



## Southern African Bulb Group

www.sabg.uk

# SABG Newsletter no. 55 July 2026

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## News

- ★ Details of the 2026 SABG Bulb & Seed Exchange are described in this newsletter

## Dates for your diary

- ★ Friday 14th August: Deadline for Jon Evans to receive donated bulbs and seeds (or a list of items to arrive later) for the annual Bulb & Seed Exchange – see details later in this Newsletter
- ★ Sunday 16th August: Expect to receive the Bulb & Seed Exchange list
- ★ Friday 28th August: Final deadline for Jon Evans to receive bulbs and seeds previously promised for the Exchange

- ★ Sunday 30th August: Deadline for Jon Evans to receive your Bulb & Seed Exchange wants list
- ★ Saturday 17th October: Nerine Day – NAAS Exbury visit: SABG members welcome. If planning to attend please contact Rosemary [rosemary.walsh1@btinternet.com](mailto:rosemary.walsh1@btinternet.com) or 01395 278179
- ★ Sunday 25th October: SABG Autumn meeting in Baughurst, UK – Details below.

## From the Editor

My greenhouse, actually a conservatory, is a bit of a no-go area at the moment. Luckily the South African bulbs are dormant (or dead!), but I venture in to water the succulents and retreat as quickly as possible. If you find any errors in this Newsletter, my excuse will be the heat!

Once again the SABG Committee is delighted to inform members of the timetable for the main Bulb and Seed Exchange this year, thanks to the continuing herculean labours by Jon Evans. His announcement is included in this Newsletter. Please note the dates for the various stages, which are also summarised under 'Dates for your diary' above, and let Jon know what you will have available. The success of this exchange depends on your contributions – there is never enough to go around.

Other items in this Newsletter include:

- details of our Autumn 2026 meeting at Baughurst
- a request for help in identifying a *Gladiolus* from Sue Bedwell's garden
- an illustrated article on the appeal of growing *Moraea* in the UK by Paul Flowers
- a view by Colin Sykes of the work being done at Silverhill Seeds and Books to prepare orders for despatch, which sometimes include joint orders organised by Carl Garnham for SABG members
- recent work by Graham Duncan including his PhD thesis on the genus *Lachenalia* and the description of another new species in that genus.



*Gladiolus* from Sue Bedwell [Celia Sawyer]

I have not included the list of Audrey Cain's South African books for sale in this Newsletter, because it requires some more work, but it will be included in a future Newsletter or Bulletin.

## Notices and Requests

### *Gladiolus* from Sue Bedwell's garden

Celia Sawyer is trying to identify this lovely *Gladiolus* which came from the garden of the late Sue Bedwell. *G. primulinus* and *G. dalenii* have been mentioned, or possibly a hybrid. Celia wondered if Sue obtained it through the SABG, and would very much appreciate it if anyone can provide any help in identification, or pointers in the right direction. If you have any ideas, please email me (Richard) and I'll pass them on.



*Gladiolus* from Sue Bedwell [Celia Sawyer]

By coincidence, Paul Flowers also sent me a photo of a *Gladiolus* hybrid, which appears on the next page. Also, see his article on *Moraea* later in this Newsletter.

### *Appeal for ideas and help, especially with meetings*

If you read as far as the end of this Newsletter, you'll notice that the SABG Committee is down to three members, hopefully only temporarily. This contributed to the lack of a Spring 2026 meeting, but we have at least arranged a meeting for Autumn 2026.

We hope to organise our Spring 2027 meeting as soon as possible, and hopefully also one or more "Zoom"-style online meetings. In particular, we need speakers for these. Because we aren't able to devote as much time as we would like to running the group, in addition to suggesting ideas, we would particularly appreciate members with ideas who can take them further, e.g. talking with potential speakers to ascertain their availability, or making arrangements for online talks or

“regional” meetings to balance our current focus in south-east England.

Other activities have been suggested in recent newsletters – have a browse through some of them and think about what you could do to help keep the group running!

### *In the next Newsletter*

I plan to produce the next Newsletter (no. 56) for distribution in autumn 2026. Contributions short or long will be most welcome, with or without pictures.



*Gladiolus* hybrid (*watermeyeri* × *huttonii*) [Paul Flowers]

## SABG meetings

### *SABG Autumn 2026 meeting*

Our Autumn 2026 meeting will be held on **Sunday 25th October 2026**. It will be at Heath End Village Hall, Baughurst, near Tadley (between Reading and Basingstoke). This is the location we used in Spring

2025 for our joint meeting with the NAAS to hear Graham Duncan’s talk during his visit to the UK. Our usual location at Badger Farm, Winchester, was not available for our Autumn 2026 meeting. We are sorry if this means some members might not wish to travel to Baughurst, but on the other hand it may attract some more members from slightly further north.

We have arranged two speakers. The provisional timetable is as follows:

In the morning, **Jonny Hartnell** will talk on “**An overview of the *Nerine* genus including cultivation and propagation**”.

Jonny has always had a real passion for plants and this really took off following retirement from a fascinating career in the nuclear industry. A relocation back to Somerset (close to where he originally grew up) has given him the space and time to really expand his horticultural interests. He grows a huge range of plants in various greenhouses, polytunnels, indoors and in the garden. The range includes South African bulbs (he has previously been chairman of the Nerine and Amaryllid Society and continues to be heavily involved as treasurer and organising the bi-annual bulb and seed exchange), orchids (including both hardy and tropical, showing at Devon Orchid Society shows), woodland plants including snowdrops, tree ferns, as well as trying to be self sufficient in fruit and vegetables. He gives a range of talks to garden clubs on his interests including his travels to various parts of the world visiting botanic gardens and nature reserves.

In the afternoon, our new Treasurer **Mark Wessels** will give a talk on “**The life and plants of the Hutton’s – 19th century Cape Colony plant collectors**”.

Mark’s interest in South African plants was initiated following a holiday to the Western Cape a number of years ago. Since that time, he has taken a special interest in geophytes from the region and enjoys the challenges of growing *Gladiolus* and *Moraea* species, and has just started collecting *Nerine* species. Although most of his collection of bulbs are winter growing, he is interested in growing summer flowering species for garden planting. Mark also has a small collection of pelargoniums and ‘mesembs’. Having moved to North Yorkshire from Norfolk the change in weather/climate has meant new ideas and practices have had to be adopted to ensure success with the South African plants. He has an interest in plant collectors and exploration along with botanical illustration although he is a ‘hopeless’ painter! [Mark’s words, not mine!]

It would be wonderful to have volunteers who can bring

something to contribute to the session after lunch: questions, answers, photos, plants or short talks will all be welcome. Ideally, please let one of the Committee know in advance so that we can run the session smoothly, but don't let that stop you bringing something you think of at the last minute. In particular, bring along any plants which are in flower for us to admire on the display table.

The arrangements will be similar to our previous meetings. Directions will be shown on our web-site at [sabg.uk/meetings:next:start](http://sabg.uk/meetings:next:start). The doors will open officially at 10.00, but it would be useful for a few people to arrive a bit earlier (say 9:30-ish) to help set things up, or if you have a lot of plants for sale. Similarly, although the meeting will probably close by around 3 p.m., depending to some extent on what members bring with them, it would be appreciated if some of you can help pack things away at the end - we have the hall booked until 4 p.m.

Jonny Hartnell's talk will begin around 11 a.m., and there will be a lunch break from approximately 12 until 1 p.m. For those of you that have not come before, it's worth adding that many members bring their own food so that they can stay in the hall and have the opportunity to chat to others and pore over the display and sales plants. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available. Alternatively, there is a Tesco and some other shops a few minutes walk down the road.

There is a reasonably large car-park at the hall entrance, and parking is free. As usual at our SABG meetings, there will be an admission charge for SABG (and NAAS) members, their guests and any other visitors of £5 per person, payable on entry. This is an increase on our previous entry fee, as far as I recall the first time we have increased it, and will help us to pay for increasing hall hire and other meeting costs. We think this is fair, because there is no annual membership fee to subsidise meetings, and so the cost of meetings is not borne by members who cannot attend them.

As usual, there will be a display table for any plants that you bring along for others to see. We will have time for some informal discussion during the afternoon, so that members can point out their plants and answer any questions. If you have any slides or computer images that you would like to show, please bring them along.

There will be a sales table where you can offer spare plants, bulbs or seed packets for sale on the usual 80:20 basis, i.e. the Group takes a 20% commission to help cover the hall hire costs etc. Please include a second label in each pot, showing the price and your initials, so that we can settle up easily at the end of the day.

Books for sale are also welcome on the same basis - put a paper bookmark inside with your name and price. It is very likely that we shall have some of the South African, alpine and general gardening books from Audrey Cain's library which have not been sold already.



*Moraea demissa* [Paul Flowers]



*Moraea unguiculata* [Paul Flowers]

## Bulb and Seed Exchange 2026

The Southern African Bulb Group will be running its Annual Bulb and Seed Exchange again this year. We are running the exchange on the same timing as recent seasons, so material is sent out in early September, and can be planted and started into growth in a timely

fashion. I know this causes problems for a few of you, but generally it works very well. There will be a further exchange later in the year for autumn ripening seed etc.

This Exchange is a key part of our activities, so we are hoping as many of you as possible will provide your spare bulb or seed material for the benefit of other members!

Please note that although we call it an exchange, if you don't yourself have material to offer, you will still be able to request seeds or bulbs from the list in exchange for a suitable donation to cover at least the cost of postage and packing.

## Overseas Members

We are only able to send material to overseas members in ways complying with their government's regulations (i.e. no mis-labelling of contents etc.), and only when conforming with those regulations is neither too onerous, nor expensive (e.g. we cannot issue phytosanitary certificates etc.) We expect the relevant member to be able to guide us in following their government's requirements. Although we'll do our best to comply with the regulations where possible, we cannot be held responsible for any bulbs or seeds which are confiscated.

All **donations from all overseas members** must now, sadly, be accompanied by a Phytosanitary Certificate. We recognise that this makes it difficult or impossible for these members to donate to the exchange.

Because the UK is no longer part of the EU, any packages sent to EU members would need to be accompanied by a Phytosanitary certificate. These are now also required for material sent to Australia. This would be a difficult and expensive administrative burden, and we regret that as a result **we are unable to send bulbs or seeds to EU or Australian members at this time**. Although changes are in the pipeline, nothing is likely to happen until late 2027.

We are still able to send seeds to some countries outside Europe, provided that the members receiving them are conversant with their own regulations.

The timetable this year is as follows:

### 14th August

► If you have bulbs or seeds available, please post them to Jon Evans, 46 Upper Way, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 8RF, UK, to arrive by Friday 14th August. Please try to clean the donations as well as you can – if you don't, I have to. Please store them in paper bags if possible

(items stored in plastic bags can sweat and rot). And please seal them carefully – Newsletter 36<sup>1</sup> contained instructions for making seed envelopes out of sheets of blank paper. Please include a list of your donations, if possible containing the following information. If you can send the list by email that would be brilliant.

- Genus
- Species (including subspecies / cultivar name where relevant)
- Source (only if the item is derived from wild collected material it is useful to know a location for the collection)
- Notes (any other information about the item you feel is useful)
- Seed or Bulb
- South African or 'Other'
- Approximate quantity (for bulbs and large seeds)

► If you expect to have items available later, by the end of August, please still send me a list of your intended donations, with any supporting information, by email or post, to arrive by Friday 14th August. My email address is [jonevans46.uw@btinternet.com](mailto:jonevans46.uw@btinternet.com). Please send me any such donations by Friday 28th August at the latest.

### 16th August

► I will then prepare the Bulb and Seed Exchange list of available material which I will email out to Members by 16th August. If you require a **paper list** to be sent to you by post, **please send me by 14th August a self-addressed envelope** suitable for five to ten folded sheets of A4 paper (with the correct postage attached if you live in the UK). My address is Jon Evans, 46 Upper Way, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 8RF, UK.

### 30th August

► After you have received the Bulb and Seed Exchange list of available material, please send your wishlist to me, to arrive by 30th August. I will then start the despatch process. I expect all orders to be sent out by 9th September.

► Then it's up to you to grow the plants and enjoy them!

I hope you find this exercise valuable and perhaps obtain some new plants. Of course, its success depends on the generous efforts of the donors, so please check whether you have some spares you can donate.

*Jon Evans*

1 <https://sabg.uk/media/newsletter:sabgnews36.pdf>

## Joint orders and Silverhill Seeds

### *Carl Garnham's joint orders*

As you probably know, Carl organises joint orders to South African suppliers, using his knowledge and experience to spread the costs and effort over a number of members. He currently has forty members on his circulation list, with up to about eight members participating in each joint order. He is at present assembling an order to Silverhill Seeds and Books (deadline Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July!), and possible orders to SABC and Shire Bulbs in the next month or two.

If you would like to be added to his circulation list, let me know and I'll pass your email address on to him. Alternatively, if you have Bulletin 52/2, emailed on 25 February 2025, there is some more information and his email address. Carl recommends you to read a much more comprehensive description of his joint order process and the rules of the game in Newsletter 51<sup>2</sup>, but I try not to include email addresses in Newsletters because they are available to all and sundry on the Web.

Carl also mentioned a forthcoming book on *Gethyllis*.

### *Silverhill Seeds*

In January 2026 my wife and I visited S. Africa again, where we met Gordon Summerfield and his wife and we also visited Silverhill Seeds to pick up some seeds and bulbs. I took some photos of the ladies at Silverhill hard at work sorting out orders for our members to see [at the end of this Newsletter]. I think Gordon is slowly cutting back on his nursery as he seems to be putting most of his sales of bulbs and seeds in the hands of Silverhill.

*Colin Sykes*



*Moraea villosa* [Paul Flowers]



*Moraea serpentina* [Paul Flowers]

## Growing *Moraea* in the UK: Small plants with big appeal

For gardeners drawn to unusual bulbs and the diversity of South African flora, *Moraea* offers a particularly rewarding avenue of exploration. These plants, many of which can be thought of as indoor “mini-irises”, combine elegance, variety and, in some cases, surprising fragrance, making them an appealing choice for growers willing to experiment and take a few risks.



*Moraea tricolor* [Paul Flowers]

### *Why grow Moraea?*

Many species are relatively easy to cultivate, especially for gardeners already familiar with winter growing

South African bulbs or corms. Because of their modest size, you can keep many species or hybrids in a small amount of pots and most produce striking flowers that often have a mesmerising, almost hypnotic quality. Here, their delicate blooms can be appreciated up close.

Some species also offer an added sensory dimension through fragrance (e.g. *M. tricolor* smells of cinnamon and *M. ciliata* smells like violets), while others attract interest for their extraordinary forms and markings. Gardeners who enjoy working with variation and novelty will find *Moraea* especially compelling. Certain groups, sometimes referred to as “peacock *Moraeas*”, display eye-like markings reminiscent of a peacock’s tail. These features are not merely decorative: they have evolved to attract pollinators such as monkey beetles, which are known for their pollen-feeding behaviour and lively movements on the flowers (described as dancing or wrestling).

For those interested in plant breeding, *Moraea* presents real scope for a major project. Hybridisation within sub-genus can yield a wide range of colours and patterns, making it a particularly creative pursuit for enthusiasts looking to develop new forms.



*Moraea atropunctata* [Paul Flowers]

### *The challenges of growing Moraea in the UK*

Despite their many attractions, *Moraea* are not without their challenges – particularly in a UK climate. Light levels can be a limiting factor, especially in northern regions like Scotland, where winter and early spring light may be insufficient for optimal growth.

Growing indoors and under LED light brings its own issues, notably the risk of red spider mite, which can

affect plants kept in warm, dry indoor environments. Vigilance and good airflow are important to minimise this problem.

Another practical difficulty is availability. Many species are not widely traded, and obtaining seeds or corms can be a matter of patience and networking with specialist growers. If the seed is too old it just won’t grow. Even once acquired, success requires careful attention to growing conditions. In particular, *Moraea* are susceptible to rot if left wet during their dormant period, so a well-drained substrate and controlled watering at particular times are essential.

Timing can also be confusing. Plants sourced from the Southern Hemisphere may arrive “out of sync” with the UK seasons, and it can take time for them to settle into a suitable growth cycle. Encouragingly, they are generally forgiving – some species may skip a year of flowering without long-term harm.

Finally, patience is required. Plants grown from seed often take several years to reach flowering size. And even then, the blooms themselves can be fleeting: in some species, individual flowers last only a few hours. It is entirely possible to miss them if you are away from home for a day or two.

### *A diverse and fascinating group*

*Moraea* is a large and evolving genus, now incorporating plants formerly classified under other names such as *Homeria*. While most species originate in South Africa, there are also representatives from the Mediterranean region, adding to the group’s ecological and visual diversity.

Their diversity is part of their appeal: from simple, understated forms to highly ornate flowers with intricate markings, there is considerable variation to explore. For gardeners interested in the ecology of pollination, the relationship between peacock *Moraea* and their diverse pollinators adds an extra layer of fascination.

### *Final thoughts*

Growing *Moraea* in the UK is not without its frustrations, but for many gardeners the rewards outweigh the challenges. With their compact size, striking flowers and intriguing biology, they offer something distinctive – particularly for those with an interest in South African plants. Success depends on light, drainage and patience, but when conditions are right, these plants can be quietly spectacular.

*Paul Flowers*

Paul sent me several of his *Moraea* photos, which I have scattered around in this Newsletter – thank you, Paul!



*Moraea inconspicua* [Paul Flowers]

## From the Bulletins

Bulletin 54/1 was emailed to members in May, and gave details of our Autumn 2026 meeting. It also mentioned the forthcoming sale of Audrey Cain's books on South African bulbs and other plant books, including many on alpine plants. As we have done before, we plan to offer these to members for sale by auction, by email wherever



possible, on the basis of bids received. More details will follow. I included at the end of the Bulletin a list of the 39 books which I had identified as relating to South African flora, especially bulbs.

The list of bulbs and seeds available in the Bulb & Seed Exchange and the list of Audrey Cain's South African books will be emailed to SABG members in due course, either in a Bulletin or Newsletter or separately.

## Contact details

A few SABG members do not have email addresses, or have addresses which do not work. If you do not receive our emails, please let me know if you have recently acquired or changed your email address (or have someone who can receive emails on your behalf and maybe print them for you).

Given the increasing cost of posting Newsletters, if you received this Newsletter by post we would appreciate it if you could consider using email, or read our Newsletters online, or send us stamped addressed envelopes for folded A4 sheets or a contribution to the postage cost. This applies in particular if you would like to receive the Exchange list or the list of Audrey Cain's books by post. (See also Jon Evans' Bulb & Seed Exchange details above.)

## Bulbils

### From the literature

I've come across a couple of publications about Lachenalias, so I've hijacked Mark Wessel's usual spot in the Newsletter. Sorry, Mark!

### A new species of *Lachenalia*

I don't know how many other people do this, but one can register searches of interest with Google, so that when Google discovers a new web page which fits the search criteria, you can be alerted by email.



One of my registered searches is for "Lachenalia", and so in just this way I was informed by Google on 3rd July of the discovery of a new species, recently named *Lachenalia groenewaldii*, in one small area of a Renosterveld reserve in the Overberg region of the Western Cape, between Bredasdorp and Swellendam.

Its entire known population numbers just around 100

plants! Don't expect it to appear in the Bulb & Seed Exchange any time soon!

*L. groenewaldii* is actually the second new *Lachenalia* species to be found at the same location in under ten years, following the description of *L. barbarae* nine years earlier.

You can read more about it in a post by Savanna Douglas in the "Good Things Guy" web-site<sup>3</sup>, with an interesting history of its discovery and a couple of photos of the flowers, attended by a monkey beetle and a Painted Lady butterfly. This article was based on a longer article, with more pictures, at the Overberg Renosterveld Trust's rather nicely presented web-site<sup>4</sup>. Finally, if you want the full botanical monty, the scientific publication by Graham Duncan is in the *Phytotaxa* journal<sup>5</sup>. But you need to be a member of the organisation, or pay for it, to download the paper, and there doesn't seem to be an abstract.

### Graham Duncan's PhD thesis

If you were frustrated in your quest for detailed botanical knowledge by not being able to read that paper on *Lachenalia groenewaldii*, you can make up for it by reading about all the other 142 species of *Lachenalia* in Graham Duncan's 2024 thesis<sup>6</sup> for his PhD degree from the University of Cape Town. There are colour photos, keys and distribution maps.

## SABG Committee

Alina Hughes is taking "sabbatical leave" from the Committee because of other commitments, but she hopes to be able to return in due course. Meanwhile, please contact me (Richard) with questions about Membership.

Also, while we lack volunteers to fill the Committee posts of Chairman and Secretary, I have included email addresses for these posts. Use these if they seem appropriate and you are not sure who is dealing with what – someone will answer! (I hope!)

### Chairman

(post vacant) [chairman@sabg.uk](mailto:chairman@sabg.uk)

### Secretary

(post vacant) [secretary@sabg.uk](mailto:secretary@sabg.uk)

### Treasurer

Mark Wessels [mark@sabg.uk](mailto:mark@sabg.uk)

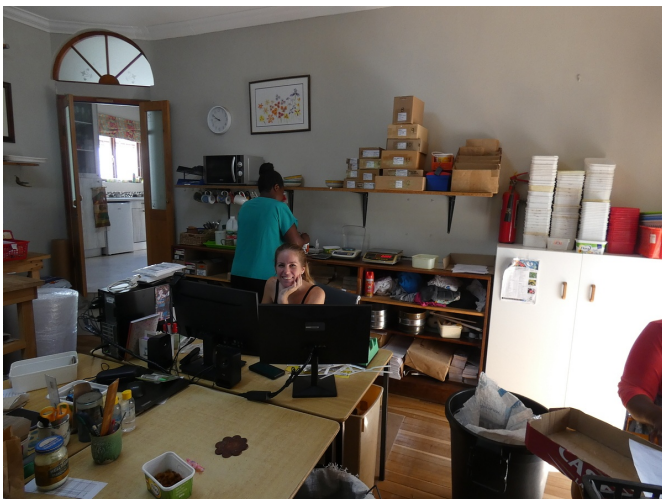
### Bulb & seed exchange

Jonathan Evans [jon@sabg.uk](mailto:jon@sabg.uk)

### Newsletter, Web & Membership

Richard White [richard@sabg.uk](mailto:richard@sabg.uk)

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Packing orders at Silverhill's [Colin Sykes]

- 3 <https://www.goodthingsguy.com/a-tiny-new-flower-has-just-been-added-to-south-africas-plant-family/>
- 4 <https://overbergrenosterveld.org.za/a-new-renosterveld-species-discovered-at-haarwegskloof/>
- 5 <https://phytotaxa.mapress.com/pt/article/view/phytotaxa.759.2.8>
- 6 <http://hdl.handle.net/11427/41450> (a permalink to <https://open.uct.ac.za/items/b7faafb4-27a5-4579-aeb0-c5dc9500d742>)