

The South African Bulb Group

Newsletter No. 21 -- January, 2011



From the Editor

David Victor

Whilst strictly it's a little late for such, let me start by offering you all my best wishes for 2012.

As I write, there is the gentle tap of snow on the window, a major change to the weather we have been experiencing through the earlier parts of the winter. Here in the south-west it has been very mild with only a couple of frosts of any significance. Up until a week or so ago, last summer's day lilies and pinks were still in flower, alongside this year's snowdrops and reticulate irises.

As a result of this strange weather the greenhouse heaters have hardly come on during the whole winter. Whilst this has been fine for the South African and South American bulbs, high levels of humidity have kept me busy looking after my collection of xerophytic *Pelargonium*, many of which rely on collecting such moisture in the wild to keep alive.

Long-toms

In the last newsletter, you may remember that I asked if anyone knew where to obtain square long-toms of 2, 3 or 4 litre sizes, as some of our Members were looking to buy some. Darren Sleep emailed me saying that he gets 1.4 and 2.5 litre square long toms from a web-site with the address: <http://www.hartcanna.com/>

He went on to say that they are very cheap, strong, with big (including side) drainage holes, and don't taper much from top to bottom, so fit together nicely. He said that service is excellent and that his Biarums and Cape Gladiolus do especially well in them.

Remember, if you have anything that you think might interest other Members, pictures, small articles, questions or comments, please feel free to drop me a line at: davidxvictor@btinternet.com or call me on 01984 667 250.

Rupert Bowlby

I also heard from Rupert Bowlby, who you will know for many years ran his bulb nursery near Reigate in Surrey. Rupert lives near Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk and would like to contact any of our Members in his area, with a view to exchanging visits and sharing experiences of growing South African bulbs. He can be contacted by email at r.bowlby@btinternet.com

Alternatively, you can call Rupert on 01284 828 128.

Rupert has now retired and given the bulk of his plants to R. V. Roger's nursery in Pickering North Yorkshire, who have been building a more extensive bulb collection in recent years. You can see their current offerings at: www.rvroger.co.uk

Desirable Plants

One of our Members, David Fenwick, has been in touch to tell us about a new web-site that he has developed for another of our Members, Dr Julian Sutton, of Desirable Plants of Totnes, Devon. He says that it separates out all of the South African listing from the rest of the site, dividing them by rainfall season. The site is rich in photographs of the plants that are sold, as well as providing really useful cultivation tips. The new site can be found at: www.southafricanbulbs.com

The International Movement of Seeds

New standards are being prepared on this subject which could reduce our access to such material in a very serious way. Those of you who remember the way in which the EU stamped on the ability of seed suppliers to offer the full range of seeds will know the way in which such organisations can interfere with our freedom to grow what we wish. So, whilst this may seem a dry and boring subject, we owe it to ourselves to do what we can to stop such abuses. Luckily, due to the freedom of information in the US and the work of Joyce Fingerut of NARGS, we have the opportunity to know what might be coming down the line to us. So, please read and digest the article later in this newsletter.

Spring Meeting 2012

Our next meeting will be held on Sunday, 11th March, 2012 at our normal venue, the Badger Farm Community Centre near Winchester. As in previous meetings, the doors will open at 10.00, with our speakers taking the stage at 11.00. The meeting will close at 16.00.

Our main speaker at the meeting will be one of our Members, Bob Charman, who will be talking on *Fritillaria*. Bob has been growing these fascinating and challenging

plants for many years and is Treasurer of the Alpine Garden Society's *Fritillaria* Group. I am sure that all of us will find his talk of great interest, stimulating us all to grow more of them.

After lunch, our Chairman, Bill Squire will be giving the second part of our 2011 tour through Namaqualand presentation, which followed the IBSA Symposium: This was deferred from the Autumn, due to problems with Bill's slides

As in all meetings, there will be a display table for any plants that you care to bring along to show Members. We hope to organise one of our informal discussions periods during the afternoon, so that Members can show their plants and answer any questions others might have. If any of you have slides or jpeg's of plants that you would like to show, please bring them along.

There will also be a sales table where you can offer material for sale on a 80:20 Member to Group basis. Please include double labels on pots, showing the price so that we can settle up easily at the end of the day.

There will be a lunch break from 12.30 until 14.00. For those of you that have not come before, it's worth adding that many Members bring their own food so that they can have the opportunity to chat to others. Alternatively, the Sainsbury's supermarket is based on the same site.

As usual, the charge for the meeting will be £3.00 each, payable at the door.

Directions to the meeting hall

Meetings are held at the Badger Hall Community Centre, near Winchester and, for those of you using satnav's or Google Earth, the post code is SO22 4QB.

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 Community Centre.

There is plenty of room in the car park and it is free: However, this privilege depends on Members filling in the form at the entrance giving the car's registration details. Please do not fail to do this, as you may find yourself facing parking fines if you do not do so.

Autumn Meeting 2012

The Autumn meeting has now been scheduled for Sunday, 21st October, a date which Audrey Cain (who books these things) does not believe clashes with any other similar event.

One of our Members, Jack Gingell has volunteered to talk to us about a trip he paid to the Eastern Cape in 2010 with Cameron McMaster. I'm particularly thankful to Jack

for doing this as originally he had only offered to do a more informal afternoon session. We see and read so much about the plants of the winter rainfall, that its always an extra pleasure to hear more about the Eastern Cape flora.

Jon Evans, who had originally agreed to do this session, had to pull out for family reasons. However, I hope that I will be able to persuade him to give his talk sometime during 2013.

The International Movement of Seeds

The Secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), set up under the FAO and part of the United Nations, is continuing its work towards a new standard covering the International Movement of Seeds. A draft specification was circulated for comments in December 2010 and can be found at:

https://www.ippc.int/index.php?id=draft_specifications&no_cache=1&L=0).

Joyce Fingerut, who looks after Government liaison on behalf of NARGS, is keeping a watching brief on this subject which could become very significant for specialist groups such as ours. In this role, she circulates regular reports on progress to a wide-range of contacts, including me for our group. Her latest says

“During an open comment period in January, 2011, I requested that the U.S. representative to the IPPC, Julie Aliaga, include in her country comments a proposal to limit the Scope of the Specifications to apply only to large commercial shippers (in effect, exempting small lots of seed). She agreed, showed me the wording of her proposed comment, and planned to include this limit in Scope with the other changes she was forwarding. Unfortunately, a glitch within the APHIS offices resulted in the wrong document being sent to the IPPC: one without the comment about limiting the Scope (and minus other comments, as well). Fortunately, the Expert Working Group (EWG) that will eventually develop the Standard has not yet been formed; only the Steward, David Porritt of Australia, has been chosen. So there is still time to modify the Specifications that will set the parameters for the Standard.

While the U.S. supports limiting the scope of the standard, there would be a much better chance of that modification being part of the Specifications (and, hence, the Standard) if more than one country requested it. Please contact your country representative (see this page for your national representative to the IPPC: https://www.ippc.int/index.php?id=1110520&no_cache=1&type=contactpoints&L=0 ...and express the need for this change in the scope of the Specifications.

It is not too soon to campaign for this change! It is necessary to have this language in the Specifications before the EWG even begins to write the draft

standard, as it is much more difficult to modify wording once the draft standard is written and put out for country comment.

Ms. Aliaga has said: “The IPPC EWGs are under obligation to consider all background papers provided by contracting parties before they draw any standard.”

If any IHSEA members are interested in contacting their country representatives (and I hope that several are), I can provide the one-page document that I sent to our APHIS representative (at her request) to be forwarded to the IPPC as background information. Also, if anyone has contacts within the International Seed Federation or, especially, the International Seed Testing Association, Julie Aliaga suggested making them aware of our concerns.”

I have passed this on to two of our Members, Chris Brickell and John David, who I hope may be able to help in ensuring the “the baby doesn’t get thrown out with the bathwater”. And to save you all looking up the above reference, the UK representative is Martin Ward, at the Food Environment Research Agency, Sand Hutton, York.

Ornithogalum maculatum

This species grows in sand pockets in Namaqualand and it just goes to show just how small they can get if there isn’t much sand! From Bill and my trip last year.



Seed Exchange 2011`

Bill Squire

For the 2011 Bulb and Seed Exchange we only had seven donors (hopefully only because of the severe Winter conditions which took a lot of us by surprise) But what a selection they donated! 158 items of bulb or seed, all South African species and 20 non South African species.

We had requests from 23 members asking for 303 items, 35 of which I was unable to supply because some items were in short supply. But, at the end, I still had stock left

which I then brought along to our Autumn meeting. I would suggest for this year's exchange that you all could be a little bolder and request more species. If available I will supply, as the saying goes "nothing ventured, nothing gained".

This year I will be in South Africa from 14th Aug to 12th September and hope to send out the listing by Week Ending 15th September. So send all donations any time before that; Trish will be here to take in the mail while I am away. My Address as normal is:-

8 Benmoor Rd, Creekmoor, Poole, Dorset, BH17 7DS

Nicholas de Rothschild
President of N.A.A.S. and Exbury Gardens

Invite you to our Lachenalia Open day on

Saturday 17th March

10.30 Coffee at Exbury Gardens,
Five Arrows Gallery

Parking in South Lodge Car Park (as signposted, gates open 10.00 am)

Programme: visits to Gallery and Glasshouse 11.00- 1.00
1.00 p.m. onwards: bring your own picnic or opt for a full
catered lunch available at the Exbury Gardens Tea Rooms

And enjoy wandering around Exbury Gardens in the Spring

RSVP to Theo at herselman@sky.com
by 14th March if possible for tea/coffee
catering numbers