



Southern African Bulb Group

www.sabg.uk

SABG Newsletter no. 51 July 2024

Newsletter Editor: Richard White richard@sabg.uk

Contents

News.....	1
Dates for your diary.....	1
From the Editor.....	1
Notices and Requests.....	2
<i>SABG Bulb & Seed Exchange 2024</i>	2
<i>In the next Newsletter</i>	3
SABG meetings.....	3
<i>Report on the Spring 2024 SABG meeting</i>	3
<i>The next SABG meeting</i>	3
Sorting out the Massonias – Part 1.....	3
<i>Massonia pustulata and Massonia longipes</i>	4
<i>How do you tell the two apart?</i>	4
Shared Imports: Joint orders for SABG UK members.....	5
<i>Details of the procedure</i>	6
<i>FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)</i>	8
SABG Committee.....	8

News

- ★ The 2024 Bulb & Seed Exchange is in progress (see **Dates** below and later in this newsletter)

Dates for your diary

- ★ Wednesday 14th August: Deadline for submitting material (or at least the promise of material) for the Bulb & Seed Exchange.
- ★ Wednesday 28th August: Final deadline for receipt of promised late submissions.
- ★ Friday 30th August: Deadline for requests from the Bulb & Seed Exchange
- ★ Saturday 19th October: Nerine Day – NAAS Exbury visit: SABG members welcome. If planning to attend please contact NAAS secretary Rosemary Walsh <rosemary.walsh1@btinternet.com>.
- ★ Sunday 20th October: SABG Autumn meeting in Winchester, UK – Speaker Alex Summers.

From the Editor

As previously announced in Bulletin 50/2 emailed on 19th June, the annual **Bulb & Seed Exchange** for 2024 is in progress and is described below.

Also in this Newsletter we have the first part of what I hope will become a series, on *Sorting out the Massonias* by Paul Cumbleton. You might recall a photo of *Massonia longipes* included as a teaser in Newsletter 50.

Finally, I have included **guidelines for joint orders** (i.e. shared imports) written by Carl Garnham who has been managing some of these for SABG members. I have included these for several reasons:

(i) to give some idea of how the process works for any SABG members considering joining in with such “joint orders” or “shared imports” arranged by Carl;

(ii) to show the complexity of the process and thus express our appreciation for what Carl is doing to benefit members;

(iii) for consideration by other SABG members who may be organising similar shared import orders, and

(iv) to provide ideas, advice and “real-world” experience to anyone else considering or carrying out similar joint ordering in other horticultural societies or plant enthusiast clubs in the UK.

Some of the information might also be useful to organisations outside the UK, with appropriate adjustments. If you'd like to get in touch with Carl and don't already have his contact details, send an email (or a letter) to me (Richard) and I'll forward it to him.

Notices and Requests

SABG Bulb & Seed Exchange 2024

The Southern African Bulb Group will be running its Annual Bulb and Seed Exchange again this year. We are hoping to run 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 European Union, 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 Wednesday 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 36¹ 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 (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 (jonevans46.uw@btinternet.com) or post, to arrive by Wednesday 14th August. Please send any such donations to me by Wednesday 28th August at the latest.

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

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. Should you require a paper list to be sent to you by post, before this date please send me 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).

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

In the next Newsletter

I plan to produce the next Newsletter (no. 52) for distribution in autumn 2024. Contributions short or long will be most welcome, with or without pictures.

SABG meetings

Report on the Spring 2024 SABG meeting

The SABG Spring meeting was held on Sunday 24th March 2024 at Badger's Farm Community Centre. The speaker for this meeting was Timothy Walker, formerly the Director of Oxford Botanic Garden & Harcourt Arboretum. The title of his talk was "From Diaz to Diamonds – Plant Hunting in South Africa". His talk was advertised as "The Western Cape region of South Africa is one of the most botanically diverse areas of the World. This talk takes a route from the southernmost tip of Africa to the border with Namibia looking at the plants and the ethnobotany of one of the most fascinating countries in the World."

A full report will be included in a future Newsletter.

The next SABG meeting

Our next meeting is the Autumn 2024 meeting on **Sunday 20th October 2024**. The speaker for this

meeting is **Alex Summers**, who was until recently the curator of the National Botanic Garden of Wales, now working in a National Trust garden. The NBGW has a large section devoted to plants from regions with a Mediterranean climate, including a collection of South African bulbs.

I have included the following notes for people planning to attend, in case I don't manage to produce another Newsletter before then.

Directions to our meeting venue, the Badger Farm Community Centre near Winchester, 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.

Sorting out the *Massonias* – Part 1

In response to several requests to help identify *Massonia* species I decided to give a series of short talks at our meetings, spread over as many meetings as it takes to get through all the species. Each talk will also be written up for our newsletter and this is the first.

This is a genus much in need of further study. Botanists at the University of Graz in Austria in particular are trying to sort out *Massonia* nomenclature and have published several papers in recent years. Currently 29 species are recognised, but expect this to change as further study is done, sorting out older, often confused, nomenclature and describing new species of which discoveries are regularly being made. The 29 currently recognised species are:

<i>M. amoena</i>	<i>M. obermeyerae</i>
<i>M. bakeriana</i>	<i>M. pseudoechinata</i>
<i>M. calvata</i>	<i>M. pustulata</i>
<i>M. citrina</i>	<i>M. pygmaea</i>
<i>M. dentata</i>	<i>M. roggeveldensis</i>
<i>M. depressa</i>	<i>M. saniensis</i>
<i>M. echinata</i>	<i>M. sempervirens</i>
<i>M. elandsmontana</i>	<i>M. sessiliflora</i>
<i>M. gypsicola</i>	<i>M. setulosa</i>
<i>M. hirsuta</i>	<i>M. tenella</i>
<i>M. inaequalis</i>	<i>M. thunbergiana</i>
<i>M. jasminiflora</i>	<i>M. villosa</i>
<i>M. latebrosa</i>	<i>M. visserae</i>
<i>M. longipes</i>	<i>M. wittebergensis</i>
<i>M. mimetica</i>	



M. longipes planted in plunge

(Note, the leaves can be purple or green or mottled). Probably most of the plants in cultivation that are labelled “pustulata” are actually of this new species and should therefore now be labelled *Massonia longipes*.

Plants which *do* fit the original description of *M. pustulata* have only fairly recently come into cultivation and here is a picture of one:



M. pustulata true species

Massonia pustulata and *Massonia longipes*

In this first part I am going to cover these two species whose names have caused a lot of confusion. Plants labelled *M. pustulata* have been grown for a long time and pictured on the Web, in articles and scientific papers under this name. But botanists realised that these plants don’t fit the original description of *Massonia pustulata* and so they described them as a new species, *Massonia longipes*. Here are some examples of *M. longipes*:



M. longipes ex Kew emerging

The botanists did DNA work as well as using morphological approaches to confirm its identity.

How do you tell the two apart?

I will describe some differences that are easy to see and require no particular botanical knowledge:

The first difference is in the leaves. True *M. pustulata* usually has many more pustules than *M. longipes* and these are smaller and evenly distributed over the leaf. *M. longipes* has fewer, larger pustules that are often irregularly distributed. You can see these differences in these pictures:

Leaf Differences



M. pustulata true species from Napier



M. longipes planted in plunge

Massonia pustulata

Lots of pustules – smaller & evenly distributed

Massonia longipes

Fewer, larger pustules – often irregularly distributed

A really obvious and key identification feature is that the flowers of true *M. pustulata* have green-blue coloration in a ring round the top of the flower tube and the tube itself is quite wide. Each flower makes copious nectar and the flower coloration makes this nectar look dark blue-green. This coloration can be easily seen in this picture:



M. pustulata true species from Napier

By contrast, the flowers of *M. longipes* are narrower, with less nectar and are white or pink.

Finally here are the differences summed up for easy reference (on the next page):

Paul Cumbleton

Shared Imports: Joint orders for SABG UK members

Somewhat long, so apologies, but it should cover everything and for most recipients should really just “formalise” things that they already know and which I have circulated informally numerous times.

Rule no. 1 of the SABG shared import “club” – if people understand and stick to the “rules”, it just makes my and participants’ lives so, so much easier. 😊

Rule no. 2 of the SABG shared import “club” – NOTHING in life is risk-free. I have no control at all over the vagaries of couriers, DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs) or HM Customs.

Rule no. 3 of the SABG shared import “club” – the total cost of any order depends on so many variables (see below), that I can only give the most basic guidance. The cost of getting an order to me will be in



M. pustulata true species from Napier



M. longipes from De Hoop

<u><i>Massonia pustulata</i></u>		<u><i>Massonia longipes</i></u>	
<u>Leaf:</u>	Smaller, evenly distributed pustules	<u>Leaf:</u>	Larger irregularly spread pustules
<u>Flower:</u>	Blue-green colour at tube entrance Lots of nectar Wider tube	<u>Flower:</u>	White to pink tube entrance Much less nectar Narrower tube

the order of 20-50% more than the cost in RSA of the bulbs/plants/seeds alone, although the major difference depends on the operation of HMRC (HM Revenue & Customs²) at the time of importation. This may add around 30% to the order value before shipping (they apply VAT and duty on total order value including carriage and 'phyto'). For information, the full details are described online³.

Details of the procedure

A longish explanation, but please read and save. After a few trips around this block, I have been asked the same things a few times each, so all that you need to know should be here, below. If it isn't, ask and I will add it as a FAQ.

Ordering

I have been placing two shared orders, one in the spring and one in the autumn, with the SA Bulb Co (SABC), Shire Bulbs, and Lifestyle Seeds. It is also worth browsing the Lifestyle lists during May – June – July for seed of rare summer-growers, which sell quickly and/or are ephemeral.

If you are interested in participating in shared imports, I will add your email to a general SABG distribution list that receives general updates, new lists, reminders etc. from me. If I am organising an import, I generate a distribution list covering only people who are involved. Everything is sent Bcc. (bar the odd occurrence of dyslexic finger), so details are not intentionally shared. If you would like to come off the distribution list at any time, please ask.

If you would like to share an import at any stage, let me have your wish list **and do nothing more**. Once I have confirmation of availability, I will contact you and ask for a deposit of the cost of **YOUR ORDER ONLY**, converted approximately to ££, deposited in my bank. **(PLEASE EMAIL ME WHEN THE TRANSFER HAS BEEN DONE AND INCLUDE THE AMOUNT** – I do not use internet banking. Please use your surname and the supplier as the reference – Jones Life, for instance.) Costs beyond the actual order value, not least bank/transfer charges/rates, are impossible to guess, so everything is tallied-up once the order arrives with me in the UK and all monies are spent, apart from UK carriage to you.

PLEASE, PLEASE, DO NOT PERFORM YOUR OWN GUESSWORK CALCULATIONS ON ANYTHING. JUST USE THE CURRENT

2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs>

3 <https://www.gov.uk/import-goods-into-uk>

EXCHANGE RATE TO APPROXIMATELY CONVERT YOUR BASIC ORDER COST, NOTHING ELSE. The nearest £ is perfectly good/near enough.

Any other calculation **will** be wrong; even with all available information in front of me; I cannot calculate total costs before the parcel or parcels actually arrive.

Add nothing to cover carriage/postage and nothing for any other cost beyond your bulbs/seeds/plants. See Q2 below.

Distribution to members

Once the order arrives, I weigh each order, including any packets/wraps, and shipping/carriage is calculated/charged pro-rata. I ignore the outer box(es) and any ullage – everyone benefits from those.

Any import costs – VAT (at standard UK rate, currently 20%), duty (just a couple of %) and handling charges (usually a £10-20 fee, but variable depending on who

For instance, for Joe Smith, \$30 “phyto” –

collects it), plus the cost of the phytosanitary certificate (“phyto”), are shared pro-rata with order value. I do not unpack or check anything apart from checking the number in packets by feel, where possible, except when more than one person orders the same item and they arrive together in one packet/wrap.

It is usual for DEFRA (actually their contractors – usually a company called Plant Health, in the case of plants) to inspect imports of any and all biological material. There is no charge in the UK for this inspection at the moment.

The charge for a “phyto” that covers the entire shipment can vary, roughly \$20-30, depending on the seller.

Each person involved in a joint order gets a screenshot of their order and the financial breakdown of the whole process, specific to them, once I have fed Excel and it has calculated everything. **“Final Balance” is what you owe me, although I have been known to miss someone’s deposit ... so apologies in advance. “Total Cost” is the total cost of getting your order to me from RSA.**

	\$	£	\$	£	£						
Invoice - bulbs and phyto (£ value as transferred inc. charges)	276.00	229.71									
Invoice - carriage (£ value as transferred inc. charges)			19.00	15.81							
Charges in UK - clearance, VAT, duty etc.					0.00						
			Total transferred £		245.52						
Invoice -					Grand total £	245.52					
	Weight of personal order	Deposit	Value of personal order		Shipping RSA-UK, based on order wt.	UK Charges, based on order value	Total cost	Balance due on order	UK Postage	Final balance	
	g	£	\$	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	
Joe Smith	16.8	85.00	90.00	84.04	5.84	0.00	89.88	4.88	2.00	6.88	
				0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		0.00	
(Check) totals	46		246.00	229.71	15.81	0.00	245.52				

Unless requested otherwise, orders are sent by 2nd class post within the UK. In 90% of cases this is a small parcel as defined by Royal Mail. If an order is physically very small, especially if it is seeds only, it may qualify as a letter. Large, usually flowering-size, bulbs – *Boophone*, larger *Eucomis* spp. etc., are usually too large and will travel as a medium parcel.

Acclimatisation and other warnings

One word of caution – personally, I would import winter-growers, for me, in UK autumn, when they have just gone or are about to go dormant in RSA. Getting winter-growers into sync with UK seasons is mostly a long job – usually two seasons/winters, often with no above-ground growth at all in the first winter, and starting with dormant bulbs is usually, basically, easier. Not a 100% rule in any sense at all, just my experience.

Summer-growers are difficult to stop growing in most cases, most times of year, just pot them up, even in dryish compost, and they usually grow.

It is a requirement of import regulations that bulbs be imported dry, minus roots and foliage.

Another word of caution. In the time that I have been organising joint orders and my own private ones, DEFRA have rejected one shipment, without providing any explanation. The shipment was eventually returned to the sender and they picked up the bills before reshipping the order exactly as at the first attempt, and everything arrived OK. Challenging DEFRA is not really worth the effort, and certainly not worth the potential, and probably considerable, expense.

And another caution. SABC and Shire are exemplary in all that they do, in my experience. Lifestyle, on the other hand, can be a bit unpredictable, and they have a reputation for seeds in particular being misidentified/mislabelled in 5-10-15% of cases. Personally, I do not have enough of their seed grown to a stage where they can be definitively identified to comment, although I will say that I have a small number of plants from Silverhill Seeds (something of a gold standard), that were very wrongly labelled, so no-one is immune.

FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

Q1. *Why are there differences in charges due to Customs?*

A1. Because **all** imports into the UK above a very low value, are subject to VAT and duty, even if some, such as books, are rated at 0%. These charges are not necessarily applied to all parcels.

Q2. *Can I pay for any costs beyond my order, before my order arrives in the UK?*

A2. I cannot stop people transferring money, but **PLEASE do not do this**. The costs are mostly unpredictable and how they are split depends on both the weight and value of your order, compared to the totals for the joint order. Second-guessing usually just makes life unnecessarily complicated. Until some boxes arrive with me, no-one can be 101% certain if all or part of their wish list has actually been shipped and the exact amount of import charges is a lottery.

Q3. *Can I order anything apart from bulbs/bulb seed?*

A3. Order anything that you want that the seller offers – it all contributes to sharing of costs. Small books can travel with the plants, but large books are so heavy that they would have to be shipped separately in many cases, but it does no harm to ask.

Q4. *When will I receive my order?*

A4. It varies, but assume 3-5 weeks after I have placed the order with the supplier.

Q5. *Availability?*

A5. Many items with all suppliers are in short supply. SABC frequently note on their lists how many they have if the number is small, and this is often only 1, 2, 3 or

so, bulbs. In the case of Lifestyle, despite what appears on the website, the stock is frequently not available at all, and seeds are often only available in smaller numbers than are listed – on occasion, this has affected as much as 10% of what I have ordered with Lifestyle. This is one reason why I do not ask for, expect, or want any deposit until an order is confirmed.

Q6. *Can my order be delivered direct to me from RSA?*

A6. No, this would not be a joint order.

Q7. *Are any plants/seeds available other than what are listed?*

A7. Generally speaking, no, but asking SABC or Shire yourself or via me may be worth it, but plants a mile wide from what is listed are exceedingly unlikely to be available. Most likely would be a bulb or two beyond any number that is listed. If you do approach either supplier yourself, it can make life a lot simpler if you mention our joint order and my name.

Q8. *Can I order direct with a supplier and add them to the joint order?*

A8. In the case of Lifestyle, I would very, very, very firmly discourage this. Otherwise, if a joint order is in the process of being organised, so long as you mention my name and a joint order, this is fine. BUT, let me have your order, please, and payment via me is also far, far, far simpler as that means a single money transfer/invoice/shipping list.

Carl Garnham

SABG Committee

Chairman

Paul Cumbleton cumbleton@yahoo.co.uk

Bulb & seed exchange

Jonathan Evans jonevans46.uw@btinternet.com

Treasurer

Rodney Sims rodney.sims@tiscali.co.uk

Secretary & Membership

Alina Hughes abmhughes@gmail.com

Newsletter & Web editor, Committee minutes

Richard White richard@sabg.uk