



Southern African Bulb Group

www.sabg.uk

SABG Newsletter no. 52 November 2024

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News

- ★ The deadline for requests from the SABG November Seed & Bulb Exchange is 16th November. The list was sent by email on 3rd November (or is included with printed copies of this Newsletter).
- ★ If you're still using **sabg.tk** to reach the SABG web-site, change to **sabg.uk** now! See later in this newsletter for more on this, and about searching for information within the SABG web-site.

Dates for your diary

- ★ Saturday 16th November: Deadline for Jon Evans to receive requests from the SABG November Seed & Bulb Exchange list.

From the Editor

Two important members of the SABG Committee have resigned their role or are in the process of doing so. The changes are described in the **Notices and Requests** section below. Not all of the tasks carried out by the Committee members who are leaving have been taken up by new volunteers, so we are appealing again for volunteers to help us run the group for the benefit of all. Of course, anyone can volunteer to take on any task or role (including writing the Newsletter!), but the specific gaps are listed in the notice below.

Talking of worthwhile tasks, what better example could be found than the regular Bulb & Seed Exchanges? The list of bulbs and seeds available to members in the November Seed & Bulb Exchange has been produced and is mentioned later in this Newsletter.

Also in this Newsletter we have the second part of **Sorting out the Massonias** by Paul Cumbleton. He gave this talk at our meeting on 2nd April 2023.

Notices and Requests

Committee changes

Paul Cumbleton has resigned from the Committee and from the position of Chairman. Rodney is also resigning, but will continue as Treasurer until the end of December, which is the end of our financial year, in order to produce his final annual statement.

The post of Chairman is therefore vacant, and of course any volunteers to take this on will be very welcome. In case it encourages anyone to volunteer, the roles of the chairman were discussed at the Autumn meeting. It would not be necessary for the same person to perform all these tasks, so if you can help with one of them, that would be great:

- Contacting and engaging speakers for our meetings,
- Chairing the meetings and Committee meetings,
- Booking the hall for our meetings.

Even if you aren't able to attend our meetings, you can help by suggesting potential speakers, possibly for Zoom meetings as well as conventional meetings, or indeed other activities for meetings.

If you don't wish to take on an open-ended commitment, help on specific occasions or for particular periods would be welcome. Another thing we would like to do but haven't so far been able is to hold meetings at other locations, especially further north in England or Wales or Southern Scotland where there are many members who find it too far to travel to Winchester. If you'd like to offer help, or ask questions, just email one or more of the members listed in the *SABG Committee* section below.

Mark Wessels has volunteered to take over as Treasurer at the start of 2025. Richard will continue to run the SABG PayPal account in collaboration with Mark. For the time being, Richard will deal with new member applications and meeting hall bookings at Winchester.

SABG web-site: don't use sabg.tk

As reported in Newsletter 47 (October 2022), we started using the Internet domain name **sabg.uk** as well as the older **sabg.tk**. These are used for the address (URL) of our web-site, which since then has been available at **sabg.uk** (and also **www.sabg.uk**) as well as **sabg.tk**. The old address caused a few problems, and we don't want to continue paying for both. As pointed out at that time, and re-iterated on the home page of the web site, the **sabg.tk** address is set to expire in January 2025.

Until now, if you sent your web browser to **sabg.tk** it would show our web site as usual. From now until it expires in January, you will instead see a warning notice,, after which the browser will jump to our regular web site. When the old address expires, it will not reach our web site, so now is the time to make sure that you are not using it. Please make sure you change any old bookmarks ("favourites") to **sabg.uk** as soon as possible.

The domain name **sabg.uk** is also used for some members' email addresses (**jon**, **mark**, **richard** and possibly others in future).

Searches in the SABG web-site

Sometimes I find I need to search through past SABG Newsletters in order to locate a previous article, or references to a particular plant or topic. Other members might want to do the same thing, and some of you may have used the search box at the top right of every web page on the SABG web site, but unfortunately this only searches web pages, not other files on the web site such as newsletters.

For example, a member was looking for an article he'd seen somewhere on germinating *Cyrtanthus* seeds in water (mentioned in Newsletter 47¹). However, typing "Cyrtanthus" into the SABG search box produces no results at all². Typing a more commonly mentioned topic such as "Lachenalia" produces a few "hits", but only on web pages – no newsletters are found³. I am investigating ways for the search box to look into newsletters as well as web pages.

In the mean time, it may be useful to know that Google has already indexed our newsletters. You can search our entire web site, including newsletters and other files, just by adding "**site:sabg.uk**" to your search in a web browser search box (not the search box at the top of our web pages) – for example, try searching for "Cyrtanthus **site:sabg.uk**", which will locate Newsletters 32, 37, 40 and 47, among many other pages and files⁴.

However, if you click on a result, such as a newsletter, you will not be taken to the place where the search term is actually mentioned in the text, even though the relevant text was shown below the link – you have to use your web browser's facility (probably a magnifying glass icon) to search within the displayed page.

- 1 https://sabg.uk/_media/newsletter:sabgnews47.pdf
- 2 <https://sabg.uk/start?do=search&q=Cyrtanthus>
- 3 <https://sabg.uk/start?do=search&q=Lachenalia>
- 4 <https://google.co.uk/?q=Cyrtanthus+site%3Asabg.uk>

My favourite search engine, DuckDuckGo⁵, doesn't seem to return links to our newsletters. If anyone knows a way around this problem, please let me know!

In the next Newsletter

I plan to produce the next Newsletter (no. 53) for distribution in early spring 2025. Photos of plants of interest, short notes or longer contributions will be most welcome, with or without pictures. For example, plants you are cultivating or how you are treating them, or accounts of meetings you have attended (whether our own SABG meetings or other societies where S.A. bulbs are included) would be most welcome.

Which reminds me to say that short notes or long articles are especially welcomed for the Newsletter. Speaking personally, it is always encouraging when any member contributes something in writing or volunteers to do some other task for the group, as it helps us all to believe we are doing something worthwhile and appreciated. On the other hand, if you no longer wish to receive our newsletters, please contact the Newsletter editor.

SABG meetings

I've included brief reports on three recent meetings, two of which I had previously held back in the pious hope that I would find time to expand them. Luckily Paul Cumbleton is providing us with write-ups of his series of talks on "*Sorting out the Massonias*", starting in Newsletter 51 and continuing below in this one.

Report on the Autumn 2023 SABG meeting

At the meeting on Sunday 22nd October 2023, in the morning, Val Bourne gave a talk on "*Plant Passions at Spring Cottage*". It was a general talk about her garden but included the use of South African plants such as Crocosmias etc. In the afternoon, Jon Evans talked about South African bulbs grown at Keith Wiley's Wildside Garden in Devon, and Paul Cumbleton gave part 3 of his series of short talks on "*Sorting out the Massonias*". All three talks were well illustrated with high quality photographs.

Val Bourne says that she is a fully paid-up member of Plantaholics Anonymous and she has a south-facing, third-of-an-acre garden in the wonderfully (and appropriately) named village of Cold Aston, high above Bourton-on-the-Water in the Cotswolds. Her plant passions include crocosmias, kniphofias, agapanthus, snowdrops, erythroniums and hardy ferns etc. Val is a

life-long organic gardener and she trialled herbaceous plants for the RHS for over 20 years. She's an Ambassador for the Hardy Plant Society and has won numerous awards for her articles and her books.

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."

Paul Cumbleton gave Part 4 of his series of talks on "Sorting out the Massonias". This instalment covered two of the less frequently seen species, *M. dentata* and *M. calvata*. Both species are illustrated by colour photos in a 2014 botanical publication (*Phytotaxa* 175(4): 201–215) which I have added to our Digital Library⁶.

Report on the Autumn 2024 SABG meeting

At the Autumn meeting on 20th October 2024, the Committee and the members present gave a vote of thanks to both Paul and Rodney for the excellent services they have performed for the SABG. Paul described the tasks which he carried out, for which we need other volunteers to carry out in future.

The main talk was given by Alex Summers before the lunch break. He was until recently the curator of the National Botanic Garden of Wales, and is now working for the National Trust. The NBGW has a large section devoted to plants from regions with a Mediterranean climate, including a collection of South African bulbs, some of which originated from SABG members.

The title of his talk was "*The Richtersveld – Collecting in the 21st Century*". I should stress that this was not about ruthless collectors stripping an area for illegal profit. It was an account of a scientific collecting expedition, collecting data as well as herbarium specimens, seeds and live plant material for the three botanical institutions taking part, Kew, Kirstenbosch and Cambridge University.

5 <https://duckduckgo.com>

6 <https://sabg.uk/library:start>

The Richtersveld is an arid area comprising two contiguous national parks, one on each side of the South Africa-Namibia border, which work closely together for conservation purposes.

After the lunch break, we were treated to two shorter talks. Tom Radford showed photos of various *Eucomis* species taken in his garden, in pots and at Kirstenbosch, together with several species of *Eriospermum* which he has been growing, highlighting the strange growths produced on their leaves.

Paul Cumbleton then gave the fifth part of his series on “*Sorting out the Massonias*”. In this talk he described *Massonia gypsicola*, *M. roggeveldensis*, *M. bakeriana* and *M. mimetica*.

The next SABG meeting

A date for the **SABG Spring meeting** is currently being decided. It will be on a Sunday in March or April 2025 at Badger’s Farm Community Centre. More details will be announced when available.

Bulb & Seed Exchanges

Summer 2024 Bulb & Seed Exchange

The Summer [2024 Bulb & Seed Exchange](#) has now finished and Jon Evans has posted the bulbs and seeds to members who requested them.

As reported in Bulletin 51/2, Bert Zaalberg said that the bulbs listed in that Exchange as *Gethyllis gerardii* are almost certainly *Gethyllis gregoriana*. He wrote that “Since *gerardii* is an unpublished species name, I tried to get more info through Paul Cumbleton to find out its proper name. Paul told me that he purchased them in 2006/2007 as *G. gerardii* from Gordon Summerfield. Location info was Nardouwsberg, Clanwilliam. After having seen pictures of flowers and leaves, I’m pretty certain this is *Gethyllis gregoriana*. Leaves are quite diagnostic for this species and match the description Paul gave me. I assume it was a simple typo from Gordon back then, since *gregoriana* was cultivated by Gordon Summerfield in those days.”

Anyone who has any other suggested corrections to the names of plants grown from seeds or bulbs obtained from past SABG Exchanges is, of course, very welcome to let Jon or Richard know (contact details at the end of this newsletter) so that other members can be informed.

November 2024 Ephemeral Bulb & Seed Exchange

The [list of available bulbs and seeds](#) for the **November Seed and Bulb Exchange 2024** was sent by email to members on 3rd November. Contact Richard if you did not receive it. Members without email access will receive a printed copy with this Newsletter.

The deadline for requests to be received by Jon Evans is 16th November. Any SABG member with a UK postal address may submit a request. Overseas members can only do so if they and the SABG can satisfy their country’s import regulations. Unfortunately we are unable to post material to addresses in the EU or other countries which require phytosanitary certificates.

Sorting out the Massonias – Part 2

Massonia echinata and *Massonia pseudoechinata*

One species whose name has been confused (and confusing!) for a long time is *Massonia echinata*. We have for a long time grown plants labelled *Massonia echinata*. But a paper published in 2015 sought to clarify this name as it had become obvious that almost all the plants being grown in cultivation did not fit at all with the original description of *Massonia echinata*. Once you see what the true *Massonia echinata* looks like it is really obvious how different it looks to the plants we were all familiar with. The result was that botanists gave the name *Massonia pseudoechinata* to those plants we had all been growing, leaving the name *Massonia echinata* to refer only to plants that agree with the original description. Here is an example of the familiar plant we have been growing, now called *Massonia pseudoechinata*:



Massonia pseudoechinata – Paul Cumbleton

Here is what the true *Massonia echinata* looks like:



Massonia echinata – Paul Cumbleton

You can see how different that looks! (The leaves apparently can sometimes be more purple or mottled in colouration.)

Finally, here are just some of the key differences to help differentiate the two:

<i>Massonia pseudoechinata</i>	<i>Massonia echinata</i>
Leaves with few to many very small pustules	Leaves with large, obvious pustules
Up to 90 flowers per plant	Up to 12 flowers per plant
Flowers white	Flowers yellowish green with reddish flush
Pollen blue	Pollen yellow

The two species are shown side by side below.

Paul Cumbleton

SABG Committee

Chairman

(post vacant)

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Massonia pseudoechinata



Massonia echinata

