



Southern African Bulb Group

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SABG Newsletter no. 53

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News

- ★ The timetable for the 2025 SABG Bulb & Seed Exchange has been announced
- ★ A video of the talk by Graham Duncan at the meeting on 23rd March 2025 is available on request

Exbury visit: SABG members welcome. If planning to attend please contact the NAAS Secretary Rosemary Walsh [<nerinesociety@gmail.com>](mailto:nerinesociety@gmail.com) to keep track of numbers expected.

- ★ Sunday 19th October: SABG Autumn meeting in Winchester, UK – Details below and to follow.

Dates for your diary

- ★ Thursday 14th August: Deadline for Jon Evans to receive donated bulbs and seeds (or a list of items to arrive later) – see details later in this Newsletter
- ★ Saturday 16th August: Expect to receive Bulb & Seed Exchange list
- ★ Thursday 28th August: Final deadline for Jon Evans to receive bulbs and seeds previously promised
- ★ Saturday 30th August: Deadline for Jon Evans to receive your Bulb & Seed Exchange wants list
- ★ Saturday 18th October: Nerine Day – NAAS

From the Editor

I am pleased to be able 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.

Our new Treasurer, Mark Wessels, is not just fiddling with spreadsheets. He's been searching the scientific literature related to southern African bulbs and has offered to contribute a regular item to the Newsletter called **"From the Literature"**. He plans to include in

each newsletter a small selection of recently published articles on newly described species, reviews and nomenclatural changes, with links to scientific journals and papers. Thank you, Mark! I will endeavour to include these in our Digital Library. The first selection appears in this Newsletter and includes references to articles on *Gladiolus crassifolius*, *Cyrtanthus pondoensis* and nomenclatural changes in *Colchicum* (*Androcymbium*).

The talk by Graham Duncan at the Spring SABG/NAAS meeting is now available as a video on YouTube, but following Graham's request, only to members of the NAAS and SABG. The talk is the first video on a new "SABG-TV" YouTube channel, for which further contributions will be welcome. For more details, see the Notices and Requests section below.

Other items in this Newsletter include some very welcome photos and accompanying notes by David Lloyd on some *Lachenalias*.

Notices and Requests

Sadly I have to record the deaths of two wonderful ladies who did much to make the SABG the success that it has become.

Sue Bedwell

Sue Bedwell, aged 76, died peacefully in her sleep at the end of November 2024 in Sobell House Hospice in Oxford where she had been for about a week. She was a long time member of the SABG, formerly a member of the SABG Committee and was always very helpful to the group, looking after our catering supplies and sometimes making good suggestions for speakers for our meetings. She was also a member of several other plant-related groups including the Nerine and Amaryllid Society and the Alpine Garden Society, being a very active member of the Oxford AGS Group, winning many awards and 1st prizes in their shows. She will be sadly missed by all who knew her.

Caroline Stone of the Nerine and Amaryllid Society wrote: "Sue had been a great support to the Society for many years serving two terms as Chair. She always helped out with the Society displays at the Malvern Autumn Show and her wide range of plants were always a big help with the mixed display that made up part of the stand. Often she brought tiny and rather fragile plants that were a worry to place but very interesting for people to see, but also *Clivia* and *Haemanthus* as well as Autumn flowering *Narcissus*. Sue's oesophageal cancer had spread to her bones and she was only expected to live for about 3 months. Only about 8

weeks ago she was still gardening, although finding her energy levels depleted. Sue was a proper character and a great plantswoman as well as friend to many of us."

Sue's funeral was held at the Oxford Crematorium on Monday 6th January 2025, followed by a reception at Waterperry Gardens. Sue and her relatives had expressed a wish that her South African plants and books be made available to our members and those of the NAAS. This was done, as reported below in the section on the Spring 2025 meeting.

Audrey Cain

Audrey Cain died on 23rd January 2025. Born in Kenya in October 1936, she moved to the UK in the early sixties. On the steamer from Cape Town to the UK she met the chief engineer, whom she later married. He died in the nineteen-nineties, but Audrey continued to live in their house in Woolston on the outskirts of Southampton, where she grew many alpine as well as bulbs – she was active in the AGS. She was already on the SABG Committee when I joined it in 2009, and continued to serve until 2018 in various roles as Membership Secretary and responsible for posting newsletters and meeting hall bookings. She had been very involved and enjoyed working on the plant sales table and talking with other members. She was a lovely lady who always appreciated help when she was on the sales table at the meetings. Although she had been unable to get to our meetings for several years, she was very welcoming to visitors at her home.

Her plant knowledge was obvious to everyone who met her. She was known for her collection of both hardy and tender bulbs, which she photographed when they flowered and documented their growth in detail. She was an early pioneer in publishing these photos and associated information on the World-wide Web as her "BulbWeb" website. Although no longer available in its original form, a provisional copy of Audrey Cain's BulbWeb has been restored (<https://sabg.uk/bulbweb/>), and will be maintained and enhanced with additional facilities in the future. During the last ten years she had the foresight to ensure that her South African bulbs were gradually transferred to the care of Exbury Gardens.

Audrey's funeral was held at Southampton Crematorium on the 13th February, attended by family, friends and two SABG members. This gave me the chance to meet her son Doug, with whom I had previously corresponded by email about obtaining a copy of BulbWeb.

Video of Graham Duncan's talk

Those of you who attended our joint meeting with the NAAS on Sunday 23rd March 2025 will have noticed a local photographer filming the talk by Graham Duncan. This is now available as a video on YouTube, but following Graham's request, only to members of the NAAS and SABG. To comply with Graham's request, the video is marked by YouTube as "unlisted" and should therefore not appear as suggested viewing or be found in any searches.

The talk includes all the slides shown by Graham, and the questions and answers which followed. There is an accompanying automatically generated text transcript, although this includes the usual kinds of errors generated by such automatic sound-to-text software, such as egg panthers at Kirsten Bush.

If you would like to see the video, please email me (address at the end of this Newsletter) and I will forward the link to you, which you will be able to click or tap on to watch the talk. Please comply with Graham's request by not passing the link to any non-members or posting it on social media such as Facebook where it could be seen by non-members.

I have put Graham's video in a new YouTube "channel" called "@SABG-TV"¹. At present there is nothing else there, and because Graham's video is "unlisted" the channel will appear to be empty. "Nature abhors a vacuum", or so they say, so here is an opportunity for all you budding cinematographers, videographers and vloggers to make short (or long!) videos of topics of interest about S.A. bulbs to share with other members.

Please let me know if you have something to contribute. In fact, if this becomes popular, I would be very pleased if another member would like to take on the role of managing the channel and its contributions, especially as my own experience of making and handling videos is mostly limited to pressing the wrong button on my digital camera!

In the next Newsletter

I plan to produce the next Newsletter (no. 54) for distribution in summer 2025. Contributions short or long will be most welcome, with or without pictures.

From the SABG Bulletins

I send Bulletins by email to all SABG members who have working email addresses. Bulletins contain information which may be too urgent to wait for the next

Newsletter, or which contain personal or other details not appropriate for the Newsletter which is posted on the Web where anyone can read it.

Items of interest from the Bulletins, which do not appear elsewhere, include the following:

The old `sabg.tk` domain (web address or URL) expired on 6 January 2025. We have been using **sabg.uk** since 2022. Please make sure you change any old bookmarks ("favourites") to **sabg.uk** as soon as possible. (You can also use `www.sabg.uk`, as the "www." prefix, technically a "sub-domain", was often used in the past to indicate that an address refers to a web-site. Strictly speaking, either version of the URL should start with `https://` but web browsers will normally fill in this gobbledegook for you, so all you really need to know is **sabg.uk**!)

Carl Garnham provided updates on his activity submitting joint orders to South African suppliers on behalf of other SABG members.

SABG meetings

The last SABG meeting – Spring 2025

Our Spring meeting was held on Sunday 23rd March and was a joint meeting with the Nerine and Amaryllid Society, arranged in order to provide an opportunity for the well known and prolific author Graham Duncan to give a talk to both groups.

Our Winchester venue not being available at a convenient time during Graham's visit to the UK, we arranged instead to meet at Heath End Village Hall, Heath End Road, Baughurst, near Tadley, RG26 5LU. Graham Duncan gave his talk at 11 am, entitled **"Agapanthus, Lachenalia and a lifetime spent at Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden: 1979 – 2024"**, and in the afternoon Jon Evans gave a talk on South African Amaryllids as seen as AGS shows and other places.

Some of Sue Bedwell's plants and those of her books which were not sold in the online auction were on sale. I am delighted to report that all her books and plants were sold, raising £885.51, which was split equally between the NAAS, SABG and Sobell House Hospice where Sue spent her last days.

The next SABG meeting – Autumn 2025

Our next meeting is the Autumn 2025 meeting on **Sunday 19th October 2025**. Bob Charman has offered to give a talk on his recent trip to South Africa.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/@SABG-TV>

This will be held at our regular location in Winchester. Directions are shown on our web-site at <https://sabg.tk/meetings:next:start>. The doors will open at 10.00, and the meeting will close at about 14.30.

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 also be a sales table where you can offer material 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.

There will be a lunch break from approximately 12.00 until 13.00. For those of you that have not come before, it's worth adding that many Members bring their own food so that they can stay in the hall and have the opportunity to chat to others and pore over the display and sales plants. Alternatively, the Sainsbury's supermarket is based on the same site.

As usual, the charge for the meeting will be £3.00 per person, payable on entry. There is no charge for parking, provided that you remember to add your car registration number to the list, usually in the main entrance hall and on the table just inside the entrance to our meeting room, to avoid any fine for over-staying.

More details of the meeting will follow in due course.

Bulb and Seed Exchange 2025

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

Although UK gardening societies are lobbying the UK government to change the regulations to facilitate international seed exchange, the import requirements set by the EU are outside the control of the UK government, and are unlikely to be affected by any changes.

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 **Thursday 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 36² contained instructions for making seed envelopes out of sheets of blank paper. Please include a list of your donations, if possible containing the following

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

information. If you can send the list by email that would be brilliant.

- Genus
 - Species (including subspecies / cultivar name where relevant)
 - Source (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 send me a list of your intended donations, with any supporting information, by email or post, to arrive by Thursday 14th August. My email address is jon@sabg.uk. Please send any such donations to me by Thursday 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.

Best wishes
Jon Evans

Notes on some *Lachenalias*

I became interested in growing *Lachenalia* a few years ago. I was on a road holiday through the Western Cape of RSA when I passed through Vredenberg, which is a nice coastal town NW from Cape Town. I stopped for a coffee and a bite to eat and as I drove north out of the town, a roadside stall selling plants and bulbs caught my eye. Amongst the many endemic plants for sale was one with striking blue flowers, labelled “*Lachenalia viridiflora* very rare”.

The chap selling them told me that he had “rescued” them from a building site on the outskirts of Vredenberg and that there were only a few left growing in gardens and on small bits of scrubland. Interesting, but a sad story nonetheless. I didn’t buy any. But I thought when I got to my destination later that evening I would look this plant up.

I discovered that not only was *L. viridiflora* classified as “critically endangered”, so were many other endemic *Lachenalia*. My Google search also came up with the SABG. I found out that there were regular meetings of the group and an annual seed and bulb exchange. The whole point of growing these fine plants quickly became a conservation issue for me.

There are many challenges to growing *Lachenalia* in the UK. Bulbs have to be acclimatised to living in the northern hemisphere. Here in the UK the winter days are short, the sun is weak and is moving low across the sky. Even if you can heat your greenhouse, the plants stretch and look unnatural because back in S. Africa, the sunlight is stronger. It’s also harder to get them to set seed.

The solution is to grow them under horticultural lights. There are several brands available that produce a colour spectrum that is distinctly mauve/purple. Though the plants do well with this type of light, the colour will attract the neighbours’ attention. Fortunately, there are now advanced LED lights that are very efficient (85%) and produce a white spectrum. Running them from say, 0800 hrs to 1500 hrs starting in the autumn will convince the plants to grow more compact. You can put some reflective material on the inside of the glass, this will throw the waste light back into the greenhouse. They will also produce some heat (the other 15%).

Having a heated greenhouse is a must. Many *Lachenalia* are not hardy and cannot withstand minus 5C. I use a four-burner paraffin heater (cheap to run) with a thermostatically controlled electric 2kW fan heater as a back-up. I don’t want the temperature to go below plus 5C in the winter, having lost some fine plants in the past due to a hard frost.



Lachenalia arbuthnotiae (David Lloyd)

Lachenalia arbuthnotiae is an endemic species that lives in seasonally waterlogged depressions at the edge of wetlands in Cape Flats Sand Fynbos. It has an area of occurrence of less than 10 km and only survives in two small isolated fragments, due to urbanisation of its habitat. There may only be 500 plants left in the wild; *L. arbuthnotiae* is in trouble. The picture shows one of several plants that I have managed to grow to flowering size from seed; they flowered this year as 3-year-old bulbs. They have quite a strong scent.

L. bachmannii is another endemic species now classified as endangered, that grows in waterlogged clay flats and shallow spring pools in the Swartland Shale Renosterveld area north-east of Cape Town. This sort of wetland is being rapidly drained and turned into farmland. To get this species to flower, even under lights, the pot needs to be sitting in standing rainwater.



Lachenalia latimerae (David Lloyd)

L. latimerae is still fairly common across the Swartberg and Kouga Mountains in the Western and Eastern Cape. It's a lovely delicate little plant that likes a well drained sandy compost.



Lachenalia bachmannii (David Lloyd)



Lachenalia luteola (David Lloyd)

L. luteola grows in the Cape peninsula. It is classified as vulnerable as all of its remaining habitat is heavily

infested with alien weeds. It's a dinky little plant with lovely crimson reddish flowers that grows well close together in a pot.



Lachenalia mathewsii (David Lloyd)



Lachenalia mathewsii (David Lloyd)

L. mathewsii was thought to be extinct for many years until a small population was discovered in 1982. Sadly, this sub-population has also been eradicated – but not before seeds were collected and it is now grown in a few specialist collections. It used to live near Vredenberg in moist margins of Cape inland salt pans in the Saldanha Granite Strandveld, but much of this habitat has been developed for housing or used for agriculture. *L.*

mathewsii does survive in two fragments about a mile apart, with a few thousand plants on each.

Unfortunately, both fragments are now threatened, one to urban expansion with the other providing grazing for livestock. It is, however fairly easy to grow in a well lit and warm greenhouse in the UK. It is classified as endangered.



Lachenalia zeyheri (David Lloyd)

Lachenalia zeyheri is another endemic species that is still fairly common, living in the mountainous Kouebokkeveld Shale Fynbos region north-east of Cape Town. It likes a damp marshy habitat and it's not threatened. It's not easy to get the seeds to germinate and if you do, Sciarid fly larvae will eat the young roots. Fortunately one can obtain a nematode preparation that is effective at controlling them.

Correctly identifying individual *Lachenalia* can be problematic. One has to hope that the person donating the bulbs (or the seeds) has got the ID correct. Even buying material from Silverhill or other specialist S. African suppliers, one finds that it is sometimes misidentified. Consulting Graham Duncan's excellent book "The Genus *Lachenalia*" is helpful. Fortunately, experienced SABG members will often provide an opinion.

Remember that importing any plant or seed material into the UK now needs a "phytosanitary" (plant health)

certificate which proves your plants have been inspected in the country of origin and are free from dangerous pests and diseases. I like to keep mine on file; you never know when they might be needed.

Many thanks to Graham for identifying two of my *Lachenalia pallida* plants as the purple form at the recent joint SABG and NAAS meeting, at which he did a fascinating presentation. And for signing my copy of his *Lachenalia* book!

David Lloyd

Note: there are more photos of some of David's *Lachenalias* in Newsletters 42, 43, 44, 46 and 50.

Bulbils

From the Literature

The following open access links to scientific journals and papers are provided for interest and reference. In each newsletter a small selection of recently published scientific articles on newly described species, reviews and nomenclatural changes will be provided. Links to articles are provided where possible but in some cases (i.e. *Flowering Plants of Africa*) a link to the whole journal issue is given: the Contents near the front and the Index near the back can be searched for the relevant species, and the relevant entry can then be clicked on to go straight to the article in question.

Peer reviewed articles

Gladiolus crassifolius in *Flowering Plants of Africa* 65: 8-12 (June 2017):

https://www.sanbi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2017_FPA65.pdf

Note that the preceding article on pages 2-6 illustrates and describes *Codonrhiza azurea*, formerly treated as a *Lapeirousia*.

New taxa descriptions

Cyrtanthus pondoensis in *Flowering Plants of Africa* 66: 22-28 (June 2019): https://www.sanbi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2019_FPA66.pdf

Again, if you browse the Contents page you will find other articles of interest, including *Moraea spathulata*.

Nomenclature changes

Manning, J. (2023). A nomenclatural correction in *Colchicum* L. (Colchicaceae: Colchiceae) in southern Africa: two new combinations for *C. coloratum* J.C.Manning & Vinn., nom. superfl. *Bothalia, African Biodiversity & Conservation*, 53(1)

[\[https://doi.org/10.38201/btha.abc.v53.i1.5\]](https://doi.org/10.38201/btha.abc.v53.i1.5)

Abstract - The new combinations *Colchicum burchellii* (Baker) J.C.Manning & Vinn. and *C. burchellii* subsp. *pulchrum* (Schltr. & K.Krause) J.C.Manning & Vinn. are provided for the taxa currently known respectively under the names *C. coloratum* subsp. *burchellii* (Baker) J.C.Manning & Vinn. and *C. coloratum* J.C.Manning & Vinn., nom superfl.

Full article:

<https://www.abcjournal.org/index.php/BothaliaABC/article/view/387/245>

Mark Wessels

SABG Digital Library

Thanks to two members who've discovered them and pointed them out to me, I have added two new entries to our Digital Library (<https://sabg.uk/library:start>), on *Drimiopsis* (2004) and *Haemanthus* (2025). Although both are technical botanical works, they include many illustrations.

I will add the references from Mark's list (above) as soon as I get a Round Tuit.

SABG Committee

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(post vacant)

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