

April 18

This past week was a particularly interesting one because the shadows are getting longer and encroaching on previously sunny spots plus we are beginning to feel the drop in temperature and see the change it brings. One definitely feels it early in the morning when attempting to creep out from under the duvet.

The change of seasons is exciting and full of energy and we really need to get out there and become part of it.

Cape Town is not known for its autumn splendour but I have already seen the start of leaf change with Liquidambers, Pin Oaks and Fiddlewoods around the city.

Hopefully a sign of a cold wet winter ahead.

An Autumn favourite is the ornamental grape that provides shade on many patios and traditional homes throughout the Western Cape.

Have you noticed the fiery Fiddlewoods changing colour?

As we get into winter we very often start looking for something different to do as the summer heat moves elsewhere.

The sun gets lower, the days shorter and there is a bit of urgency about.

When you walk around the nursery this time of the year you see a lot of variety and colour, simply because it is our growing season!

Quite a few plants caught my eye this week both in the garden and in the wild.

Taking into consideration the sometimes harsh conditions experienced along the coast, plus the added challenge of minimal water, there was still a very dominant group of plants that performed outstanding well.

It was no surprise that they all belonged to the Daisy family.

The dominant species of shrubs and trees included The Coastal Silver leaf *Brachyleana* discolour, the ever favourite Wild Camphor- *Tarchonanthus littoralis* and camphoratus, the Bietou Daisy, the ever flowering *Blombos* - *Metalasia*, and the winter *Euryops*.

Sturdy and floriferous ground cover daisies include *Gazania*, *Arctotis*, *Felicia* and many *Helichrysum* species.

Lets not forget the Canary creepers which also give us winter flowers.

I believe the daisy family makes for the core splendour of waterwise plants in our gardens and require minimal attention to survive.

Meanwhile out in the wild it's happening!

There is a lot coming into flower, going out of flower and a lot in full flower.

Firstly, lets talk about what's happening in the forest.

Many of our large trees such as the Cape Saffron, Candlewood, the Cape Holly and even our Mountain Cypress will either be flowering or fruiting.

Many who spend time on the mountain, or are lucky to have one in the garden, will be enjoying the fruit of the Bokdrol or Cape Date...*Canthium inerme*.

Its in the *Gardenia* family and is perfect for small and large gardens.

It is a very adaptable species and therefore found in a number of different habitats throughout the country.

The birds and bees love it but it is also eaten by humanoids!!

The taste is not unlike a dry date and probably wont appeal to many.

Moving out of the forest there is much in flower either starting or finishing.

Red Hot Pokers, the Candelabra flower- *Brunsvigia orientalis* (found in sandy spots), *Leucadendron salignum* the Geelbos is at its peak now and of course many *Erica*'s like *E plukenetii*- the Hangertjie and *E mammosa*- the Nine Pin Heath!!

You might be very lucky while hiking to still see a Mountain Dahlia (*Liparia splendens*) in flower.

I was not so lucky this season!!

Autumn brings us many plants fruiting and seeding in the wild and in our gardens.

The many local *Searsia*'s or Karee bushes are full of seed and many birds are having their fill before winter.

Milkwoods, Pendoring, Wild Olives, and many others are in full production which means wild life activity is also at a peak.

If your garden is wild and local there is non-stop colour from now on.

Many bulbs are also coming into flower , a favourite is the *Chasmanthe aethiopica* or Suurkanool which has got to be one of the easiest bulbs to grow in a garden.

They prefer semi shade under trees and flower on time every year without help.

I also noticed a huge display of *Crocsmia* in flower. Most know it as *Montbretia* and although a summer rainfall species they seem to do well here in the Cape. Right now, its time to get planting-

Winter annuals, spring bulbs, vegetables and all ornamentals.

Besides planting the most important thing you can do is to get a good layer of mulch down before temperatures drop and the rain arrives.

The rain is coming and with it much needed growth, flowers and fruit.

Have a great colourful Autumn weekend