOU HEARD

- Thanks to Grant Forbes and Dean Gardiner, the Visitors' Centre has a fresh coat of paint, and a new boardwalk has been constructed over the path in the damp area below the Centre.

- 'Floor talk' noted at the Botsoc AGM –

Paths in the newly established arboretum were said to be "crunchy" underfoot and thus birdwatcher unfriendly, and "high maintenance". A solution is being sought.

"Pipe Dreams" – the gardens' plan to tap the three neighbouring rockfill dams for a permanent water supply – was being looked into by a sympathetic municipality.



- A large stand (400 to 500 plants) of the **Critically Endangered** *Erica hermani* was discovered on the sandy slopes above Hermanus Heights by Jane Crawford and Geraldine Gardiner when out botanising at the end of February. The small plants (three years after fire) were covered with their purplish-mauve little bell-shaped flowers. The find is to be reported to SANBI and CREW (Custodians of Rare and Endangered Plants).

- These same slopes are now fresh green and meadow-like and covered with a profusion of wildflowers especially the pink Ericas, *E. rhopalantha*, *E. labialis*, *E. globiceps* and *E. longiaristata*.

- A total of 17 different Erica species were collected on one morning in February for display at the Visitors' Centre. As one visitor from Austria commented in the Visitors' Book - "Plantastic"!

- Congratulations are in order! The **5,000<sup>th</sup>** photo, (and it is fitting that it should be *Erica hermani*), has just been added to the website by Christine. This is a 'major work in progress'! The total includes photos of our Fernkloof flowers, birds and mammals, the Hermanus Bird Club being responsible for the contribution of the many excellent bird photos. Visit the website [www.fernkloof.com](http://www.fernkloof.com), click on Slide Show on the top left corner of the Home page, add the last number to the box and click the DISPLAY icon to view the latest pic!

- March is the time for the reappearance of our black crickets (*Gryllus bimaculatus*), their night-time chorus irritating some, particularly when chirps disappear under the fridge! Denise Schemel, an entomologist with the OCF, explains " crickets reach adulthood during late summer. The shiny black males start to chirp and produce these chirps by rubbing their wings together. They can change their chirping to a softer, lower call when approached or to a higher tone when attracting females. Both males and females possess excellent auditory organs, and these 'ears' are found not on their heads, but on their knees! The female cricket is able to detect slight differences in volume and will select a male according to his chirping song!"

- For the first time in 35 years South Africa will not be showcasing its floral splendour at The Chelsea Flower Show in London in 2011. The cause - lack of corporate sponsorship! SANBI is calling for any interested parties or sponsors for 2012.

Reference: [www.sanbi.org](http://www.sanbi.org)

- Thank you to Claude and Loretta Steenkamp, voluntary conservation officers, for their ongoing maintenance of Galpin Hut.

## **“Easter Plant Sale” at Fernkloof Nursery”**

**22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> April**

**20% off all plants**

**“SPECIAL PRICES ON LARGE TREES”**

**Pompom, Waterberry, Nuxia and more!**

### **DATES TO DIARISE**

March 18<sup>th</sup>

Jim Sweet will present a talk, thought provokingly entitled, ‘Vegetation and Mapping in Namibia and Angola’

April 15<sup>th</sup>

Dr. C. Moran will speak on the importance of ‘Fynbos and the Biological Control of Alien Trees’

April 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>

Easter Plant Sale at Fernkloof Nursery : 9am to 4pm

May 20<sup>th</sup>

Cameron McMaster, renowned expert on indigenous bulbs, will present an illustrated talk on ‘Bulbous Plants of the Overberg’

June 17<sup>th</sup>

Rosanne Stanway will talk on the fascinating subject of ‘Plant Pollinator Interactions and Implications of Global Change on Pollination Web Structure’

July 15<sup>th</sup>

BOTSOC’s ‘Soup and Sherry Evening’

August 19<sup>th</sup>

Lynda de Wet, renowned botanical artist, and winner of a Kirstenbosch Botanical Biennale Gold Medal in 2010 will present an illustrated talk. Title to be announced.

September 22<sup>nd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>

Fernkloof Flower and Eco-Fair

**All talks take place in the Fernkloof Hall on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month at 7.00pm**

We welcome any contributions to, or feedback on the newsletter.

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