

March 28

Good morning

I am sure we are all starting to enjoy the cooler weather.

The mornings are fresh and, in the evenings you might need some extra cover, but without doubt our plant life is enjoying it as well.....

Do you remember those plants that hung their heads on really hot days, not due to lack of water just the heat that made us all a bit weary!!

No more, from here on they are standing up, looking forward to the winter rain and many already developing their early blooms.

No matter how bleak conditions are, plants are always optimistic.

So should we be as it is an exciting time, filled with energy out there in the wild which we very often tend to miss or in some cases ignore!!.

We are holding onto the last of the summer flowers but in wild gardens especially, there is much about to happen.

We are looking for answers in every sphere of our lives.....work, home, social life...whatever, but we also are desperate to find solutions in our gardens and the environment in general.

The answer is quite simple...in order to have a sustainable garden it needs to fit into its local environment.

The key is the correct plant material which is productive and beneficial to all other life within that big space!

Sadly, as I mentioned last week the Kirstenbosch Plant Fair has been postponed until further notice.

It was due to happen next weekend but we are all positive that another date will be set later in the year when we are on top of things.

You can of course still go wild in the garden, probably the safest and most peaceful place to be in these challenging times

I suggest that in the meantime those who are not members of the Botanical Society complete 2 chores with one spade!!

That is, become a member of the society as it has many benefits and secondly get to the societies book shop and get a pile on information on how to create that wild garden so desperately needed in our city.

Even though the Plant Fair has been postponed you still have a herd of Botanists, biologists, naturalists, field experts and common or garden horticulturists at your beck and call.

They are there to be used and abused so don't miss the opportunity to have all those questions answered online.

There are some amazing new books out at the moment.

If you are a member of the Kirstenbosch Branch you might consider getting membership for someone else as a gift.

Many students would also appreciate membership, so there is another opportunity to give the gift of Kirstenbosch.

You never know....you might convert and budding engineer into a blooming botanist!!

In the meantime get a pen and paper and jot down your want list of special plants you are not finding anywhere else.

Maybe you are looking for something common but not available, which is my predicament at the moment.

I am looking for a plain old *Polygala virgata*... the Purple Broom..as called by many.

It grows from seed, straight up like a bamboo of sorts, is single stemmed but branches near the top to form a flowering head of striking purple flowers.

A wonderful plant all round, waterwise, evergreen, and its striking flowers appear from September right into mid summer.

Its natural habitat runs from the southern Cape up the east side into Natal and can be found at any altitude.

I did find it, while hiking in the Drakensberg a number of years ago!

We are all familiar with its bushy cousin *Polygala myrtifolia*- the September Bush which plays a big part in our gardens throughout the country.

A great characteristic of the 'purple broom' is that it needs minimal space so is suited to small gardens and really tight spaces!!

It also plays a big role in the life of bumble bees and many other insects.

Good news is that once established, it will pop up from seed.

With all that in mind, you now know why I highly recommend the Purple Broom for all gardens both big and small

Well that's it today and I look forward to our chat next week.