

FMR MARCH 31, 2018

I thought we would end March with some ideas how to become more involved in the world of plants, especially those we should be planting in our Cape gardens.

Traditional gardening ideas and practices are changing and been replaced with something more suited and practical for our local conditions.

There are the young new homeowners who believe in working closer with nature and there are the seasoned traditionalists who know that change must come if we want our gardens to survive the challenges we continually face.

Its not just about water, it's about working with nature and all its living components.

Plants, Insects, birds, mammals and reptiles all need the right environment to survive and be productive.

We can only understand this natural system by learning more about it.

The first port of call on this journey is going to be the Botanical Society of SA, fondly referred to as BOTSOC by members and friends throughout the world.

You don't need to be a botanist, horticulturist or expert in any field...you just need to want to expand your knowledge, and if desired, play a role in conserving our flora.

There are walks, talks, volunteer programmes, courses and outings to interesting places you have never visited.

If you have a speciality or particular interest you will find a home filled with likeminded enthusiasts.

Membership categories range from students to individuals, families and seniors all the way up to corporate. No one is left out!!

Membership fees are very reasonable when you look at all the benefits.

Firstly- free entry to all National Botanic Gardens. They become your very own garden where you can picnic, sleep, read or just enjoy plants all day long.

You receive the informative quarterly journal Veld and Flora which can be collected over time and used as a source of reference, plus you get a discount on books purchased at the BOTSOC bookshop.

I think the easiest way to get all the Botsoc info and become a member is to go to their website which is [www.botanicalsociety.org.za](http://www.botanicalsociety.org.za)

On the subject of books, SA is a leader in publishing botanical literature so there is no shortage of reading and reference material.

Books range from the specialist editions like The Field Guide to Succulents in Southern Africa to those covering bulbs, trees, orchids and specific families.

There are also many general Field Guides covering the whole country.

Two examples are-*The flora of Table Mountain by Terry Trinder-Smith* and

*A guide to Fynbos by John Manning*, both still available.

On top of this there are many small little handbooks on various subjects. There is of course no easier place to start learning about plants, their origin, associations, family and requirements.....than in the nursery where you have them all labelled and right in front of you.

Perfect for children especially when they have a plant project to do!!

It's kind of the end of summer now and I have been looking at gardens to see which plants came through on top after the hot dry summer.

There were a couple of surprises but a few did impress me.

First up was the common or garden Plumbago we all know so well.

It's a good hedge plant on the coast or anywhere else for that matter, thrives in sun or shade, makes an excellent pot plant and takes on all challengers!

The dark blue flowering form seems to do very well under Karoo conditions, but if you not into blue then there is the white variety.

Next up was my favourite fruit- *Dovyalis caffra* the Kei Apple.

I was still picking fruit off them this week.

It is found naturally in many dry areas but not the western Cape.

It does well here as a small tree or large shrub, usually not higher than 4m and just as bushy.

They make great security barriers with their long spikes but the cherry on the top is the delicious fruit either eaten fresh and made up as jam.

The third plant was a great surprise as I always think of it more as a dainty ground cover. *Cineraria saxifraga* occurs naturally from the east side of the western cape right in the eastern cape on dry rocky slopes.

One unusual characteristic being a daisy is that it grows in light shade.

It's hard to believe that this dainty looking plant can survive with so little moisture and flower so well.

This Monday evening 2 April the Cape Hort Soc will be as usual hosting a 'must attend' talk by Ernst v Jaarsveld and it's all about his work at Babylonstoren.

Ernst is a never ending source of info with regard to all things bright and beautiful so don't miss it.

As always on the first Sat of every month, that will be next Sat 7 April you can join a guided tour of the Arderne garden. It costs R40, meet at the gates at 10am and enjoy an hour or so of magic in this historic garden.

See you next week, same time, same place....goodbye!!