



PLATE 1

Watercolour painting of *Agapanthus praecox* 'Albiflorus' (ex hort Kirstenbosch, NBG 1316/83).

Artist: Elbe Joubert



**Figure 9.** *Agapanthus praecox* 'Argenteus Vittatus', in cultivation at Kirstenbosch, from plants obtained in the Canary Islands. Image: Graham Duncan.

among which it is evident that at least four species (*A. campanulatus*, *A. caulescens*, *A. inapertus* and *A. praecox*) were already well established in cultivation (Bailey, 1914), and by the mid-1920's, a number of these varieties were being offered for sale by the New Zealand nursery Duncan & Davies, Ltd. (Duncan & Davies, 1925).

Following The Hon. Lewis Palmer's agapanthus selection work during the 1940's, the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Wisley Garden trialled 60 of the hardy *Agapanthus* hybrids (Headbourne Hybrids) he had raised, some of which are still in cultivation in RHS gardens, such as at Rosemoor (Figure 10). These included *A.* 'Lady Grey', named for his sister, a violet-blue-flowered plant with widely funnel-shaped blooms, which received an Award of Merit in 1951, and in 1954 the tall-growing cultivar *A.* 'Lewis Palmer', with large, rounded heads of greenish blue, nodding, funnel-shaped blooms was introduced by the RHS and received an Award of Merit that year. A subsequent five-year Wisley Agapanthus Trial comprising a total of 71 accessions was held from 1972 to 1977, of which 60 emanated from Palmer's plants (Figure 11) (Bond, 1978). The celebrated name 'Headbourne Hybrids' is, unfortunately, often misapplied to an assortment of seed-propagated plants in the nursery trade, which are not necessarily derived from Palmer's plants. In 1978, an agapanthus trial was established in The Netherlands at the Experimental Station for Floristry at Aalsmeer, in which 58 cultivars were included, classified into five groups based on five different perianth shapes (tubular, trumpet, funnel, salver and intermediate) (Gillissen, 1980). In the most recent RHS trial of agapanthus, the deciduous, tall-growing cultivar with dense, rounded heads of violet-blue, funnel-shaped flowers, *A.* 'Luly' (Palmer's nick-name and originally raised by him), received a First Class Certificate in 1977, and an Award of Garden Merit in 2018 (Skelmersdale, 2019).

- 9b** Perianth light to deep blue or mauve, rarely white; tubular or narrowly to widely funnel-shaped or trumpet-shaped; tepals thin-textured . . . . . 10
- 10a** Perianth tubular; light to bright blue, rarely white; perianth tube 16–32 mm long; leaves usually glaucous, in erect or suberect fans; plants up to 2 m high in flower; grassy flats, swamps, hills and mountain slopes; eastern Mpumalanga to central Limpopo (Barberton to Haenertsburg . . . . .  
. . . . . **8a. *A. inapertus* subsp. *inapertus***
- 10b** Perianth narrowly or widely funnel-shaped or trumpet-shaped; light to bright blue or mauvish blue, rarely white; perianth tube 10–18 mm long; leaves glaucous or green, in arching, suberect or erect fans; plants up to 1.2 m high in flower; rocky grassland flats, hills, mountain slopes and plateaus, sometimes in seepage or beside streams; southern Mozambique, central Eswatini and Gauteng to the Soutpansberg, northern Limpopo (Namaacha, Manzini and Johannesburg to Blouberg and north of Makhado). . . . . **8b. *A. inapertus* subsp. *intermedius***

## THE SPECIES

### 1. AGAPANTHUS AFRICANUS

***Agapanthus africanus*** (L.) Hoffmanns., *Verzeichniss der Pflanzenkulturen*: 35 (1824). *Crinum africanum* L., *Species Plantarum* 1: 292 (1753). *Mauhliia africana* (L.) Dahl, *Observationes Botanicae*: 26 (1787). *Crinum floridum* Salisb., *Prodromus stirpium in horto ad Chapel Allerton vigentium*: 228 (1796), nom. superfl. *Tulbaghia africana* (L.) Kuntze, *Revisio Generum Plantarum* 2: 718 (1891). *Abumon africanum* (L.) Britton, *Flora of Bermuda*: 72 (1918).

**TYPE:** South Africa, Cape, collector and precise locality unknown, *Herb. Linn.* 415.6 (LINN!, lectotype, designated by Leighton, *Journal of South African Botany*, suppl. vol. 4: 17, t. 2 (1965)).

**SYNONYMY:** *Tulbaghia heisteri* Fabr., *Enumeratio Methodica Plantarum Horti Medici Helmstadiensis* (ed. 2): 4 (1763). *Tulbaghia africana* (L.) Kuntze f. *heisteri* (Fabr.) Kuntze, *Revisio Generum Plantarum* 3(3): 317 (1898). Type: South Africa, Cape, collector and precise locality unknown, figure in C. Commelin, *Horti Medici Amstelodamensis Rariorum* 2: t. 67 (1701) (lectotype, designated here).

*Agapanthus umbellatus* L'Hér., *Sertum Anglicum*: 17 (1789). *Mauhliia umbellata* (L'Hér.) Thunb. ex Schult. & Schult. f. in Roemer, J.J. & Schultes, J.A., *Systema Vegetabilium* ed. 15 bis 7: 997 (1830). Type: South Africa, Cape, collector and precise locality unknown, figure in Breyne, *Prodromi Fasciculi Rariorum Plantarum*: 23, t. 10, fig. 1 (1739) (lectotype, designated here).

*Mauhliia linearis* Thunb., *Nova Genera Plantarum*: 111 (1792). Type: South Africa, Cape, precise locality unknown, *Thunberg s.n.* (UPS!, holo., microfiche no. 336/15).

*Agapanthus minor* G.Lodd., *The Botanical Cabinet* 1: t. 42 (1817). *Tulbaghia minor* (G.Lodd.) Kuntze, *Revisio Generum Plantarum* 2: 718 (1891). *Agapanthus umbellatus* L'Hér. var. *minor* (G.Lodd.) Baker, *Flora Capensis* 6: 403 (1897). *Tulbaghia africana* (L.) Kuntze f. *minor* (G.Lodd.) Kuntze, *Revisio Generum Plantarum* 3(3): 317 (1898). *Agapanthus africanus* (L.) Hoffmanns. var. *minor* (G.Lodd.) Beauverd, *Bulletin de la Société Botanique de Genève* (ser. 2) 2: 197 (1910). Type: South Africa, Cape, collector and precise locality unknown, figure in C. Loddiges, *The Botanical Cabinet* 1: t. 42 (1817) (lectotype, designated here).

*Agapanthus umbellatus* L'Hér. var. *leichtlinii* Baker, *The Gardeners' Chronicle* 10 (new series): 428 (1878). *Agapanthus africanus* (L.) Hoffmanns. var. *leichtlinii* (Baker) Beauverd, *Bulletin de la Société Botanique de Genève* (ser. 2) 2: 198 (1910).

**NAME.** *africanus*: from Africa.

**COMMON NAMES.** Cape agapanthus, fynbos agapanthus, kleinbloulelie (Afrikaans).

**DESCRIPTION.** Evergreen, winter-growing perennial 200–750 mm high in flower, usually clump-forming, rarely solitary. *Rhizome* erect, 5–25 × 5–15 mm. *Pseudostem* 30–55 × 20–30 mm, erect, white, usually tightly surrounded by old, dried leaf remains, basal sheathing leaves absent. *Leaves* 5–20 per shoot, linear, 100–410 × 5–22 mm, slightly curved, leathery, deeply canaliculate, yellowish green or light to bright green, produced in erect, suberect or arching fans; apices acute, margins entire. *Scape* erect or suberect, 140–700 × 4–7 mm, sturdy, green or purple-flushed, covered with a light grey waxy bloom; spathe bracts ovate, 20–35 × 20–25 mm, apices acute, light brownish-cream, sometimes flushed with blue at base, longitudinal veins brown. *Pseudo-umbel* globose or subglobose, 45–140 mm across, 3–60-flowered; pedicels erect or suberect in bud, suberect or sometimes spreading at anthesis, 10–45 mm long, light green or dull purple; bracteoles 6–12, filiform or narrowly lanceolate, 8–22 × 1–5 mm, dried at anthesis, creamy brown or translucent white, veins dull brown or light purple. *Perianth* narrowly or widely funnel-shaped (tepals radiate >15° up to 30° or more from longitudinal axis), light to deep blue or deep violet blue, light bluish white or rarely pure white; spreading, suberect or



**Figure 178** (left). The subglobose heads sturdy scapes of *Agapanthus africanus*, Silvermine Nature Reserve. Image: Graham Duncan.

**Figure 179** (right). A rare white form of *Agapanthus africanus*, Silvermine Nature Reserve. Image: Graham Duncan.

**PLATE 3**

Watercolour painting of *Agapanthus africanus* from the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, Western Cape (*de Lange s.n.*, NBG 253/95).

Artist: Elbe Joubert

slightly nodding; tepals fleshy, free to base or slightly overlapping in lower half, midrib prominent on lower surface; perianth tube cylindrical, 10–15 mm long, containing nectar; outer tepals oblanceolate, 16–25 × 6–7 mm, apices minutely bearded, midrib prominent on lower surface, margins flat or slightly undulate; inner tepals narrowly spatulate, 20–25 × 9–11 mm, margins entire or slightly undulate. *Stamens* declinate, included; filaments 12–17 mm long, light to deep blue or rarely white; anthers 1.2–1.4 mm long; pollen brown, yellowish-brown or bright yellow. *Ovary* narrowly ellipsoid, 8–10 × 3–4 mm, yellowish green; style declinate, 12–20 mm long, light to deep blue or rarely white; stigma minutely capitate. *Capsule* ellipsoid, 20–30 × 7–10 mm. *Seeds* ovate or oblong, glossy or matte black, 3 × 3 mm; wing ovate, 4 × 3 mm. *Chromosome number*:  $2n = 30$  (Belling, 1928). Plate 3; Figures 102, 103, 122, 127–129, 178–184.

**FLOWERING PERIOD.** December to March, with a peak in January and February.

**HISTORY.** The early history of *Agapanthus* is essentially that of *A. africanus*, first described by Jakob Breyne in 1680, using the phrase name *Hyacinthus Africanus Tuberosus*, *Flore caeruleo umbellato*, or, ‘The tuberous African Hyacinth with umbels of sky blue flowers’. Towards the end of the 17th century, the English botanist Leonard Plukenet published the first illustration of the species, a monochrome drawing, in part 3 of his *Phytographia* (Plukenet, 1692). The genus *Agapanthus* was established by the French amateur botanist Charles-Louis L’Héritier de Brutelle in 1789 when he described *A. umbellatus* (*A. africanus*), however this name also came to be used for other members of the genus including *A. praecox* and *A. campanulatus*, leading to considerable confusion. For further details, see History chapter (page ???).

**DISTINGUISHING FEATURES AND AFFINITIES.** *A. africanus* is recognised in flower by subglobose heads of widely or narrowly funnel-shaped, light to deep blue, deep violet blue, light bluish-white or sometimes pure white blooms, carried on suberect, light green or dull purple pedicels and sturdy scapes covered with a light grey or colourless waxy film (Figures 178, 179). The flowers are spreading or slightly nodding, with cylindrical perianth tubes 10–15 mm long and distinctly fleshy tepals (Figure 180) with oblanceolate outer tepals and narrowly spatulate inner tepals, with all the tepals free to the base, or slightly overlapping in the lower half. The style and stamens are included and declinate, and the anthers bear brown, yellowish brown or bright yellow pollen. The distinctly leathery, strap-shaped leaves are borne in multiple erect, suberect or arching fans, with 5–20 leaves per fan, and are canaliculate with acute apices,



**Figure 180.** Widely funnel-shaped flowers and thick-textured tepals of *Agapanthus africanus*. Image: Graham Duncan.



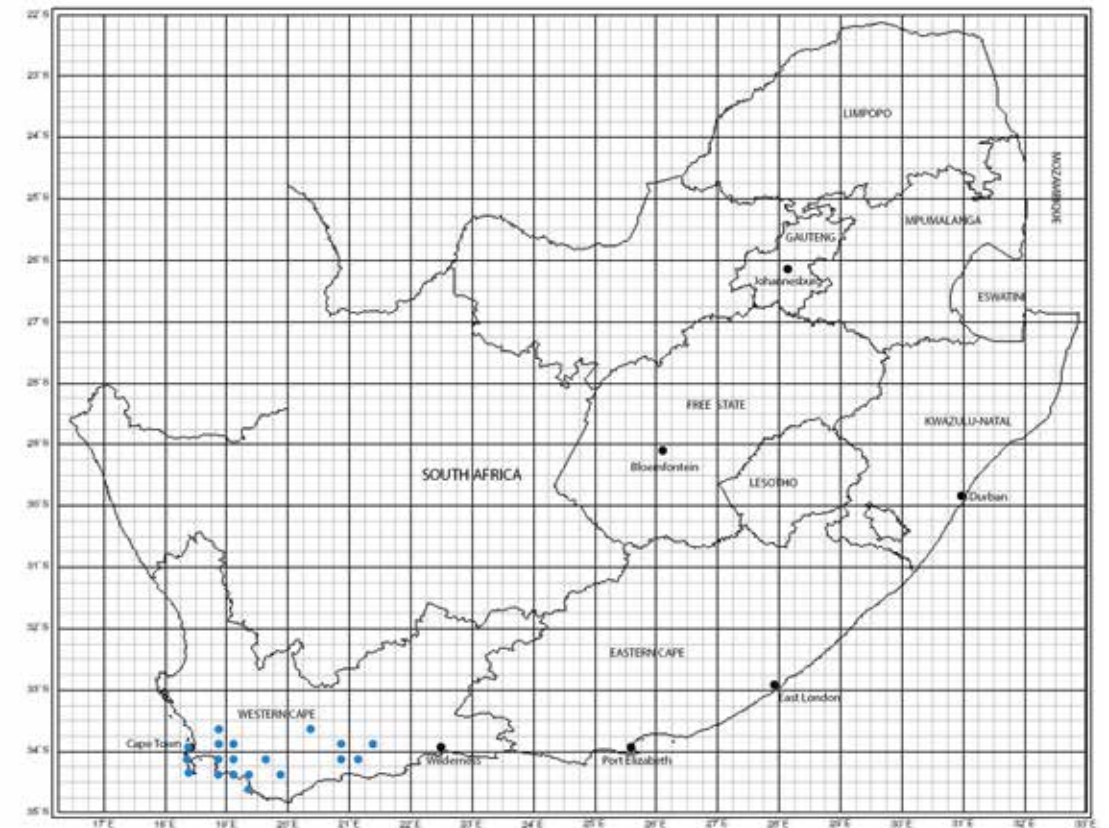
**Figure 181.** Fans of leathery leaves of *Agapanthus africanus*, Silvermine Nature Reserve, Cape Peninsula. Image: Graham Duncan.



**Figure 182.** *Agapanthus africanus* glossy fruit, Overberg Mountains, southern Cape. Image: Cameron McMaster.

and sometimes with purple-flushed leaf bases (Figure 181). The developing ellipsoid fruits have a distinctly glossy appearance (Figure 182). *A. africanus* appears most closely related to another fynbos endemic, *A. walshii*, which has very similar leathery leaves with acute apices, borne in erect, suberect or spreading fans, and thick-textured tepals. *A. walshii* differs in having pendent or cernuous, tubular- or trumpet-shaped flowers borne on slightly to strongly arching pedicels, with longer cylindrical perianth tubes 16–31 mm long, and overlapping, lanceolate outer and oblanceolate inner tepals. It also differs in having a more or less straight style and filaments, with the anthers protruding just beyond the tepal tips.

**DISTRIBUTION, HABITAT AND LIFE CYCLE.** *A. africanus* is native to the south-western and southern Cape, occurring from the southern and northern Cape Peninsula eastwards to the Boosmansbos Wilderness Area east of Barrydale and the Langeberg summit above the farm Witte Els Berg, north-east of Riversdale (Map 2). It is usually encountered in large colonies on steep, rocky, south-, west- and east-facing lower, middle and upper mountain and hill slopes, and on elevated flats, in a range of sandstone habitats including Peninsula Sandstone Fynbos, Kogelberg Sandstone Fynbos, Overberg Sandstone Fynbos and South Langeberg Sandstone Fynbos (Figures 183, 184). In the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve in the southern Cape Peninsula and at Gansbaai in the southern Cape, it ranges from close to sea level, and in the vicinity of Maclear's Beacon on Table Mountain, it reaches



**Map 2.** Known distribution of *Agapanthus africanus*.