

# The Southern African Bulb Group

## Newsletter No. 15

Spring 2010, published February 2010



If you have any difficulty reading this Newsletter, either on the computer screen or printed copy let me know at email: [mick.reed@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:mick.reed@blueyonder.co.uk) or by telephone to 01293 420975.

### Spring meeting

2010, Winchester, UK. See below for more information.

The Spring meeting of the Group will be on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2010, at Badger Farm Community Centre, Winchester, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00p.m.

***Directions to the meeting hall Directions 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 Badger Farm Community Centre.***

- The post code is SO22 4QB for those with satellite navigation.
- MAPS:
  - o [Map of the location](#), courtesy of Google Maps (you can scroll around, change scale, etc.)
  - o [Another map](#) which is more like a road atlas, thanks to [Streetmap.co.uk](http://Streetmap.co.uk) (look for the orange arrow pointing to the meeting place)
  - o [A similar map at a smaller scale](#) showing the access roads from the M3

**The Meeting will be at the usual hall in Winchester on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2010.**

10.00a.m. Doors open

10.45 a.m. Welcome by Chairman

11.00a.m. **Dr. John Grimshaw Bulbs of the African Mountains**

Drawing on twenty years of travel and botanical experience, John Grimshaw will give an introduction to the principal families and genera of bulbous plants of the African mountains. Looking at their distribution and diversity he will comment on the differences and similarities of the monocot floras of different mountain areas from Ethiopia to Table Mountain, via Socotra, East Africa and Zimbabwe, trying very hard not to descend below 1000 m and not to go on for too long.

Lunch break approximately 12.30pm

1.45pm Jonathan Hutchinson " My Trip to Ethiopia in search of *Scadoxus nutans*"

Please bring along plants that you particularly enjoy, which interest you; which you want to know more about, which you think might interest other people or which are just available so that we can all discuss them and learn about something new and interesting.

4.00p.m. Closing time.

**The charge to members attending this meeting will be £3.00 per person.**

We are looking for extra items for the agenda. So, could you bring along photos of your plants or of other people's plants or plants in habitat and say a few words about them, please, If you can , please drop a short email to David Victor ([davidxvictor@btinternet.com](mailto:davidxvictor@btinternet.com)) before-hand giving some brief details and projection requirements.

Also , if you can think of any new, relevant speakers for our main sessions, please let David Victor know.

**Nerine and Amaryllid Society Trip to Exbury Gardens**

The NAAS has organised the 2010 Exbury Lachenalia Day for Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March starting with refreshments at 11.00am **All SABG Members are all welcome to join this trip.** There is no fee and the restaurant will be open

that day for members to be able to buy a hot meal. Please let Mike Garrett know if your attending by 13<sup>th</sup> March.

Tel. no. 01933 663681 Email: mike.garrett@tesco.net

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### **Margaret Corina – 1947 to 2009**

Margaret was a founder member and the Treasurer of the Southern African Bulb Group. She was a highly enthusiastic, knowledgeable and successful grower of tender and hardy bulbs and of succulent plants, and so it is not surprising that, as far as I know, she attended every meeting of the SABG from the first in April 2004 until last spring. It was characteristic of her that she went to the *Nerine* exhibition event at Exbury Gardens on the 7th March 2009, despite feeling very unwell and suffering from shortness of breath, which was found to be due to a collapsed lung. She was taken into Southampton General Hospital, diagnosed with a lung tumour and placed on a course of chemotherapy, and was therefore unable to attend our meeting on the 22nd March 2009. Never one to give in easily, I am sure she would have come if it had been possible. She was able to go home shortly afterwards and return to her beloved plants, but unfortunately the disease had spread and the treatment was ultimately ineffective.

She did not complain about the serious nature of her illness, although she had always enjoyed complaining about trivial things. She remained cheerful and pragmatic, arranging for the distribution of her plants while she was still able to do so, the succulents to members of the British Cactus and Succulent Society and the bulbs to Exbury, where Southern African bulb enthusiasts Nicholas de Rothschild and his gardener Theo Herselman from Zimbabwe were among her many horticultural friends. She was taken into the Mountbatten Hospice near Southampton in the autumn, and later transferred to Southampton General Hospital, where she died peacefully in her sleep on Thursday 19th November.

The funeral service was held on Thursday December 3rd at Southampton Crematorium, attended by about a hundred friends and family, and the East Chapel was full. There were many friends and acquaintances who were members of the SABG, the Alpine Society and several branches of the BCSS in the south of England. Her family and friends gathered afterwards for a reception in the library room at the Hilton Hotel nearby.

Margaret was born in Sutton on 24th April 1947, and grew up in Brighton from the age of eight. She attended Varndean Grammar School for Girls (now a mixed school and sixth-form college), in Brighton. After that she began her working life with plants by getting a job at a nursery in the village of Small Dole, south of Henfield in Sussex. At that time the nursery was noted for sending carnations to Buckingham Palace every day, by royal request. I do not know whether Margaret personally performed this duty!

She must have decided she wanted to make a career out of growing plants, and studied horticulture from 1964 to 1966 at the former Waterperry Horticultural School for Women, near Oxford, now the Waterperry Gardens. One of her instructors there was Valerie Finnis, a famous gardener and specialist in alpines, which became one of Margaret's horticultural interests. Valerie Finnis first came to my attention as a delightful pale blue variety of grape hyacinth

(*Muscari armeniacum*), but I digress.

While she was studying at Waterperry, she was introduced by her older brother Donald to David Corina, a biochemist, and they were married in 1966, two weeks after she finished her course. Margaret instilled in David his interest in plants as things to grow, not just bags of interesting biochemical compounds and processes. Plants became a life-long passion for them both. David was an enthusiastic grower of succulent plants and, like her, a member of the BCSS in addition to the SABG.

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Despite her horticultural training and interests, she worked for many years at the Southampton factory of BAT (British American Tobacco, responsible for Dunhill, Rothmans, Peter Stuyvesant, Benson & Hedges, Player's and other well-known brands). She rose to be in charge of the wages and salaries at the plant, which closed in 2007. Margaret's association with tobacco was also as a consumer, which one assumes was responsible for her illness.

Margaret was accompanied by David at almost every meeting of both the BCSS Southampton branch and the SABG until his death in 2007. He assisted Margaret when she could be persuaded to speak to the BCSS about her plant interests, which include succulent Geraniaceae, which we referred to as "Margaret's weeds", as well as bulbous plants, but mostly David was valued for his role as an expert interrupter who could always remember a name or other detail that Margaret might have forgotten.

In addition to their work and support for SABG meetings, the couple were also regular supporters and hard workers at the various shows and other events staged or attended by Southampton branch of the BCSS. During the last few years, after I left Southampton, they also jointly took over the role of branch secretary; Margaret was already the branch treasurer, using the expertise she had gained as payroll officer at BAT. Together they made a remarkable team, and we shall miss them both. They had no children, but Margaret is survived by her brother Donald and his wife Pauline, to whom we offer our condolences.

*Richard White*

## **SABG meeting, 18th October 2009**

Bill Squire started the proceedings by introducing our speaker, Paul Cumbleton, who is the supervisor of the Alpine Department at the RHS, Wisley. Bill mentioned that he had recently been with his wife to the west coast of South Africa, where they had noticed a lot of building work causing much loss of sandveld habitat. He also suggested that the South African government might restrict seed and bulb exports in the future.

### ***"A Growing Addiction - Bulbs from the Winter Rainfall Areas"* - Paul Cumbleton**

Paul began his talk by saying that as previous speakers at SABG meetings had been to South Africa and spoken about their field observations, his talk would present his personal choice of the most appealing and desirable plants, adding his experiences as a grower. At home he has an 18 x 8-foot aluminium greenhouse, with 80% of the space devoted to South African bulbs. His plants are spaced apart – yes, there are actual gaps between them! He explained that he preferred to "grow fewer but better", and that in any case he did not have enough time to look after more, as he is not yet retired. This remark drew an appreciative response from the audience, both retired and unretired members alike. He also has Wisley to look after – well, at least a 50-

foot square house which is half winter and half summer-flowering bulbs from South Africa.

He started his slides with some daubenyas. *Daubinya marginata* is the commonest of its genus and one of the best. *D. alba*, a more recent introduction grown from seed from Gordon Summerfield, is slow growing and has purple tips to the anthers. *D. aurea* was shown with its buds nestling between two leaves. When the flowers open, they are red with the outer three petals (sorry, tepals) enlarged. He also showed us *D. comata*, *D. stylosa* (bright yellow with lots of pollen and easy to grow from seed). *D. zeyheri* when viewed from above looks jewel-like, with amethysts in the centre of the leaves. There are other species, not shown, including *D. capensis*.

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Some bulbinellas are too large for small collections, but the smaller ones include *Bulbinella graminifolia* which grows 12 to 18" tall in cultivation and has spikes of white flowers. *B. latifolia* and *B. nutans* are larger species.

*M. aristata* is his favourite *Moraea* and has pure white flowers with a metallic blue centre, but varies a bit when grown from seed. *Moraea* flowers tend to last for only one day; *M. tricolor* has flowers which only last for about four hours. Other species include *M. vegeta* (brownish), *M. atropunctata* (white with chocolate-purple spots) and *M. tulbaghensis* (orange/yellow). *Moraea villosa* is an easy worthwhile plant, whose shade of blue varies, and *M. gigandra* is similar. *M. polystachya* starts to flower early, at the end of August, and can remain in flower for eight weeks by producing a succession of flowers. Paul also showed the yellow *Homeria elegans* here, as *Homeria* is included within *Moraea* by some botanists.

*Spiloxene capensis* comes from "seasonally moist" habitat and therefore likes regular watering. It varies in colour from white to yellow

Most species of *Geissorhiza* are blue, like *G. splendidissima*, but *G. inflexa* is red and doesn't need staking as much as the other species. We also saw *Empodium flexile* and *E. plicatum* which is a short plant with yellow flowers.

### Cultivation

Paul had warned us that he would interrupt the slides with some digressions, the first of which was on his cultivation techniques. His potting mix is one part each of John Innes no. 2, peat, Perlite and grit. The peat keeps it acidic, neutralising the lime in the John Innes formula, and producing something nearer to the pH 5 typically found in habitat, although most plants aren't too fussy in cultivation. He said he uses this for all his South African bulbs, and they all seem happy with it. (I assume he meant that none had complained!) He does not use any additional fertiliser in the potting mix, as they tend to grow in low-nutrient soils in habitat. A member of the audience said they didn't use peat and the plants were still OK. However, the compost does need to be free-draining.

Paul re-pots once a year (despite being unretired!), in order to "keep an eye on them", as he put it. If you're unsure how deep to plant the bulbs, his advice was to plant them shallow. Some will pull themselves down, in which case they can be planted at that level when re-potting. *Ferraria* and *Babiana* prefer to be planted deep, and are usually found to have moved to the bottom of the pot.

Paul starts watering at the beginning of September, and they usually respond quite quickly. Remember we are talking about winter-growing bulbs. Once in

growth, do not let them dry out. He waters solely with rainwater, which he recommends if possible, as it avoids any tendency for the pH to rise and become alkaline. They need a lot of water, as long as the compost is free-draining. Stop watering in late spring when the leaves turn yellow, and keep them completely dry while they are dormant.

They should be fed much less than other bulbs. He recommends a phosphate-free or low-phosphate fertiliser, with a formula such as NPK 1-0-2 or 13-5-20. However, he didn't mention any actual brands, so a careful study of the packets is required! Be stingy – use it at half strength once a month.

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Lighting should be the maximum possible during winter. Even in southern England there isn't enough light. The southern African collection at Kew is given artificial light. The temperature need not be high – just frost-free is safest, but many will grow in unheated greenhouses, or even outdoors. It went down to -8C in one greenhouse at Wisley last winter (2008-2009).

Paul grows almost all his plants from seed. Seed is a good way to increase a collection, and some species will flower in two to three years from seed. He suggested sowing in early September in the same compost that he recommended for potting, with grit covering the seeds. They can be placed outside in a cool shady position and should germinate in about six weeks. Then bring them inside and give them more light. When pricking out small plants to give them more room, it can be a challenge to plant several tiny bulbs with long roots into one pot for growing on. Paul found that they can simply be laid on their sides with their roots splayed out, and they will grow on perfectly well.

He returned to the plant slides with some plants in miscellaneous genera, including the “weird and wonderful” *Eriospermum folioliferum*, whose seed is very short-lived. He showed three *Ferraria* species, all with crinkly-edged petals, including *F. crispa*. This genus likes a deep pot and to be put in a hot position when dormant in summer – presumably out of the way on a high shelf. Also *Gethyllis verticillata*, which flowers before the characteristic spotted leaf sheathes appear, the early flowering *Haemanthus coccineus*, an unusual orangey coloured *Ixia pumilio*, and the bluish-green flowered *Lachenalia viridiflora*.

*Gladiolus alatus* is a nice chunky species and not as floppy as some others in the genus. *G. orchidiflorus* is taller and more elegant. *G. brevifolius* is a pretty pink, *G. caeruleus* is blue (only one seed germinated, and Bill confirmed that it is hard to grow), and *G. uysiae* has a powerful Freesia-like scent.

We moved on to massonias, which Paul mentioned is a favourite genus of his. *Massonia depressa* is the largest species and is pollinated by gerbils and other small rodents. It shares some similar features by convergent evolution with *Protea* species, also pollinated by small mammals: dull coloured, robust flowers at ground-level, with a strong yeasty odour, producing copious quantities of viscous or jelly-like nectar in the evening with a high sucrose

content. He described in detail how pollination by rodents had been demonstrated in the field by trapping, by footprints on smoked cards, and by showing that hardly any seed was set if rodents were excluded from an area. Two species of gerbils and three species of mice were found to visit *Massonia* flowers. In the laboratory it could be seen that they lapped up all the nectar in five seconds, but didn't eat or damage the flowers. Pollen was deposited on their snouts – they licked it off and swallowed it, but presumably enough was left to pollinate the next flower. The breeding system of massonias is such that they are unable to pollinate themselves; only 38% of flowers pollinated with their own pollen produced fruit, but 82% fruited if cross-pollinated, and produced larger seeds. So if you want to produce your own *Massonia* seeds, you should cross-pollinate if possible. A small paintbrush is easier to use than a gerbil.

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Species of *Massonia* discussed by Paul included *M. echinata*, *M. hirsuta* which is less common in cultivation, *M. pygmaea* whose bulbs are large but leaves are small, and *M. jasminiflora* with attractive flowers and smooth or pustulate leaves, very nice to grow. *M. pustulata* also has a variable amount and distribution of leaf pustules, and various flower colour forms: purple, yellowish, etc. It grows well from seed and is not upset by spending nights at -8C.

## Bulbs

We had another digression on the subject of the bulbs themselves. Plants can reproduce themselves vegetatively as well as by seed. Some such as *Gladiolus* produce lots of offsets around the main bulb, or even bulbils on the flowering stems. Moraeas can produce new bulbs on the ends of runners. Some bulbs divide themselves, but others including massonias rarely do this.

Paul showed us some slides of the bulbs themselves to illustrate their diversity of form. *Lapeirousia divaricata* has thimble-shaped bulbs, *Hesperantha* species have projections from the base of the bulb, and *Romulea tortuosa* has frilled bulbs. Obviously one should keep a camera handy when re-potting!

Some species, such as *Lachenalia zebrina* (which has a single striped leaf and relatively unattractive flowers) may “skip” a year and simply not come up – so if no growth appears in a pot, do not throw it away, just don't water it so much and wait until next year.

We returned to the flowers of more genera. *Ornithogalum dubium* has orange or yellow flowers and *O. fimbri-marginatum* has quite large and long-lived white flowers with dark centres. One-year-old bulbs are very small, so Paul recommended to wait for two years before repotting *Ornithogalum* seedlings. *Polyxene corymbosa* is very floriferous, and *P. pygmaea* varies in how compact the flower cluster is. Romuleas like a lot of water while in growth. *Romulea hirsuta* is one of the more subtly coloured ones. There is a nice white form of *Sparaxis elegans*. In the genus *Strumaria*, *S. salteri*, *S. watermeyeri* and its subspecies *botterkloofensis* are his favourites.

He then turned to *Oxalis*, and wondered why more people don't grow them (perhaps it's because most people already grow one particular species!) They deserve to be more widely grown, being easy and having a long flowering season. Paul showed us lots of species and varieties, of which the following is a selection: *O. debilis*, *O. lobata*, *O. perdicaria* 'Citrino', *O. versicolor* (whose flower buds are spirally striped like barbers' poles), the similar but more subtle *O. goniorhiza*, *O. lutea* 'Splash' with attractively marked leaves, *O. inaequalis*, *O. purpurea*, *O. smithiana*, *O. obtusa* (variable in the wild and with many named forms in cultivation, such as 'Sunset'), *O. massoniana*, *O. gracilis* ("karooica") and *O. pulchella*.

This concluded his slides, but there were a number of questions from interested members of the audience. Paul responded to a question about the use of smoke water to encourage germination, for example in *Lapeirousia*, by saying that he had tried it and was not sure it had made much difference, but it would be worth other people trying.

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There was a discussion of pest and diseases such as mildew, narcissus fly and mealy bugs, but the consensus of opinion was that they were not much of a problem. There was a question about whether winter-flowering bulbs could be "shifted" to flower in summer, since ixias are sold in garden centres for summer bedding, but Paul advised that it doesn't work and they quickly revert to their "correct" season.

Bill thanked Paul for his most interesting and encouraging talk and excellent slides. Michael and Jill Agg from Choice Landscapes mentioned that they had seed available from Gordon Summerfield.

## Making troughs - Bill Squire

After lunch, Bill Squire demonstrated some ideas for making plant troughs. His first suggestion was to use polystyrene fish boxes, which can be begged from Tesco's and no doubt other supermarkets. Leave them in the garden for two or three weeks to get rid of the smell. Take off the top lip with a hacksaw blade or serrated bread-knife. The use of a hot-air paint-stripper "gun" will roughen and harden the surface by slightly melting it. Cut holes in the bottom for drainage and possibly in the sides to plant through. One approach is then to paint with a mixture of sand and paint,

"stippled" on to the outside and about 2" down from the top on the inside. One coat is enough unless there is blue printing to cover up. Alternatively, a "tufa mix" can be used, possibly after wrapping with chicken wire. This is a mixture of equal parts of coarse sand, peat and cement, plus water as required, and is greatly superior to paint as it lasts much longer, at least 10 to 12 years.

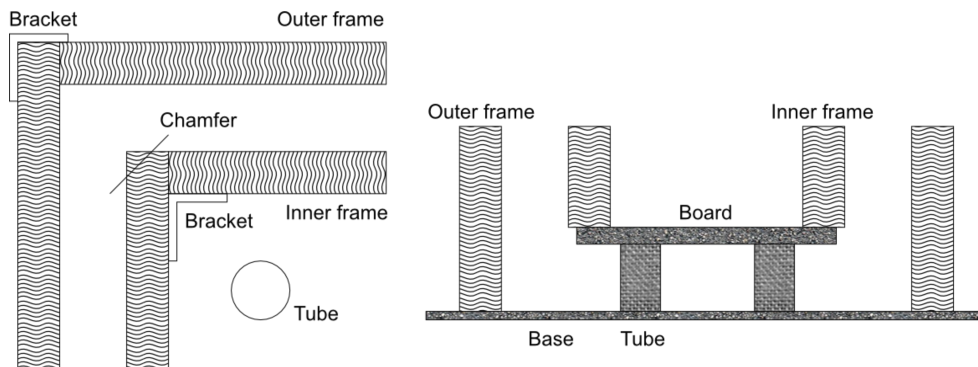
Another approach to making troughs is to cast them in concrete between two nested rectangular wooden frames made from old planks, with aluminium angle screwed in the corners to act as brackets, on the outside of the outer box and on the inside of the inner box. The inner frame also has its outside corners chamfered, which strengthens the corners of the resulting trough. The inner



frame is shallower than the outer one by an amount equal to the thickness required for the base of the trough. Stand the outer frame on something flat. Stand four short pieces of kitchen-roll tube in the outer frame to make drainage holes (the length of these is the thickness of the base of the resulting trough). Fill the outer frame with concrete mix up to this level, making sure that the frame doesn't lift and the concrete run underneath (perhaps stand something heavy on top), rest a piece of plywood (fractionally smaller than the outer edge of the inner frame) on the four supports, then rest the inner frame on that and top up the concrete until it is flush with the top of the inner and outer frames, again taking care that the frames do not lift. After setting, the frames have to be unscrewed in order to be removed, so number the corners so they can be reassembled easily. This technique can be used to make many troughs of any required size, possibly copying an existing trough to make sure the sides and base are strong enough but the result can still be lifted by two people!

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! See diagrams below showing (left) a corner of the frames viewed from above, and (right) a cross-section through the assembled frames.



A third option is to start with an old glazed “Butler” sink. Using safety goggles and a carpenter’s hammer with a pointed end, tap gently and the glaze will slowly break away, or use a heavy-duty grinder. You can then paint with diluted cow-pat, or yoghurt for the more refined constructor, to encourage faster growth of a mature patina of algae, moss, lichen, etc. Or it can be painted with the “tufa mix”, but this will make it even heavier.

## Darling flower show

Geoff Layman, showed some slides of a flower show at Darling, 75 km north of Cape Town, taken in 1995. This is a typical example of many small-town flower shows which are staged in August and September. This one has been running annually since 1917, and is an amazing show put on by a town with only five to ten thousand inhabitants. It includes several displays. The sandveld display showed mostly plants of the daisy family (Compositae or Asteraceae). The renosterveld display included a few bulbs among the daisy flowers. The flowers were exhibited in containers of water, and included many lachenalias, one of which was *L. longibracteata*.

## Plants on display

Bill commented on the plants on display, which included three early-flowering lachenalias related to *Polyxena*, a genus which might be combined with *Lachenalia*, one of which was *L. rubida*, where the depth of red in the flower varies. Also two “genuine” polyxenas, *P. pygmaea* and another one, and a *Haemanthus coccineus* flowering later than usual. Other plants were *Cyrtanthus spiralis*, *Brunsvigia minor*, and *Nerine pudica* which attracted a lot of attention.

## **Just a few comments on bulb hardiness during this cold snap.**

In our main glasshouse we have kept temperatures at just above freezing (approx 1 - 3 c ). Things are always kept on the dry side although during the cold snap we did not water at all. In addition to the heater we have bubble-

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lined the walls of the house and also drew a fleece curtain over the middle of the house mainly as a method of keeping in the heat. We have used two Calor Gas Cylinders for heating during the spell at £ 45 each ! Things seem to be O.K although some of our Babiana have had their leaves tipped by frost but this isn't anything of long term detrimental effect. Gladiolus, Haemanthus, Massonia, Polyxena, Romulea, Lachenalia, Boophane etc all appear live under this regime.

Our seedling house was unheated during the first half of the cold spell but things were covered in fleece. Although temperatures would have been well below freezing the fleece has protected the seedlings. We bought an electric heater for the second half of the snap which keeps the temperature at 5 c. the result of this (apart from an expensive electric bill) is that a lot of the newly sown seed has germinated !

The polytunnel is unheated and went down to minus 12 c. We fleeced our *Nerine sarniensis* etc with about four layers. There is no sign of any damage to the leaves although time may tell. The key again is to grow things on the dry side. Plants which were only covered with one layer of fleece froze in their pots. *Massonia depressa*, *Lachenalia aloides* have also survived quite happily in the tunnel with three layers of fleece over them. The plants of *Massonia*, *Lachenalia*, *Freesia viridis* and several species of *Watsonia* planted out in our raised bed in the tunnel have again survived quite happily apart from some frost damage to some leaves.

It maybe in a week or two's time further damage is noticed but at the moment we can only advocate not watering too much.

Chris and Lorraine Birchall

**South African Bulbs in the Deep Freeze – January 2009**

The rigours of the current winter will be in everyone's mind, but for me it has been relatively without incident. Our electricity supply has been connected throughout, and as a result my new electric heater has kept the interior of the greenhouse above freezing point, although the weight of snow cracked three panes of glass in the roof.

Last winter (2008-9), however, was a different matter. In January 2009 we had night-time temperatures of at least –10C for over a week. The old electric heater proved delinquent (the fan was later found to be malfunctioning), and as a result, despite the bubble-wrap inside the glass, temperatures inside the greenhouse fell to –8C three nights in a row. This problem was exacerbated because I had watered recently before the weather turned cold, so most of the pots were slightly damp. Finally, just as we thought the cold might be breaking, we had 12 inches of snow on 2<sup>nd</sup> February.

Fortunately, many of my tender bulbs were plunged to the rim of the pot in sand plunges, and the majority of these survived relatively unharmed, with minor damage to the foliage. Also, most pots of seedlings survived; these were plunged in sand, but at the coldest end of the greenhouse.

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However, space is always at a premium, and the most precious of the bulbs were plunged in just two inches of sand, on a shelf above the main benches, where they would receive the most sunlight, and flower most compactly. Other large pots (primarily oxalis) were standing on the greenhouse path for lack of space.

The effect of the frost upon the plants on the shelf was devastating. Not only South African species, but many Mediterranean bulbs succumbed. Most of the survivors came from the end of the greenhouse nearest the heater, where even without effective air circulation they received some heat. However, individual genera were in general kept together, and some interesting observations emerge.

<b>Genus</b>	<b>Lost</b>	<b>Survived</b>
Babiana	ecklonii	Most survived, plunged in sand, but weak this year
Brunsvigia	bosmaniae, gregaria (1), josephinae, orientalis, pulchra, striata minor	gregaria (2). Two pots of B. gregaria survived.
Crossyne	flava	-
Daubinya	marginata	-
Empodium	plicatum (particularly sad to lose this), veratrifolium	4 bulbs in the very centre of a large pan of E. flexile (c. 30 bulbs) survived
Freesia	viridis	alba, laxa (all forms)
Gladiolus	20 different SA species, including large pots of carmineus and huttonii	cardinalis, flanaganii and geardii (not in growth), trichonemifolius

	x. tristis concolor (20+ bulbs)	(plunged in sand)
Hannonia	hesperidum	-
Hessea	stellaris (2 pots)	-
Ixia	13 different species	-
Lachenalia	aloides aloides, aurea, contaminata	-
Lapeyrousia	corymbosa, jacquinii	-
Lapiedra	-	To my surprise, 3 pots of martinezii from different sowings all survived.
Leucocoryne	-	No losses among 7 species in the sand plunge
Leucojum	-	nicaense, roseum and trichophyllum survived in the sand plunge
Massonia	echinata, depressa, sp.	aff. echinata, pustulata
Ornithogalum	dubium (2 pots), osmynellum (very sad to lose this)	gifsbergensis

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Oxalis	hirta and hirta Gotenburg, purpurea, versicolor (large pots on the greenhouse path)	brasiliensis, flava, luteola, massoniana, namaquensis, perdicaria (all on the shelf at the warm end)
Pancratium	-	foetidum, illyricum (at the warm end of the shelf)
Polyxena	corymbosa (2 pots), paucifolia (1 pot)	brevifolia, ensifolia, longituba, paucifolia (1), pygmaea
Romulea	10 SA species lost, many others decimated including bulbocodium varieties	odd survivors, usually no more than 10% of pot
Sparaxis	8 species	-
Strumaria	discifera ssp discifera, salteri, truncata, watermeyeri	discifera v. bulbifera (1 offset survived from 20 bulbs), gemmata
Syringodea	lutea	-
Tritonia	crocata (1 pot), deusta (1 pot), hyalina, latifolia, squalida (2 pots) – these were in the sand plunge, but didn't tolerate the loss of foliage, or subsequent	crocata (1 pot), deusta (1), squalida (1), watermeyeri

	watering	
Urginea	maritima	-
Vagaria	olivieri	parviflorum (surprisingly, this was fine – but it is grown in 75% sharp sand)
Wachendorfia	paniculata, parviflora	-

I hope some of this is useful to others. The mix of different conditions (sand plunge, shelf – one end warmer than the other) makes the information difficult to interpret, and there may have been varying moisture levels before the frost, so it is hard to make hardiness judgements between individual species in a genus, but it is clear that survival rates were much higher where pots were plunged to their rim in sand, and at the warm end of the greenhouse where temperatures didn't fall below about –4C. However, I wouldn't like anyone to assume that because something survived for me, that means it is reasonably hardy.

More caution with watering in winter months would probably also help, but when you get long periods of frosty weather, you have to find an opportunity to give these winter-growing bulbs a little moisture.

On a happier note, I have managed to replace many of these losses over the last 12 months with new bulbs or seed, in no small part due to the generosity of the SABG seed and bulb exchange and individual members, but there are perhaps half a dozen species which are particularly scarce in cultivation, or tricky to increase, which will be a challenge for the future.

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## Notice of future Meetings

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June.** Cameron McMaster at Exbury Gardens. Tea/ coffee will be provided but you need to either bring a packed lunch or purchase a meal at the restaurant. Price for each Member attending will be £5.00

Having heard a previous talk by Cameron I can thoroughly recommend that you do your utmost to attend.

We are appealing for a member, who lives near Heathrow and attending the Cameron talk on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June, to take him to their home and accommodate him on the Sunday evening. Hopefully this member will be able to arrange for Cameron to get to Heathrow by 9.00am on Monday.

Let me know by 31st March if you think you will be able assist the Group with this.

Mick Reed email: [mick.reed@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:mick.reed@blueyonder.co.uk) or Tel. No. 01293 420975

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October** This will be at Badger Hall Winchester and Kit Strange will be the main speaker. She has taken over from Tony Hall at Kew Gardens now that he has retired. She grows a large range of South African material there. Further details will be published in the Autumn Newsletter.

### General bulb suppliers

These suppliers are not specialists in southern African bulbs, but usually have southern African bulbs for sale. With one exception, they are based in the UK, which makes ordering convenient for UK and other European residents, who should be able to avoid restrictions (but see disclaimer above!)

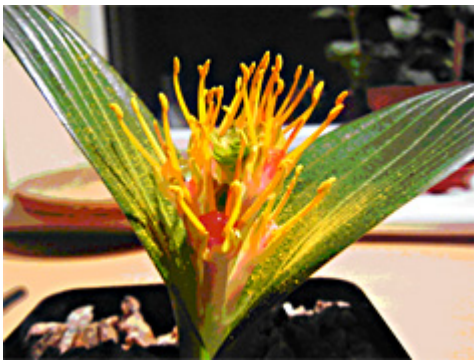
- **[Choice Landscapes](mailto:info@choicelandscapes.org)**: Southern African bulbs; email ([info@choicelandscapes.org](mailto:info@choicelandscapes.org))
- **[Cotswold Garden Flowers](mailto:info@cgf.net)**: a number of Southern African taxa including *Lachenalia* and *Nerine*; orders can be placed by post, phone, fax, email ([info@cgf.net](mailto:info@cgf.net)) or by visiting the nursery
- **[The Crocosmia Gardens](#)**: NCCPG National Collection of *Crocosmia*; plants and seeds for sale to support the collection
- **[Desirable Plants](mailto:sutton.totnes@lineone.net)**: Pentamar, Crosspark, Totnes, Devon; mail order only (email [sutton.totnes@lineone.net](mailto:sutton.totnes@lineone.net))
- **[Great Western Gladiolus](mailto:clutton.glads@btinternet.com)**: listing includes a number of South African taxa (email [clutton.glads@btinternet.com](mailto:clutton.glads@btinternet.com))
  
- **[Pennard Plants](#)**: *Agapanthus*, *Nerine* (*bowdenii* type) & *Watsonia*
- **[Plant World Seeds](#)**: interesting collections of Alliums and other hardy bulb seeds (note that seeds are sold, not bulbs); on web-site use search box or look under "A", "H", etc.; printed mail-order catalogue available
- **[Prime Perennials](mailto:liz@prime-perennials.co.uk)**: Llety Moel, Rhos-y-garth, Llanilar, Aberystwyth SY23 4SG, U.K.; selection of Southern African Plants; NCCPG National Collection of *Tulbaghia*; order from web-site or by email or request catalogue (in Word format) by email ([liz@prime-perennials.co.uk](mailto:liz@prime-perennials.co.uk))
- **[ProperPlants.com](#)**: *Agapanthus*, *Crocosmia*, *Nerine* etc.
- **[Springbank Nurseries](#)**: Winford Road, Newchurch, Sandown, Isle of Wight PO36 0JX, U.K.; catalogue lists a considerable range of hybrids and a few species
- **[Telos Rare Bulbs](#)**: a Californian nursery which has recently advertised that it is resuming overseas shipments; SA bulbs and an extensive range of *Oxalis* are among their specialities; web-site has names and pictures of many species; (used and recommended by some of our members)
- **[Terry Smale](#)**: interesting selection of Southern African taxa offered by a member of this group

- [Trecanna Nursery](#): Latchley, Cornwall; S.A. Bulbs and plants; (phone +44 (0)1822 834680)

## DAUBENYA

As if ordinary gardening wasn't difficult enough I had to get interested in bulbs from the opposite hemisphere and, as if **that** wasn't difficult enough, I had to fall in love with one of the most difficult bulbs to flower ! When I saw the photographs of *Daubenyia* in The Colour Encyclopaedia of Cape Bulbs (Manning/Goldblatt/Snijman) and I knew that I just had to get and grow them.

The first bulb I acquired was *Daubenyia marginata* from Paul Christian Rare Plants (perhaps rare but definitely expensive !) in November 2006, this has since sat in its pot (re-potted annually) doing absolutely nothing. In October 2008 I purchased a bulb from Paul Cumbleton via the SABG sales table and this grew well and flowered in December that year – I was delighted.



In February 2007 I purchased two more bulbs from Paul Christian – these were described as *Daubenyia aurea* (presumably *aurea* var. *aurea*) and *Daubenyia coccinea* (*aurea* var. *coccinea*). The *aurea* has done nothing to date, the *coccinea* is now my pride and joy.



Since then I have managed to obtain several other varieties (*capense* in seed form, *comata*, *namaquensis*, *zeyheri*) all of which put out leaves but have not flowered.

From another South African source I purchased 4 x red, 4 x yellow and 6 x mixed *Daubenya aurea* in March 2009. These were planted immediately and all put out leaves and some had buds. I aborted these in July and re-potted and watered again in August/September – from this batch 10 have grown leaves and 8 have produced buds which hopefully will open soon (the second photo is *D. aurea* var. *aurea*)

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From my experience these bulbs prefer to be kept moist whilst growing, the ones which I kept on the dry side aborted their flowers or the flowers were distorted. For feeding, compost etc. I have followed the advice of Paul Cumbleton from his Wisley Alpine Log on Massonia and Daubenya

My dedicated greenhouse is kept at a minimum winter temperature of 5°C and, as with most of my South African bulbs, all leaves and flowers are etiolated even with the benefit of 'daylight' lighting. This, however, does not detract from my joy at seeing one of these beauties opening its petals for me.

P.S. I have a South African source for Daubenyas (red or yellow) at a cost of £5.50 for 4 bulbs (at current conversion rates) plus p&p.

The p&p obviously depends on how much I order but the last order I put in for approximately 50+ bulbs the p&p came to about £10 which I think is very good.

To participate in this very generous offer contact [mick.reed@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:mick.reed@blueyonder.co.uk) before 14<sup>th</sup> March.