

The Southern African Bulb Group

Newsletter No. 12

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Autumn meeting

Sunday 26th ~October 2008, Winchester, UK. See below for more information.

The Autumn meeting of the Group will be on Sunday 26th October 2008, 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 (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

AGENDA for 26th October Meeting

The doors will open at 10.00 for 10.30am start. Plants will be for sale and also tea and coffee will be available.

10.45am Chairman's welcome

11.00am Mick Reed. A short report on the Seed and Bulb exchange

11.15am Jonathan Hutchinson will give a talk on Scadoxus

12.30 – 2.00pm Lunch break

2.00 – 4.30pm Slides and digital Photographs from Members of the Group.

4.30 – 5.00 Clearing the hall

Do bring along your slides and CD's of your plants to show to Members. Also bring along any surplus seeds and bulbs to sell (Bulbs in pots use the double label system) The Group recommend 75% to the grower and 25% to the Group. There will be some seeds and bulbs from the Seed and Bulb exchange. Seeds will be 30p per packet with all the money going to the Group. Un-potted bulbs will be priced at 50p per packet. Bulbs that I have had to pot will be priced separately and 75% will go to the Group.

Do bring along any plants you have in flower to display for members to see.

SABG Thoughts and Observations 1

18.08.07

Not much movement at all over the last few days. *Eucomis zarrbeziacus* is in full flower and I seem to think it's a little later flowering than other years. Others I have noticed making growth are *Freesia refracta*, *Chamanthe aethiopica*, *Daubeya stylosa* also four *Lachenalia's* among them *L.pustulata* *L.unifolia v.wrightii* and *L.kliprandensis*.

21.08.07

Very windy and overcast today with temperatures about 18-20degC and again very little movement, appears to be mainly *Lachenalia's* such as

L.zeyheri, *L. carnososa* and *L. salteri*. Two of the Spring flowering *Gladiolas* are also bursting into growth *G.tristis* being one the other is *G.grandiflora*.

23.08.07

I notice several *Nerine* are making growth among them being *N. pudica* and *N. flexuosa* then of course a lot of *Lachenalia sp.* also but I'll only mention two (otherwise it will just become a list of names which always is a bore even if you're an avid reader) *L.rosea*, *L.bulusii*.
Bulbinella

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gramifolia, *Brunsvigia josephinae*, *Freesia sparrmannii* and a single bulb of *Massonia pustulata*, this bulb always remained smaller than the rest of the sowing and flowers a month earlier consistently. (The reason its in a separate pot)

25.08.07

Very misty here this morning and not clearing until about 8.30 AM. I do notice that an awful lot of leaves have droplets of clear liquid at the tips, and I wonder is it a residue from the mist in which case I would expect it to run down the leaves, or as I think from the plant material itself. (Any one any ideas or theories on this)
The dull start does not seem to effect the growth at all as *Massonia echinatas* are peering though the soil, also *Bulbinella nutans*, *Cyanella capensis*, *Brunsvigia grandiflora*, *Chasmanthe floribunda* V. *duckittii*, in full flower is *Cytathus clavatus* with very large red trumpet shaped flowers as is also *Albuca shawii*.

29.08.07

Quite a few seedling pots are showing greenery I am pleased to say over the last few days and plenty of *Lachenalia sp* (by now you will have realised I like *Lachenalia*) *L. aloides v.vanzyhae* being one, this has a beautiful striking blue flower, *L.orthopetala*, *L.violacea* collected Nieuwoudtville and *L.congesta* along with *Babiana mucronata* *Haemanthus coccineus* and *Brunsvigia herrei* all bursting into growth.

31.08.08

More *Lachenalia* *L. longibracteata*, *L. arbuthnotiae*, *L. gillettii*, *Tulbaghia capensis* in flower while *T. violacea* is making seed pods at the same time as flowering. *Nerine filifolia* and *N. filamentosa* (the latter rediscovered by Cameron McMaster in the early 1970s in the Cathcart district of the Eastern Cape) both flowering, the second with very long filaments as the name suggests. *Massonia pygmaea* has really surprised me 16 days ago I noticed it had started into growth- today 16 days later it is in full bloom (I wonder if that's normal ?)

04.09.08

What a difference 4 days make! 6 *Lachenalia*'s, *Albuca spiralis*, *Hessea disdifera*, *Freesia caryophyllacea*, *Lapeirousia oreo genq* *Gladiolus guthiei*, *Bulbinella caudis-felis*, *Watsonia laccata* and various others all making growth.

15.09.08

Quite a lot of movement in the last few days, *Hessea disdifera* in flower as is *Nerine gibsonii* (this sp thought to be extinct in the wild until recently rediscovered by Cameron McMaster in the Eastern Cape, there is a full report on this in Veld & Flora September 2004 page 102) many more *Lachenalia* showing growth, *Cyranthus sanguineus* 'horseshoe' has 2 very large bright red trumpets what a sight! Both *Nerine angulata* and *Cyranthus clavatus* have large buds just waiting to open also lots of seedlings germinating.

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22.09.08

Some *Gethyllis* sp in growth including *G. verticillata* and *G. villosa* also several *Polyxene* and of course more *Lachenalia*. *Massonia pygmaea* and *Cyranthus clavatus* are flowering well.

I have enjoyed writing these notes with the added bonus of observing my plants much more closely than I would do and hopefully learning much more about them. I now feel it is possible for us to control the growing season to a certain extent more so early growth. I'm sure it will also work to delay growth to have a late season but a word of caution here I would not advise more than a few weeks delay because I have heard a few South African friends say some bulbs will remain dormant for a year. I do wonder if this happens because of a shortage of water at the critical time.

Bill Squire

Notes on summer growing South African bulbs in my garden.

Last time I wrote some notes about my collection of the winter growing Cape bulbs here in Lancashire. I tend to concentrate on these but I do have a few species from the summer-rainfall areas of South Africa.

Our garden seems to suit the summer growing Gladioli. The big hybrids do OK just left out over the winter, as does *Gladiolus papilio* which flowers nicely in a moist part of the garden though could not be described as spectacular. We recently planted a few Agapanthus seedlings, some of which we lost in winter as I feel they were planted at too shallow a depth, however – most are doing fine. *Moraea spathulata* and *M. alticola* are tough, reliable and attractive. My most pleasing success has been *Gladiolus flanaganii*, the ‘Suicide Gladiolus’ from crevices in basalt cliffs high in the Drakensberg. Planted in a pocket between two limestone boulders it has increased and set seed every year since planting in 2004. There is a good write up in the Alpine Garden Society bulletin (December 2006) from when it gained an RHS Preliminary Commendation. The text states that the pot grown stock shown averaged around 40cm in height, Goldblatt and Manning (in *Gladiolus* in Southern Africa) describe it as 35-60 cm also, but my stock never seems to exceed 30cm. The write up also says that ‘someone must be trying this outside’. Now you know! *G. flanaganii* has spectacular long-tubed carmine red flowers and is adapted to pollination by sunbirds. We have no sunbirds but copious seed is set without intervention from me. I have a suspicion that it is visited by our bumblebees.

In pots (which are put outside from April-October and unceremoniously dumped under the greenhouse bench and dried out over winter) I grow a very few species now. *Albuca humilis* and *A. shawii* are both lovely. A friend nearby grows the former outside in a ‘scree’ all year round and I know others can keep the latter out in the garden too. Unfortunately it is a mollusc magnet here and needs to be kept out of their reach. It has lovely aromatic foliage and is almost worth growing for this alone but its tall (about 45cm) stems of yellow flowers are very attractive. I have couple of species of tiny *Hesperantha* which would be lost in the open garden, and a summer growing form of *Massonia jasminiflora* which I find unattractive in comparison to the

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winter growers. My favourite potted summer grower is *Eucomis vandermerwei*, this despite my not being a big fan of the genus. I was enchanted by pictures of this very dwarf species in the 1999 edition of *Herbertia* (published in 2000) and discovered that Penrock seeds were selling it at £1:20 per seed. My three seeds from this source all germinated quickly and I’m now on the third generation. The undulate and purple spotted foliage is always attractive and varies a lot from seed. This also featured in an award write-up in the AGS bulletin (December 2005 in this case). The *Herbertia* article mentioned that although apparently adapted (by colouration and scent) to carrion fly pollination, this had yet to be observed in the wild. The AGS bulletin text mentioned that cultivated plants set ample seed by insect pollination. I have not seen insects on my plants except casual opportunist visits and very little seed is set if left to nature. Certainly the flies do not flock toward it as they do winter growing *Ferraria*. However – hand pollination works very well and seed can be set by every flower in this case. The fleshy mahogany coloured seed capsules are quietly attractive and they are borne with the foliage still looking in good shape. By mid October the plants have been moved indoors and dried off until March – I have noticed that although the foliage dries up the roots seem to be present all winter. Bulbs are now commercially available in the UK and sometimes seen as selected forms.

My Experience Importing Bulbs from California.

This has been my experience of importing bulbs from California this year. Probably the authorities will have brought in more rules and regulations by next year.

In April I contacted a Nursery in California which said they could supply the Bulbs that I wanted to purchase with a phytosanitary certificate which would mean the bulbs could be imported to the UK. The bulbs would be ready for delivery in late August and to be paid for with a cheque in dollars.

In August the nursery contacted me by email stating the goods were ready and the amount would be \$136 including the phytosanitary certificate and postage and packing. I managed to get a cheque in dollars from my bank at a cost of £20.00 and sent it to California. The nursery then contacted me to say that they could not get a phytosanitary certificate and that the Bank of America could not issue a cheque in pounds sterling to refund my money.

I then contacted another nursery in California who had the bulbs I wanted. So I then had the cheque for \$136 sent from the first nursery to the second nursery and arranged for any outstanding money to be taken from my Debit Card.

The goods were shipped and arrived at my address in 7 days and had already been through the customs in Worcester. There was a 17 ½% VAT and a charge for delivery to be paid.

I contacted DEFRA that the goods had arrived and the local DEFRA representative said that he would want to see the bulbs once they were in growth.

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I contacted the nursery in California about what regulations there were to get a phytosanitary certificate and was told that the inspectors have to visit the nursery to see the plants in growth, sometimes more than once and then the nursery have to travel 50 miles with the parcel of bulbs for the phytosanitary certificate to be issued.

So I would advise anyone contemplating importing bulbs from California to make absolutely sure that the nursery supplying the bulbs has inspectors looking at their bulbs in growth.

Telos Rare Bulbs were able to supply the goods with full phytosanitary certificate at a reasonable price. Be aware that there may well be changes in this procedure next year so it would be wise to contact the nursery before ordering.

Mick Reed

As I have previously stated the group welcomes articles, and suggestions, for inclusion in future newsletters. Contributions (handwritten, typewritten and electronic

are acceptable!) should be sent to the newsletter editor Mick Reed, 52 Purcell Road, Bewbush, Crawley, West Sussex, RH11 8XJ Email: mick.reed@blueyonder.co.uk

The Treborth Botanic Garden

Treborth Botanic Garden is located just 2 miles from Bangor, on the banks of the Menai Strait, bordering the Snowdonia National Park. This botanic garden is growing *Diarma*, *Crocasmia*, *Eucomis* and *Rhodohypoxis* in the garden. They have several other Southern African Bulbs growing under glass.

Like most botanic gardens Treborth has been short of cash and three years ago was in danger of closing. The Curator now spends 85% of his time teaching students and all other work must be accomplished in the 15% of time left available. Fortunately the garden has a team of volunteers to work in the garden and a flourishing and knowledgeable Friends organisation.

.The Botanic Garden has a link with Katse Botanic Garden in Lesotho and so are able to grow a good range of *Drakensberg* and summer rainfall genera outside. Thus botanic garden is able to grow *Diarma*, *Crocasmia*, *Eucomis* and *Rhodohypoxis* in the garden. They have several other Southern African Bulbs growing under glass.

If Members are holidaying in North Wales perhaps they would like to add this Botanic Garden to their itinerary.

The date and agenda for the spring show will be published in the Newsletter number 13 in early spring 2009.