

# HERBS

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

## CHELSEA EXPERTS WILL DESIGN THE HERMANUS SPRING FLOWER SHOW

The Royal Horticultural Society's Chelsea Flower Show in London is legendary. Now the Hermanus Botanical Society will be offering South African expertise from this famous event at the Flower and Eco Fair, the new name of our spring flower show, this September.

**Team members of South Africa's prize-winning exhibit at the CFS, David Davidson and Riaan Maritz, are designing and constructing a flower show *extraordinaire* for the Hermanus occasion (September 17 to 20 at the Fernkloof Nature Reserve) and its hard to say who is the most delighted of the parties involved.**

It all came about when local flower arranging chief Jessica Mitchell saw a Chelsea photo in the Cape media and contacted Hermanus-based Riaan of The Garden Company on a technical point. He offered his help with the Hermanus show, then he went further and offered David Davidson's expertise as well and left Jessica speechless. David will also be giving talks on his 16 years of experience at Chelsea, from whence he has brought home more than that number of gold medals.

David says he doesn't actually keep a CV because it reads like someone else's. He graduated with Psychology Honours and Clinical Social Work at Stellenbosch University but what he *really* wanted to study was Botany, his great passion. He *should* have done a course in Fine Art or Graphic Design – and didn't although he has designed and painted over 40 stage sets for amateur and professional stage productions.

"I also worked as Head of the Graphic Services Unit at the National Botanical Institute for 17 years (I was once introduced as the Head of Traffic Services at Kirstenbosch) and my main responsibilities there included design and production of corporate and horticultural publications. Shows and exhibitions were a part of that portfolio which is how I came to be involved in the design and construction of the Kirstenbosch-South Africa exhibit at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show for the last 16 years. The exhibit has been awarded 30 gold medals and was last year also the recipient of the newly introduced President's Most Creative Award.

He was also responsible for the South African garden at the Royal Flora Expo held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in 2006/07, and was invited to create a fantasy garden for the Singapore Garden Festival which was held for the second time in July last year, and has been invited back again in 2010.

He is currently a member of the design team preparing for the Design 2050 conference to be held in Singapore later this year. He has been working as a freelance graphic design consultant since October 2000.

Riaan Maritz joined the South African Chelsea Flower Show team as a volunteer this year – a well-qualified one. As the inspirational owner-manager of The Garden Company, a Hermanus-based landscape business, he knows and loves gardens of all kinds, specializing in the indigenous format. He is in his third year of study in horticulture at UNISA. He has training in IT and construction, both now directed towards his main love, garden design.

This is a formidable combination of floral expertise. The Hermanus Botanical Society gives them its sincere thanks for a wonderful contribution to a small but special show which helps to conserve and care for the larger environment around it.



### **THIS IS THE PICTURE WHICH IS BRINGING TOP SA CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW TEAM TO THE FERNKLOOF FLOWER AND ECO FAIR**

With its familiar backdrop of Devil's Peak and magnificent foreground of proteaceae, it's easy to pin the Kirstenbosch label on this stunning picture. This is the 34<sup>th</sup> year that the Kirstenbosch-South Africa team has participated in the 'international floral olympics' and the 30<sup>th</sup> gold medal they have received.

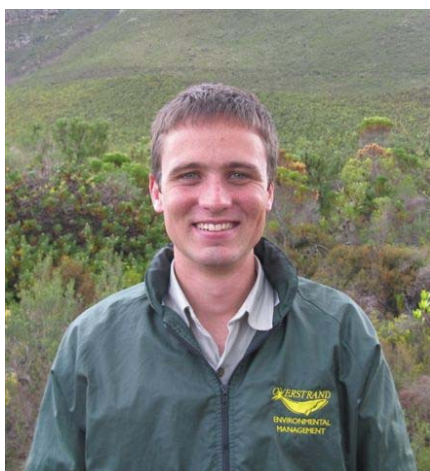
### **OUR SHOW IS CHANGING THIS YEAR....**

- Hermanus Wildflower Festival has become the Flower and Eco Fair.
- The Hermanus Botanical Society will be partnered by the Overberg Conservation Foundation, who will present a sustainable living exhibition in the marquee, showing what needs to be done to achieve this lifestyle and in the process, ensure the preservation of biodiversity and fynbos habitat. Educational and informational storyboards will be backed up by practical demonstrations of technology and talks.
- The mini gardens in the amphitheatre will be replaced by environmental projects and lots of fun and games for children.
- A Spring Sale at the Fernkloof Indigenous Plant Nursery will offer bargains to gardeners.
- Hundreds of botanical specimens will be on display from the Overberg area.
- Delicious teas and lunches will be served.
- Raffle prize-winners will walk away with magnificent gifts.

**Geraldine Gardiner**

### **A MESSAGE FROM GRANT FORBES – FERNKLOOF'S NEW MANAGER**

Thank you all for the heartfelt welcome given to me during the first weeks here at Fernkloof. I thank the Overstrand Municipality for giving me the opportunity and I am looking forward to the challenge ahead.



I completed a National Diploma in Nature Conservation at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology from 2005 to 2007 and did my in-service training at Overstrand Municipality. I worked as a student at Fernkloof Nature Reserve in 2008.

I was employed as a Research assistant at Flower Valley Conservation Trust involved in their 'sustainable harvesting of fynbos' program on the Agulhas plain. I was also involved with fynbos suppliers, management of the Trusts reserve, resource based surveys, and assisted in the Herbarium.

I am currently completing the final year of my Bachelor's degree in Nature Conservation and hoping to continue with a Master's degree.

Conservation and protection of our environment has always been my passion. We have to look at long term sustainable planning and it starts with us here at Fernkloof. Fernkloof Nature Reserve is very special and unique, an aesthetic asset but also rich in biodiversity. The Reserve needs to be conserved for present and future generations. In my position as Manager of Fernkloof there are many burning issues on my desk, important ones being the drafting of an Annual Plan of operation for the Reserve, finalizing and signing-off the Reserve management plan, path

maintenance, alien clearing, fire management, ecological monitoring and the management of the baboon/human situation. We are also planning an exciting event for arbour day and will keep you posted – keep your eyes peeled in the garden!

I thank the Hermanus Botanical Society for their support, their involvement in Fernkloof and the work done there. Their wealth of knowledge is a valuable resource and will be of great assistance to me in the management of Fernkloof. I will do my best to ensure that it can become the jewel of the Overberg!

I am available at the Fernkloof Office, Monday to Friday on 028 313 8100  
or you can contact me at: [gforbes@overstrand.gov.za](mailto:gforbes@overstrand.gov.za)

## WHAT'S FLOWERING IN FERNKLOOF?

### ZALUZIANSKYA

There are about 55 species of *Zaluzianskya* in Southern Africa but only three in the Overberg. The plant is an annual or perennial herb which belongs to the Scrophulariaceae family, flowering from July to November and turns black on drying.

Many people wonder where this relatively uncommon S.A. plant gets its romantic name. It was named after a 16th century Bohemian botanist/physician who was the first man to argue for the separation of botany from medicine, and for a universal classification of plants years before Linnaeus.

The most important work of Adam Zaluziansky von Zaluzian (1558-1613) was 'Methodi herbariae libri tres', published in Prague in 1592.

His approach to the modern scientific standpoint may be translated as follows :- "It is customary to connect Medicine with Botany, yet scientific treatment demands that we should consider each separately. For the fact is that in every art, theory must be disconnected and separated from practice, and the two must be dealt with singly and individually in their proper order before they are united. And for that reason, in order that Botany (which is, as it were, a special branch of Physics) may form a unit by itself before it can be brought into connection with other sciences, it must be divided and unyoked from Medicine."

*Zaluzianskya villosa*



*Zaluzianskya villosa* with its distinctive Y shaped, white or mauve petals and yellow-eye is mostly found in sandy flat areas and along the coast.

*Zaluzianskya capensis*



*Zaluzianskya capensis*, or "drumsticks", which is flowering at the moment, has white corolla lobes with red on the reverse. The Afrikaans name of *Zaluzianskya* is verblommetjie which refers to the use of the flowers as a source of dye. The flower, which opens towards evening is strongly scented to encourage its pollinator, a moth.

Christine Wakfer

## RESTIOS OF FERNKLOOF NATURE RESERVE

Extract from a field guide on the restios of Fernkloof Nature Reserve in preparation by the authors

Many walkers comment admiringly on the variety and beauty of the "grasses" they notice in the fynbos. Often, however, these are not grasses, but a category of fynbos renowned not only for the elegance of its specimens, but also for the confusion experienced in identifying them.

This confusion starts with the family name. Although the botanical family is called "Restionaceae" and its members are commonly called "restios", the family includes the genus "Restio", along with many other genera. So as well as not being grasses, not all restios are Restios...



*Elegia filicea*: male

Fynbos vegetation is shrub land that is characterised by the presence of four families of plant types. These are proteoides (proteas), ericoides (heath-like ericas), geophytes (plants growing from bulbs) and restioides (reeds). Indeed, it is the presence of restioides that distinguishes fynbos from other heath or shrub land vegetation.

Restios are not confined to the Cape floral kingdom. There are 330 species of restio in Africa, and 150 in Australia – four are found in New Zealand, and a solitary species each in South East Asia and South America.

Within the Cape floral kingdom, the Kogelberg biosphere houses over 100 restio species. Fernkloof Nature Reserve is home to 57 species housed within 13 genera, with a further five species to be found in the coastal areas bordering Hermanus.

Restios are **not** grasses, nor sedges, nor rushes. Because their leaves are reduced to sheaths, the green stems ("culms") have taken over the manufacture of food for the plant (from sun, carbon dioxide and water) which the green leaves produce in other plants.

In order to be a "restio", a plant must have solid stems with nodes. The sheaths may be present ("persistent") or have dropped off, leaving a dark ring above the node. If present, they will always be split down to the node. The sheaths do not have the same function that leaves do in the other families.

Unlike the other families with which they could be confused, restio species have separate male and female plants (i.e. they are “dioecious”). The differences between male and female plants of the same species can be marked and generally the male will be more showy and “open” in appearance than the female. However, in some species it can be very difficult to tell male and female plants apart, but both male and female of the same species will have similar growth aspects in terms of the sheaths and stems. Although male and female plants often grow in close proximity, they can also be relatively far apart in the field.



*Elegia spathacea*: female

Both male and female restio plants produce flowers. Because of their tiny size, the flowers are rather inconspicuous, but certainly reward close inspection, preferably with a magnifier. The flowers are often partially hidden by bracts, and the whole spikelet of flowers is usually partially enclosed by a spathe. Male flowers produce masses of yellow pollen and female flowers have white, pink or maroon styles, often feathery, to collect the pollen.



*Hypodiscus laevigatus*: male

Restios are pollinated by wind, and male restios are particularly profligate with their pollen. Tapping the stem of a male restio in flower will release a cloud of pollen to be dispersed to whatever receptive females are in the neighbourhood. With so much pollen flying around, the pollen grains and their matching receptors must naturally be very specific for the different species. Despite this however, some hybridisation between species of a particular genus does occasionally occur.

The fruit that is formed on the female plant varies considerably in size from species to species. Restio fruits can be in the form of nuts, nutlets (often winged) or capsules with tiny seeds. Once ripe, the fruit drops from the plant and is dispersed either by the wind (if very small) or by ants (and possibly mice, although this has still to be confirmed).

The fruit of certain species develops a juicy band around the base, called an elaiosome, which has the sole function of attracting ants.

The ants carry the nuts, still with this sought-after food attached, to underground storage areas, where the elaiosome is eaten. The seeds remain safely underground until the heat and smoke of fire stimulate germination in the enriched soil of the ant’s nest. In the field, many of the different genera within the family can be distinguished by the presence of distinctive visual features. The most striking members of the restio species of Fernkloof will be described in a subsequent article.

**Pat Miller and Anina Lee**

## WORLD CLASS!



This is a picture taken by Christine Wakfer of *Viola decumbens* on the burn above Hermanus Heights. We sent it to world expert on the Viola family, Kim Blaxland in the United States to remind her of her visit to Fernkloof four years ago. She was so delighted with the picture that she plans to make it her screensaver.

She wrote: “I had read that *Viola decumbens* grows very well after fires, an adaption to the environmental conditions. Probably extra nutrients released into the topsoil, and reduced competition for sunlight.

I don't know of any other violet species in the world that lives in similar conditions, though one of the South American rosulate violets is known to be a pioneer species re-vegetating mountain slopes after volcanic eruptions."

Kim is currently working on a book on the violets of North America. She visited Alaska and northern Yukon territory in Canada, almost to the Arctic Circle, last month where she found and photographed the last violet needed to complete her project.

She has also been working for several years with a young botanist Thomas Marcussen in Norway on the evolution of violet species in the world. By chromosome analysis he has determined that violets originated in South America, spreading to North America then across to Asia and Europe. This is the reverse of what had originally been thought and so quite exciting. In the process he has shown that several north American subspecies and hybrids are actually unrelated and are species in their own right. For their joint publication Kim has to produce drawings of the styles of violets from each of the taxonomic groups to show their evolution.

Maybe our lonely species is a leftover from Gondwanaland days?

**Geraldine Gardiner**

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Winter 2009 so far has been mostly mild and dry, with a few cold spells and showers. The rain seems to have been reluctant to venture much "over the mountain"; no doubt the residents of the sodden and windswept Peninsula would welcome a change in this pattern. Although rain is needed and will be welcome when it does arrive, I for one am crossing my fingers that it will hold off for the four days of the Flower & Eco Fair! Four days of gorgeous spring weather over that period will be very welcome indeed.

This year's flower show promises to be a special event and planning of the various elements of the show is picking up pace. Botsoc is very fortunate in having the (voluntary) services of David Davidson – designer of SA's Chelsea Flower Show exhibit and winner of many gold medals at CSF – and Hermanus' own Riaan Maritz of The Garden Company to design and build the flower exhibit this year. Well done to Jessica Mitchell for initiating this wonderful happening. It's going to be spectacular and one definitely not to be missed! The "Eco Tent" will be packed with informative and fascinating exhibits and fun children's activities will give parents and grandparents a bit of a breather. The "old favourites" such as the delicious food always on offer will still be there, and our nursery will be having a sale of all plants over the show period.



Our previous fundraiser, the "Cocktail for fynbos" with a silent wine auction to open the Wine & Food Fair, held on 14 August, was unfortunately not as financially successful as in previous years. Few tickets were sold, despite our best efforts, and the evening brought in just under R10 000. The evening itself was very enjoyable indeed; there was a wonderful selection of wine for tasting together with fine snacks. The marquee was enhanced by some spectacular fynbos arrangements, done by Christine Ross (left), Sue Taylor and Ann Harvett. These ladies also put up an impressive display on Botsoc with informative storyboards and wonderful fynbos displays. Our deep thanks to them for putting our very best face forward at the event.

Work has commenced on the Red route repairs, using the donation from PSG. Sturdy wooden steps have been constructed to bypass the wash-away; these were referred to by a relieved hiker familiar with the previous condition of the path as "the miracle of Fernkloof"!

Our Friday evening talks have proved popular with members. Please let us know if there is any topic you would like to have covered, or if you have speakers in mind. Peter Slingsby and Amida John's book on TP

Stokoe, which was the topic of a fascinating talk, has just been released and our copy is now in the Botsoc library. It is a delightful read.

Those who have been walking the paths around Hermanus recently may have noticed that spring seems to have come unusually early this year; flowers that normally are seen much later are already in bloom. The fynbos is always full of surprises, always unpredictable – and always beautiful.

Pat Miller

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Seven up-lighter lamps have been installed in the amphitheatre courtesy of Hospice and the Municipality. Also power points for a really big band.
- The sandy burnt slopes above Hermanus Heights have come alive with clumps of wild violets ranging from the palest to the deepest of blues. Abundantly floriferous *Amphithalea virgata* in the palest pink and yellow *Struthiola confusa* accompany the *Viola decumbens*.
- The only aloe indigenous to the South West Cape *Aloe succotrina* has been flowering on rocky crags and in the Fernkloof gardens. It was named for the Indian Ocean island of Socotra where collectors wrongly thought it had its origins. It is said that Alexander the Great conquered the island to gain access to its aloetic supplies.



### FERNKLOOF NURSERY

Buy all your indigenous plants  
at the  
"SPRING PLANT  
SALE"

Flower and Eco Fair  
17<sup>th</sup> –20<sup>th</sup> September  
9am –5pm

## DATES TO DIARISE

**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September**

**Hermanus Flower and Eco Fair** 9am – 5pm

View the floral and specimen displays, buy plants at the indigenous nursery, view the exhibits in the Eco marquee and then sit down to a delicious tea or lunch!

**BE THERE!**

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> October 7pm**

Ted Oliver, world renowned expert on ericas, author, botanical scientist and photographer will be giving an illustrated talk on ericas at the Fernkloof Hall at 19h00.

For any contributions to/feedback on the newsletter, please contact the editor **Sandy Jenkin** at: [botsochermanus@telkomsa.net](mailto:botsochermanus@telkomsa.net)

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