

# HERBS

**No. 97**

**September 2010**

**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)**

## HERMANUS FLOWER and ECO FAIR FERNKLOOF NATURE RESERVE

30<sup>th</sup> September to 3<sup>rd</sup> October

Floral & Specimen displays, Eco-tents, Plant sales  
TEAS & LUNCHES



### REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

2010 will no doubt be remembered as the year of the Football World Cup, during which South Africa shone, giving the many visitors to the country a taste of what life is like at the southern end of this wonderful continent. However, this is also the international year of biodiversity – and here South Africa shines as well. Botsoc, OCF and the Municipal conservation department were proud to showcase Fernkloof at the Biodiversity Expo held at Kirstenbosch at the end of March. Ronnie Hazell put together an interesting and attractive audiovisual presentation on Fernkloof's biodiversity and the work of these three organisations. It was very well received at the Expo and stimulated much interest in the reserve.

This audio-visual was shown at a celebratory members' Soup and Sherry evening in July, 2010 being the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Botsoc's name change from the Hermanus Horticultural Society to the Hermanus Botanical Society. This evening gave us the opportunity to honour our ten longest-standing members. First place goes to Anneke Spratt, who has been a member for the very impressive period of forty-two years!

Despite being winter, the past few months have been very busy at Fernkloof. After a very intensive development process, bedevilled by technology problems that reached Monty Python proportions at times, the new hikers' map for Fernkloof is nearing completion. It will be a large-format map of the reserve with full route descriptions on the back, which will be available in English and Afrikaans versions. Hopefully there will be no further glitches and we will be able to get it to the printers very shortly.

The members' evenings continue to be well-attended and have provided food for thought on topics ranging from 'the highly-endangered renosterveld', 'climate change', 'Iguacu Falls National Park in South America' to the 'microworld of high magnification'.

On the administrative side, thanks to Geoff Andrew and his team of willing and capable volunteers, there is now a presence in the Botsoc office in the mornings to deal with requests and queries. We now have Section 18A tax exemption status, which means that any donations, or bequests from estates, are exempt from tax. We will issue certificates for any such donations or bequests. Please remember Botsoc when doing your estate planning or considering donations to worthy causes.

Many will have noticed that the lower gardens have been a hive of activity. The arboretum project in memory of Chris and Elwen van Schouwen has largely been completed. Trees have been planted, paths have been laid and stone and wood benches built. The restoration of the lower gardens is continuing following on from the arboretum area. The ground level adjacent to the fence has been raised, and more trees, shrubs and lawn will be planted. The "loop road" is also getting a much-needed facelift. Thanks are due to all the myriad helpers who have been and continue to be involved in this project in a variety of ways. We are also very grateful to the Hermanus Rotary Club for a generous donation that has enabled us to install irrigation to the area.

Planning for the Flower & Eco Fair has started and as usual, we would be grateful for any assistance with putting on this very important event in the town's calendar.

The OCF is planning a larger 'Eco' exhibition which will include 'green building projects', 'energy saving products', and exhibits on the 'co-existence of humans and wild animals'.

Show Gardens will illustrate innovative ways to use indigenous plants and Fernkloof Nursery will be packed with exciting plants for sale! It will be a wonderful way to say goodbye to winter and hello to spring – that is of course, if the weather co-operates...

**Pat Miller**



**20% off all plants  
at the  
'Spring Plant Sale'**

**30<sup>th</sup> Sept to 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct  
9am to 5pm  
The Fernkloof Nursery**

### **Aloe hybrids on Sale**

Jack and his staff will be at Fernkloof Nursery to assist you during the **HERMANUS FLOWER and ECO FAIR**. Jack reports that exciting new varieties of plants will be on sale, including an array of attractive and striking new Aloe hybrids such as the magnificent **Aloe 'Candyfloss'** (photo right). All plants are offered with a 20% discount. So make sure you arrive early to take advantage of all the nursery has to offer.



## THYMELAEACEAE

One of the biggest mouthfuls in the list of botanical family names must be the THYMELAEACEAE – never mind trying to spell it correctly. So whence the name? It does not, as one might logically suppose, originate with the herb Thyme, which belongs to a different family. Rather it derives from the genus *Thymelaea*, from the Greek *thymos*, thyme, plus *elaia*, olive. This name was originally applied to the popular garden plant, *Daphne*, which is a member of the family *Thymelaeaceae*.

So perhaps we could more conveniently call it the Daphne family, or, as it is referred to in the S A Wild Flower Guide No 5 (Stellenbosch to Hermanus), the Stripbark family because of the fact that its bark does not break easily but tears off in long strips.

Whatever its origins, it is an important part of the Cape Floral Kingdom. It ranks as No 20 in size with 124 species, 76.4% of which are endemic to the Cape. Hermanus alone has 22 species in 4 genera. They are an interesting, but sometimes confusing group. Fortunately the genera at least are relatively easy to tell apart:

**Gnidia** is the largest genus with 150 species worldwide, mostly in Africa, of which 10 have been recorded in Hermanus. Gnidias may be distinguished by having their flowers in terminal heads at the tips of the branches. They are usually white or cream to yellow and most of them are covered with silky hairs, the beauty of which can only really be appreciated under magnification. Have a look through your eye-glass on a sunny day and you will be amazed!



*Gnidia squarrosa*



*Gnidia pinifolia*

The commonest Gnidia in our area is probably *Gnidia squarrosa*, which forms a shrub up to 2 metres tall and seems to flower almost all year round, mainly near the coast and along the lower mountain slopes. Plants are sometimes available from the Fernkloof Nursery and it makes a good filler for odd spots near the back of the garden.

Another potentially good garden subject is *Gnidia pinifolia*, with its neat shape up to about half a metre tall, narrow dark green leaves and large clusters of tubular white flowers at the branch tips. It also seems to bloom at any time of year and resprouts after mountain fires.

**Struthiola**, of which six species have been recorded in Hermanus, forms the next largest group. Their flowers are similar in shape and form to those of Gnidia, but instead of being held in terminal clusters, they grow in ones or twos in the leaf axils, forming a spike along the upper portion of the stem.



*Struthiola tomentosa*



*Struthiola confusa*



*Struthiola ciliata*

One of the most attractive in this area is the silky hairy *Struthiola tomentosa*, with its flowers varying in colour from cream to yellow, tinged with red. It occurs frequently on the lower slopes at Fernkloof, particularly in the Klipspringer area.

Two very similar species are *Struthiola confusa* and *S. ciliata*, both with cream flowers although those of the latter may sometimes be tinged reddish. Both are delightfully scented at dusk and are pollinated by moths. They can usually be distinguished from each other by the fact that *S. ciliata* has white-woolly branches and leaf edges, particularly towards the tips. Fortunately they mostly seem to flower at different times in different parts of Fernkloof, which makes it easier to tell which is which.



*Lachnaea densiflora*



*Passerina corymbosa*

**Lachnaea**, with possibly the most attractive flowers in the family, is represented in Fernkloof by only one species, although another six occur in the general area. Ours is *Lachnaea densiflora* with posy-like round heads of cream or pink. It forms neat shrublets to about 250 mm and is found in Spring and early Summer, mostly on sandy lower slopes.

**Passerina** is a genus which is likely to be overlooked by most, particularly when not in flower – simply part of the general green background of the fynbos. Yet when it flowers in October the nondescript bushes suddenly turn yellow or red and their clouds of pollen fill the air, for this genus, unlike the others, is wind-pollinated. We have four species in the area.

*Passerina corymbosa* occurs on the lower mountain slopes whilst the others are plants of the seashore. One, *P. ericoides*, has been listed as "Vulnerable" in the latest Red Data list.

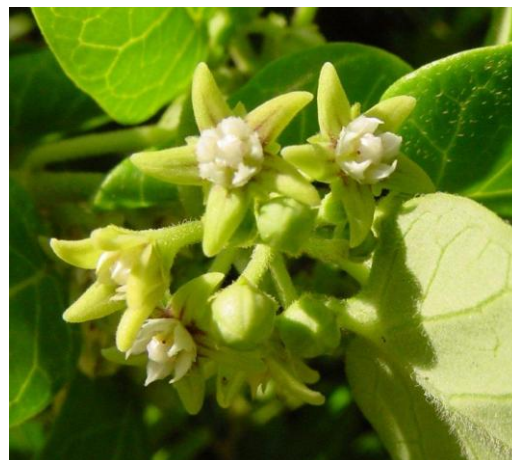
The flowers of this plant family are odd in that the flowers consist of a well-developed calyx tube and if they have any petals at all (*Gnidia* and *Struthiola* only), these are limited to small scale-like or fleshy lobes at the mouth of the calyx tube.

## WHAT'S FLOWERING

Walking the Cliff Path at this time of year one often sees the climbing plants of the APOCYNACEAE family covering the bush. These members of the milkweed family are indigenous to our coastal strip and are Nature's way of keeping the *Searsia* (*Rhus*), which grows so vigorously, under control.



*Cynanchum africanum*



*Cynanchum obtusifolium*

*Cynanchum africanum*, (Klimop), is a climber which has horizontal runners, opposite, slightly fleshy oval leaves and clusters of scented flowers. The dark brown petals with pale margins are twisted to resemble its common name bokhorinkies, and the tubular corona is white with ten teeth.

*Cynanchum obtusifolium*, commonly called "Monkey Rope" climbs to 3 metres and has a woody base. The opposite egg-shaped leaves with rounded heart-shaped bases, have conspicuous veins on the underside. The flower, which blooms throughout the year has a white corona and the style column is not stalked.



*Astephanus triflorus*



*Dipogon lignosus*

Another APOCYNACEAE, *Astephanus triflorus*, is a twiner with slender opposite leaves, and a clear sap. The small white flowers in umbels have five petals flushed with pinky-mauve in the throat. Growing in bushy places from sea level to 200m it flowers from May to August

The *Dipogon lignosus* or Cape Sweet Pea is a member of the FABACEAE family. This creeping vine flowers throughout the year and its showy mauve to purple and pink pea flower brightens the green coastal bush. Trifoliate leaves have a pair of leaf like structures on either side of the attachment to the leaf (stipules) and it produces sickle-shaped pods with 4-6 seeds.

**Christine Wakfer**

## BOTSTAP – BotSoc’s Excursion Group for Senior Hikers

**Piet Joubert** has been organising and leading this successful hiking group since 2001. Piet was initially appointed ‘Braai Kommandant’ in 1996 by At Rabie, the previous convenor of the Botstappers, and it was only when At had to step down because of ill health that Piet took over the leadership.

He reports that it has been a wonderfully enjoyable experience being involved with such an enthusiastic group for the last nine years, however, he feels it is time to step down which he plans to do in early 2011.

Piet reports that the Botstappers get together four times a year, and such is the popularity and demand for places that the group can sometimes total eighty ‘stappers’!

The two to three night stay-overs usually have camping and caravan facilities as well as chalets. Not only has Piet to search out venues to accommodate the large numbers, but also ensure that where possible there are different grades of hikes, those to suit the eagerly fit and those for the more casual strollers.



Piet leading his group across the river at Vic Bay



.... and hoping the rest are safely over!

Some popular excursions have included hiking to the Cracks and Maltese Cross in the Cedarberg, walks in the Wilderness National Park and the Groeneweide Forest near George, hiking in Citrusdal and staying at the Baths Spa Resort, visits to Grootvadersbosch near Swellendam, The Karoo National Park at Beaufort West, Victoria Bay, Jacobsbaai and hikes in Du Toit’s Kloof and Bain’s Kloof Mountains.

The next Botstap outing is from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> October to Victoria Bay.

For those interested in joining Botstap or needing further information please contact Piet by email at [piet.botstap@hermanus.co.za](mailto:piet.botstap@hermanus.co.za) or phone 028 314 0264.

## NEW APPOINTMENT FOR FERNKLOOF

Welcome to the newly-appointed Fernkloof Field Ranger, **Dean Gardiner**. Dean’s duties, starting in July this year, include law enforcement, limited administration, environmental education and tourism and ecological monitoring. He reports to the reserve manager, Grant Forbes.

For the past five years Dean has worked for the Parks, Sports Fields and Beaches section of the Overstrand Municipality and on an ad hoc basis at Fernkloof. He has experience in the use of power tools, infrastructure and path maintenance and alien vegetation management.



Dean Gardiner

**Grant Forbes FNR Manager**

## **MORAEA VUVUZELA!**



A new species of *Moraea* has been discovered near Worcester.

The *Moraea* is to be named *Moraea vuvuzela* by SANBI botanist Dr. John Manning, to commemorate SA's hosting of the Soccer World Cup.

The epithet 'vuvuzela', is as everyone must "have heard", the name given to the trumpet-like horn used by fans at soccer matches.

The pretty little bulb is found in just two habitats between Rawsonville and Villiersdorp.

Both populations are threatened by agriculture and development.

The species was brought to the attention of SANBI by Anso le Roux, a Rawsonville resident, who discovered the little plants flowering in unburned veld in 2006. After a controlled burn a large population of the species was found flowering in July 2009 and specimens were collected for description and illustration. A further population has since been located by CREW (Custodians of Rare and Endangered Wildflowers) near Villiersdorp.

**Photos by John Manning : Reference [www.sanbi.org](http://www.sanbi.org)**

## **CONGRATULATIONS TO MARGARET DE VILLIERS**

Four of her very finely worked and beautiful botanical paintings have been accepted for exhibition into this year's Botanical Art Biennale.

The exhibition is held at Kirstenbosch every two years and features botanical art from artists all over the country.

The 2010 Exhibition will be focusing on paintings of rare and endangered and narrow endemic South African plant species.

The rare *Nivenia stokoei* (right), a member of the IRIDACEAE family and found only in the Kogelberg Mountains, is one of Margaret's paintings selected for display.

The exhibition takes place from 5<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> September at Kirstenbosch 9am to 5pm. Admission is free, garden entry fee not necessary as event is in the Old Mutual Conference Centre.



## **Meditations in Fernkloof**

The new benches in the Van Schouwen Arboretum have been given the 'nod of approval' by the alpha male of the Fernkloof baboon troop. The troop appear to be enjoying themselves in the gardens ever since the new paths and seating have been installed!

**Our congratulations go to Frank Woodvine for receiving the  
"Mayor's Environmental Award"**

**for his 34 years of commitment to the environment in Fernkloof and Hermanus area**

## **DATES TO DIARISE**

### **5th to 24<sup>th</sup> September Daily 9am to 5pm**

Kirstenbosch Biennale – Exhibition of Botanical Art - Admission free  
Old Mutual Building Kirstenbosch

### **30<sup>th</sup> September to 3<sup>rd</sup> October 9am to 5pm**

Hermanus Flower and Eco Fair at Fernkloof

### **15<sup>th</sup> October Fernkloof Hall 7pm**

Cameron McMaster, a renowned expert on indigenous bulbs will present an illustrated talk entitled "Bulbous Plants of the Overberg"

### **19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> October**

Botstap outing to Victoria Bay

### **19<sup>th</sup> November Fernkloof Hall 7pm**

Franz Noltee, a succulent specialist, will be visiting us from Calitzdorp

We welcome any contributions to/feedback on the newsletter

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