

*Alpine Garden Club*  
*of*  
*British Columbia*



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## *Alpine Garden Club of BC*

Internet Home Page: [www.agc-bc.ca](http://www.agc-bc.ca)

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### **Committee Members**

Margot Ketchum - Richard Hankin - Lisa O'Donnell - Bob Tuckey

### **Honorary Life Members**

Margaret Charlton - Francisca Darts - Pam Frost

Ian Gillam - Bodil Leamy - Amanda Offers

Ian & Phyllis Plenderleith - Geof Williams - Bob Woodward

Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month except, July and August, in the Floral Hall, VanDusen Botanical Garden. Doors and Library open at 7:00 pm and the meetings start at 7:30 pm. Please bring plants for the plant draw; the proceeds of which go toward paying for the hall rental.

Front Cover: *Sparaxis elegans*: Photograph taken by Nico Verbeek

## From the Editor

This edition of the Bulletin marks a change in administration of the club. Our outgoing president, Linda Verbeek, has put a lot of time and effort into helping our organization succeed. She, of course, had help from many others, many of whom have remained to carry forward the development of the Club. From this group has emerged our new President, Philip MacDougall. I think I am speaking for all when I extend to all of those of the past administration and those of the new administration our best wishes and our thanks.

## Message from the President Philip MacDougall

As I write this it's February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the first day of the Chinese New Year. I had hoped to write a substantial message of greeting but I, as so many of us find ourselves these days, am stretched in too many areas. Oddly the idea of my less than adequate job takes me in another direction. Our organization exists because of volunteers, donating their time and talents to making the club a resource and social group for all our members. Too often we forget to say thanks to these people. And worse, at times we complain if a something doesn't come off as planned or seems less than well done. Yet every bit of volunteer effort is a gift of their time and resources, and seldom do we experience what might be thought of as the equivalent of the yellow Christmas tie.

During the next 2 years I will get around to thanking those members who volunteer within our group. To start let me say that the success of our last study weekend was the result of an enormous amount of effort on the part of a number of our members. I feel I never praised them adequately, and over the months it has become both less pressing and more awkward. So this message is a thank you to among others; Pam Frost, Ian and Phyllis Plenderleith, Ruth Anderson, Jo Bridge, Margot Ketchum, Sue



Evanetz, Moya Drummond, Ann Dies, Diana Hume, Mark Demers, Dana Cromie, Chris Klapwijk, Doug Smith, Linda Verbeek, Jo Bridge. Forgive me; I know I've left people off this list. To these people and to all I say Gung Hay Fat Choi, have a prosperous and happy Year of The Rabbit

## **Plant Finder**

In order for this section to be of value to all club members, those who submit enquiries should provide some details of the plant characteristics: size, shape, flowers, and other properties that make this a desirable plant. The native habitat of the plant would also be of interest. The request for information or a reply can be directed to [Alan Tracey](#) or [Chris Klapwijk](#).

## **Alpine Flowers of Vancouver Island**

For those planning a trip to the highlands of Vancouver Island this recent publication might be useful. Hans Roemer has published (April 2010) a visual guide to alpine flowers of Vancouver Island. Basically it is a 51cm x 66cm (20" x 26") duplex, fold-out, water-proof and tear-proof colour photo identification pamphlet of 86 representative native alpine flowers on Vancouver Island, British Columbia. It can be ordered through the following web-site.

<http://sites.google.com/site/islandalpineflowersca/>

## **Seed Exchange**

**Diana Hume**

A big thank you to the following additional donors of seeds to the Seed Exchange this year: Bob Gordon, Charles Charron, and Kazmierz Kot. As the seeds arrived after the printing of the Seed List, they were not all able to be included. However, they will be put to good use in various other venues that the club takes part in. Thank you very, very much. It is most appreciated.

## **Programs**

**David Sellars**

**February 9:** Ron Long will speak on the **Flora of Pink Mountain**, British Columbia. Ron is a retired photographer and an active member of the Native Plant Society of BC and the Vancouver Natural History Society.

**March 9:** Jane McGary will give a program on **Bulbs in their Habitats**. The presentation will cover habitats such as meadow, woodland, desert, seacoast, rocky uplands, and alpine areas, with commentary on how the natural areas shown in the photos relate to our garden conditions. Jane McGary is one of the leading bulb growers in the Pacific Northwest and was the Editor of three valuable Timber Press books on rock gardening: *Bulbs of North America*, *Rock Garden Design and Construction* and *Rock Garden Plants of North America*.

**April 13:** Judith McLaughlin from Victoria will speak on **Australian Flora**.

**May 11:** Our very own Glen Patterson will give a presentation on the **Flora and Fauna of the High Canadian Arctic**, featuring the islands about 600 miles north of the Arctic Circle. Glen is an avid world traveller and outstanding photographer.

**June 8:** Timothy McNitt will speak on **Yellow Aster Butte Trail and other great NW Botanical Hikes**. Timothy is a Fern Specialist and Photographer from Bellingham, Washington.

## **Spring Plant Show 2011**

**Linda Verbeek**

This year the public Spring Show will be earlier than usual, due to a scheduling conflict at VanDusen. We should consider this an opportunity to show off some different plants. I know we always have quite a splendid pot show at the March meeting, so we should be able to put together a spectacular show on March 26 and 27. As usual, plants are to be brought in on Friday March 25 between 6 and 9.

We also have two new classes this year. The first one is 'Alpines as Art' (in the miniature gardens and troughs section). This is suggested by our judges, and it is not clearly defined – so only your own imagination limits you. The second is: 'Plant raised from seed by the exhibitor' (Vera Peck Trophy). This is meant to honour the seed exchange and all the people who make it run, which provides us with the means to grow rare plants.

I would like to reassure people that all these daunting classes aren't as bad as it sounds. There are always experienced people around who can help you decide what class your plant can fit in – and the judges have been known to move a plant to another class if they think it fits better that way. If you have a plant that you love, and it is in good shape, it is worth showing and sharing with others.

## Open Gardens

Lisa O'Donnell

**Saturday May 14:** Please join us between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. in South Surrey for a tour of the gardens of David and Wendy Sellars (\*\*\*\*\*) and Jean Olsen (\*\*\*\*\*)! While you are there, visit Free Spirit Nursery (20405 32 Ave.) where Lambert and Marjanne Vrijmoed have spectacular plants for sale!

Wendy and David Sellars started their garden 24 years ago on an undeveloped one acre lot. Working with a clean slate, they shaped the sloping site to create topographic interest and developed a waterfall, stream and ponds. Species rhododendrons, unusual rhodo hybrids and specimen trees such as *Davidia involucrata* and *Magnolia denudata* form the garden plant structure. A rock garden on a high bank built with local glacial boulders and featuring cliffs formed with large tufa blocks extends along the front garden. Plants likely to be in flower include *Edraianthus serpyllifolius*, *Lewisia tweedyi*, *Helichrysum sessiloides*, *Aquilegia bertolonii*, *Androsace studiosorum*, *Androsace villosa*, *Meconopsis betonicifolia*, *Penstemon rupicola* and many Silver Saxifrages.

There are a number of plants in tufa in the rock garden and David will provide a demonstration of tufa planting at 2 p.m.

Jean Olsen started her garden about 22 years ago on a bare acreage with no nice trees, just a couple of vine maples and huge stumps from the original logging off! She began collecting trees at year end sales and now has over 15 species. There is a large rockery down the driveway built of boulders found on the property as it was prepared for lawns. As her children grew up, Jean was able to spend more time in her garden- she now has an extensive collection of maples. Another change in the garden occurred when greenhouses were installed and Jean could grow plants from seed. This is now the basis of her

various collections. After joining the British Cyclamen Society Jean received 4000 seeds of *Cyclamen hederifolium* which carpet many spaces in the garden. She became enamoured of cyripedium, dactylorrhiza, fritillaria, corydalis, and trillium. There are also collections of species rhododendron, peony, hellebores, hepaticas, anemonellas, anemones, arisaemas, while species clematis run up the trees.

You are invited to bring your lunch and enjoy wandering the gardens and then finding a spot to eat!

Free Spirit Nursery is owned by Alpine Garden Club members Lambert and Marjanne Vrijmoed. This is a wonderful nursery laid out with beds containing plants across from the plants in pots for sale- this way you can see how they grow! About 90% of the plants are grown and also propagated at the nursery, many are only available here! There are dynamic planting schemes in which not only colour and flowering time play a role, but character, texture and flower shapes also create a garden that is always interesting. Lambert will be on hand to answer questions and show us 'what's hot!' The nursery is open from 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.

**Saturday May 28:** 11 a.m.- 3 p.m. Glen Patterson's Rooftop Garden (\*\*\*\*\*): This is a wonderful opportunity to see the 2000 square foot rooftop garden that Glen built in 2001. Many of the plants were transferred by flatbed truck from his West Vancouver home. Some that were unable to be planted on the rooftop were donated to the park in front of the building. The collection includes many conifers, an *Acer japonicum dissectum* that is over 100 years old, rhododendron, perennials and alpines, some planted in tufa. In the center of the garden there is a 3 pond water feature with large Koi fish that Glen has had for years. The trees are kept root pruned and cloud pruned to control size and damage from the seaside wind. He has a wonderful Japanese gardener, Jim Nakano, who has worked with Glen for years. Come and be amazed and hear from Glen about how the garden was built and how the soil was created to support this amazing garden.

Lisa O'Donnell's garden (\*\*\*\*\* ) was also started in 2001. The deck, fences and other infrastructure were built by her husband John, and the garden evolved gradually over the last

10 years as plants were found! Particular interests include Japanese maples, conifers (especially dwarf), daphne, gentian, arisaema, podophyllum, polygonatum, clematis, hosta and fern. Many conifers are featured in pots on the decks and there are several bonsai.

You are welcome to bring lunch and eat in either of the gardens!

Near Lisa's Garden you will also find The Natural Gardener Gardening Store (4376 West 10th Ave, Vancouver), owned and run by Bob Tuckey, member of the Alpine Garden Club. There are rare, unusual and native plants in the nursery as well as other gardening essentials (including seeds) and giftware. Come and visit Bob at the store and receive your usual 10% discount and a surprise gift!

## **Plant Sales Mark Demers**

The spring sale is on Saturday May 7 at St. David's Church at 1525 Taylor Way in West Vancouver. Set up is 5-8 PM on Friday evening and 9-11 AM on Saturday morning. The sale is open to the public 1-4 PM with a pre-sale for volunteers at 12 noon. There will be a pot-luck lunch for volunteers and dealers.

## **THEY WANT TO GROW! (although they can be choosy about it) Linda Verbeek**

Vera Peck, who used to run our Seed Exchange, and turned it into the splendid institution it is today, always said about seeds: "They want to grow". And so they do, although sometimes it may take more patience than most of us are likely to have. In the fall of 2002 I ordered a number of alstroemeria species from Plantworld in Devon, UK. At the time, the instructions for germinating alstroemerias were to put them at room temperature for 6 weeks or so, then in the fridge for the same length of time, and then back at room temperature, at which point they should germinate. Usually they didn't, and nowadays I am inclined to put them at 10° C or so, which works much better. However, I didn't know that then. So I did what the expert suggested, and when they didn't germinate I repeated the performance, and after that just put them outside.



I always keep my seed pots through two winters, and often the bigger seeds will germinate after the second. I throw them away after that, unless the seed is notorious for slow germination, like peonies or *Colchicum*. However, this time I decided to investigate what the seeds looked like after 2 years – *Alstroemeria* seeds are quite large and instantly recognizable. And in a pot of *A. gayana* I did indeed find 5 perfectly healthy looking seeds. I planted three of them in the garden, and never saw anything again. The other two, on a whim, I put in a piece of paper towel in a plastic bag and tucked it in with my *Fritillaria* pots in the big planter under the eaves. They got extremes of temperature there, and once in a while, when I thought of it, I'd put a little water on the paper towel. You couldn't imagine a more destructive regime, but every time I looked at them they were healthy and sturdy-looking but never showed any sign of germination. This went on for five years (!) and late last summer, when I was repotting all my bulbs, I found this little baggy again, and decided, enough was enough. I thought I'd thrown them away, but I must have put them in some leftover mix, because lo and behold, in October there were these two little *Alstroemeria gayana* shoots in a seedpot, still with the original label from early 2003. They had germinated.

## **Flora of South Africa's Cape Province, part 2**

**Linda Verbeek**

In the Spring Bulletin of 2009 I wrote about the *fijnbos* in the Cape area, the defining vegetation type of that area. The rest of the vegetation is not classified in a single category, but to a casual visitor the various types look similar, at least where you find them. As I said before, they are getting pretty rare. The general aspect of this type of vegetation is much more open than *fijnbos*; there are still shrubs, but they are lower, and more widely spaced. As an aside, these Mediterranean type shrub vegetations all have their own colour - in North America it tends to be grayish, in the Mediterranean a dusty green, and here it had a definite brownish tinge. It is this vegetation type that people generally come to see when they go on flower tours. This is where the wildflowers grow, and they do produce an incredible show. The most numerous and showy ones are the daisies, in every imaginable colour – blue, white, pink, orange, red, yellow. Also they are quite often not plain. Many of them have markings at the base of the ray flowers, sometimes just a dark spot, but quite often the flower presents concentric rings of contrasting colours – for instance,

imagine a bright orange flower with a black ring, within which are electric blue markings. Or a cream-coloured flower with a black ring around the centre, and a darker yellow area to mark the transition. I couldn't begin to list all the Asteraceae we saw (and that was only a fraction of the ones in the books), but here are some of our favourites.

*Dimorphotheca pluvialis* is an annual with large, glistening white flowers with a yellow heart, and no further markings. The back of the petals is purple. It is very widespread, and like many of the daisies, it prefers somewhat disturbed soil, such as roadsides and abandoned fields. We saw fields just covered with this, all the way from the south coast to well up the western side of South Africa. I also managed to acquire some seed of it, and last year it flowered nicely in the garden, and with some persuasion, set seed. This year it isn't doing so well, but then I was away at the critical time. The old seed is still viable too. It seems to me this would be quite a valuable annual to have in the summer garden, it bloomed all summer long.

Another plant in this genus (*D. cuneata*) is a small shrub, with the same glistening white flowers, only this time the reverse of the ray flowers is a very strange, pale salmon sort of colour. Like the previous one (and most of the daisies) the flowers close at night and in dull weather. This plant occurs much further inland, on the edge of the Karoo. We saw it first on a dull day, and I puzzled a long time about this plant with the somewhat untidy looking, strange-coloured stuff on top of it. The next day it was brilliantly sunny, and the same plants were transformed into blazing bouquets of white. The plants tended to be quite symmetrical in shape, and to be covered in flowers. But not being an annual, I think it would be mostly impossible in our gardens.



*Gazania krebsiana* Photograph by Nico Verbeek

The familiar *Gazania* that we can buy in all the nurseries in the spring is also a South African. I don't know whether there is any hybridizing in the commercial ones. The *Gazanias* were numerous in the Cape area, and mostly rather similar to each other. They are also very similar to the genus *Arctotis*. They seemed to be all dark yellow or orange, and to vie with each other in the

elaborateness of the markings at the base of the ray flowers. For instance, in *Gazania krebsiana* the base of the rayflower (closest to the centre of the flower) is a slightly darker orange than the main part, with white edges parallel to the length of it. Beyond that is a white dot surrounded by a brown edge and finally the main part of the ray flower, which is orange. In *G. rigida* the base of the ray is charcoal grey, marked with white flecks near the outer end, then comes a dull brown stretch tipped by a deep red-brown stripe, and then the main part of the ray is again orange. In *Gorteria diffusa*, another orange daisy, the markings occur on only some of the ray flowers, and are thought to mimic beetles (the common name is Beetle Daisy!).



*Gazania rigida* Photograph by Nico Verbeek

However, opinions differ whether the mock beetles are meant to attract more beetles to serve as pollinators, or to discourage other herbivores, because the flower is already occupied. I guess no-one ever sat beside one long enough to see what happens. But I have to say that we didn't see live beetles in the flowers. In one variety the 'beetles' occur on every ray flower, thus turning the marking into a ring again, and losing the beetle image.

Not all the 'daisies' are Asteraceae. This is also the territory of the Mesembryanthemaceae, or Ice Plants. The flowers all have so many petals and so many stamens that they do look very much like daisies. Most of them are pink, or magenta, but there are also brilliant yellow species and at least one flaming orange one (*Lampranthus aureus*). The one we know at home as the annual iceplant is *Dorotheanthus bellidiformis*, and it occurs in the wild in as many colours as it does in cultivation. To my surprise, many of the 'meses' are shrubby, usually very compact and dwarf, but decidedly woody. Some of them also have rings around the centre of the flower, but then usually only one. *Ruschia unca* was the most elaborate we saw. It is pale pink with a darker ring at the base of the petals, and then the centre is again pale pink with a darker centre. I don't know whether the immature stamens are darker than the ripe ones, or whether the dark spot is created by the stigma(s). *Cheiridopsis rostrata* was a brilliant golden

yellow annual, which created sizeable colour patches where it occurred.

In between these show-off's there are many other, smaller or less numerous plants that reward closer observation. There is a genus of Cruciferae, *Heliophila*, that actually does grow massively enough to make sizeable colour patches. The best of them grow about 30 cm tall



*Cheiridopsis rostrata* Photograph by Nico Verbeek

and have truly sky-blue flowers, about 1 cm across. They are all blue, but some of them are more washed out. There are also many species of *Nemesia* and *Diascia*, but they none of them look like the commercially available bedding plants. The only one that comes close is *Nemesia caerulea*, forms of which have been available for some years. But the wild plant is very wispy, and although the flowers are a beautiful blue, they are quite small, and sparse. Most of the other *Nemesias* we saw were yellow with other markings, and they were all wispy and never occurred in numbers. The form of the flowers was quite interesting, though, with the corolla lobes long and narrow and often subdivided into linear segments.

From the Neuradaceae, a small and obscure family with only three genera, comes *Grielum*. In South Africa there are 2 very similar species; in one the flowers are all pale yellow, in the other the centre of the flower is white. They grow just like bindweed, flat on the ground, and the flowers, too, are reminiscent of bindweed. They can form patches of considerable size.

Pelargoniums are plentiful here, and very different from the ones we're used to. All of them have smallish flowers, more like the lemon geranium than like *P. zonale*. There is a brilliant red one (*P. fulgidum*), which scrambles, or even climbs through other shrubs; a rosette plant with a tuber and umbels of up to 20 candy-pink flowers on short stems (*P. incrassatum*); and shrubs like *P. spinosum*, which grows up to 1 m in height and has fierce spines to 5 cm long. The flowers of this are pale pink with veining, and nestle between the spines.

Another common genus is *Oxalis*, but they are hard to identify, as it has to be done by the leaves, and sometimes the tubers. They are white, yellow, pink, or even salmon-coloured, and often the same species varies. Almost all of them are beautiful, and would make a lovely addition to a garden, but I have no idea how hardy they would be – or how invasive, if they did settle in.

One of the big surprises was *Drosera cistiflora*. It occurs mostly in damp places – but that is where many of the bulbs also congregate, and it had the biggest flowers around, perhaps 4 cm across, in white or deep pink, on slender stems to 25 cm.

And even the Gentianaceae were represented, in the form of 2 or 3 *Sebaea*, small annuals with usually bright yellow flowers in flat-topped, starry clusters, much like the European Centauriums, except that those are pink. I should actually quite like to grow those.

Of course, this is also where the various bulbs are in their glory. Although I personally think there is even more fascinating detail in the various bulb flowers than in the dicots, they generally don't make as much of a statement in the landscape, as they don't tend to occur massively (from the pictures in books, there are some exceptions, but we mostly didn't see that). The only one we saw that made an impact from a moving car was *Moraea miniata*, locally called Tulip(!), a tall, branched stem with a number of salmon-orange, wide open flowers. This grew in fairly dense, low shrub, and overtopped the other vegetation, so you saw all these waving flowers floating over the brownish surface.

As I said before, South Africa has the largest concentrations of geophytes – according to Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden almost 4 times as many as the next richest floral region, the Mediterranean. I never found a convincing explanation why this should be so. Also, almost 60 percent of them belong to one family, the Iridaceae. I don't think I am going to bore you with a description of all the ones we saw, I'll just highlight a few of the most fascinating ones.

There are 3 or 4 small bulbs that have a pattern of a deep blue outer edge and a wine red central area. We saw 2 of them, *Geissorhiza radians* and *Babiana rubrocyanea*. The flowers only differ in that the *Geissorhiza* has a narrow white line between the blue and the red,

and the *Babiana* doesn't. They grew together, in a very wet area, but the *Babiana* occurred just a little higher up than the *Geissorhiza*, which grew just about in standing water! There were other bulbs that did that, *Sparaxis bulbifera* with creamy white cups on taller stems (25 cm or so): one even with just the flower above water (*Romulea tabularis*) and the long, narrow leaves emerging.

In some genera the flower form can be quite variable. *Moraea* is the worst in that respect. South African taxonomists are lumping in a big way, and the genus *Moraea* now contains about 4 or 5 old genera.



*Moraea fugax* Photograph by Nico Verbeek

The original genus had only flowers that looked much like Iris-flowers, with rather broad falls, often marked with different colours at the base. Of these we saw, for instance, *M. fugax* and *M. tricolor*, both very short-stemmed. They are quite wispy plants, with only one or two very

long, narrow leaves, and only one or two flowers at the time. As an aside, I flowered *M. fugax* this spring. I think a lot of these winter-growing, South African bulbs would do very well in an alpine house – as I said in the first article, it gets pretty cold in Africa too. Not having an alpine house, I just line up the pots against the house and cover them with several layers of clear plastic. The house leaks enough heat and the plastic traps enough solar energy to keep them safe down to  $-5^{\circ}$  or  $-6^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Only if it gets colder than that do I put them in the windowsill, and they go out again as soon as possible.

Other sections of *Moraea* look more like the florists' Irises, with very narrow falls. I have two of those in the garden (*M. flexuosa* and *M. spathulata*, both yellow and both quite winter-hardy, but they are summer growing, and I don't think they come from the Cape area. And then there are the open cup-shaped ones, like *M. miniata* I referred to above, which used to be in the genus



*Moraea vallis-belli* Photograph by Nico Verbeek

*Homeria*. Others that belong here are *M. vallis-belli*, actually very similar to *M. miniata* and *M. elegans*, which we only saw at Kirstenbosch, very striking, yellow with a black spot at the base of 3 of the 6 tepals.

And then you have the *Romuleas*, which are all very similar indeed. They are very closely related to the *Crocuses*. The leaves are all



*Romulea eximia* Photograph by Nico Verbeek

thread-like, and the flowers tend to be more starry, not as bowl-shaped as the *crocuses*. They come in the most vivid colours, and usually the cup-shaped centre of the flower is coloured differently, often with various markings. I don't want to list them all, but some of these do come in concentrations, like *R. eximia*, a very vivid bright pink, in the same general area as the blue-and-red ones mentioned above. *R. rosea*, a similar colour but smaller flower, occurs as a weed in lawns (even in SW Australia!). *Romuleas* come in yellow, purple, white, lavender, red. I am growing some of these, and have flowered several (and lost some of them too). If you treat them right (including feeding them enough, and I think giving them lots of water while they are in growth), they can flower in their second year.

Another one of my favourites was *Lapeirousia oreogena*. Whereas many *Lapeirousias* have flowers with a long tube and spreading corolla lobes, this one looks as cup-shaped as the *Geissorhizas*. The flower is purple-blue, with a black centre marked by inward pointing white triangles.



*Lapeirousia oreogena* Photograph by Nico Verbeek

And how can I not mention the *Babianas*. They are totally identified by their leaves, which are pleated like *Tigridia* leaves, and usually hairy. Their flowers tend to be more or less zygomorphic, sometimes clearly 2-lipped, and they usually bloom several at the time. Like so many of the bulbs,

they stay close to the ground, but a cluster of bulbs with flower trusses all around makes quite a show. *Babiana vanzyliae*, from the Nieuwoudtville area, was named after the grandmother of the man who still owns almost all the accommodation in the town! Many of them are blue-violet, and some have intricate markings on all, or the lower three, tepals, like *B. framesii*, which is marked with white, almost spade-shaped spots.



*Babiana framesii* Photograph by Nico Verbeek

It does not do to ignore all the other families of bulbs. Cyanellas belong in the Tecophilaceae, but you wouldn't guess it by looking at them. They mostly have spikes of smallish, very lily-like flowers in white, yellow, or lilac. They are quite elegant, and a patch of them is quite a sight.

*Bulbine* and *Bulbinella* belong in the Asphodelaceae. The difference between the two is in the anthers: hairy in *Bulbine* (emphatically so, like in *Tradescantia*), and bare in *Bulbinella*. In fact, the *Bulbinellas* we saw were all quite tall spires of great numbers of flowers, so that the effect was more or less that of a short *Eremurus*. They came in yellow or even orange in one variety, cream, and clear white. The *Bulbines* were mostly much smaller plants, with only 12 or 15 flowers, which would look great in a pot. The ones we saw were lemon yellow.

As far as I can make out, you can find some bulbs in flower in the Cape province in any month of the year. There is a group that flowers specifically in the fall, members of the Amaryllidaceae. They make big umbels of mostly reasonably large flowers, and when they have a good year, they can colour the hillsides pink. Of course, being there in the spring, we didn't see any of this, we only saw the leaves, which are large, and flat on the ground, and peculiar in that they seem to meet in the centre in a line, rather than a point. I wondered how a new pair would grow up between the previous one, as there were sometimes as many as eight leaves.



In the Hyacinthaceae we find *Ornithogalum* – of which we saw only white species, including the florists' Chinchinchee (*O. thyrsoides*), but there are also yellow and orange ones. Very similar are the Albuca's, mostly distinguished, I think, by the fact that the inner tepals don't spread, so that the flower looks more like a snowdrop. The texture of the tepals is very heavy, though, and the comparison does not immediately come to mind. They are mostly white with green lines on the tepals, but there are some yellow ones too. The largest bulb we saw is in this genus, *A. maxima*, which can grow to 1 ½ m or more. It is white. Here too belong the Lachenalias, which are sometimes seen in nurseries. The ones we saw were all quite short, 15 to 20 cm. The leaves are in a rosette on or nearly on the ground, from which arises a relatively stout stem with an inflorescence that looks most like a long-drawn-out *Muscari*. I find most of them rather understated, but both *L. unicolor* and *L. violacea* are a beautiful uniform purple, and *L. pallida* has a dusky-pink top (presumably the buds) and pale yellow open flowers lower down.

This doesn't even cover all the families, but hopefully you've got an idea of the riches of this vegetation – and maybe some of you would even be interested to try to grow a few. Silverhill Seeds in Cape Town has an extensive seed list, and a nice catalogue on the web ([www.silverhillseeds.co.za](http://www.silverhillseeds.co.za)).

## **Colour in the Winter Garden**

### **David Sellars**

The assignment was to find colour in the winter garden on a single sunny day in January. The challenge was that we have not purposely chosen plants for winter flowering. Hamamelis is far too yellow for the wife's taste and who wants to be out in the garden in a coastal BC January anyway when it is most likely to be dripping with cold drizzle and fog.

But the angle of the sun on a bright winter day does wonders for the colour of bark and leaves so camera in hand, I set off to find some images of interest.

The first stop was beside the ever reliable *Cyclamen coum*. Somehow it flowers in January despite the alternating drenching rain

and freezing temperatures. It is also one of the easiest cyclamen to grow so it is a plant that everyone should have. Nearby the leaves of



*Cyclamen coum*. Photograph by David Sellars



*Rhododendron bureavii*. Photograph by David Sellars

*Rhododendron bureavii* form a green glossy canopy with the hairy indumentum extending up the stalks and onto the new buds. Above the rhododendron, the bark of *Acer griseum* forms an attractive backdrop.



*Acer griseum*. Photograph by David Sellars

Over in the rock garden some of the Kabschia saxes are starting to show flower buds. *Saxifraga* 'Franz Liszt' and *Saxifraga*



*Saxifraga* 'Franz Liszt' 'Winifred'  
Photograph by David Sellars

'Winifred' are two of the first to flower. I have them growing between blocks of tufa with the top block slightly overhanging to provide some protection from the rain which can spoil the flowers. *Daphne*

*arbuscula* grows happily nearby in a tufa block and its winter foliage is a beautiful dark green which sets off the pink flowers when they arrive in late April. Below the daphne, a large mat of *Saxifraga paniculata* is



*Daphne arbuscula*. Photograph by David Sellars



*Saxifraga paniculata*.  
Photograph by David Sellars

extending its charming rosettes across the coarse gravel.

In front of the house there is more sun and the galanthus are tentatively opening their flowers. It is still not warm enough for the flowers to completely extend and the flowering is likely to be over before this happens.



*Galanthus sp.* Photograph by David Sellars

December, the flowers appear before the leaves but they can be spoiled by hard frost though heavy rain doesn't seem to bother them. This shrub is easy to grow and propagate and as an added bonus, is sweetly scented, so is worth cutting for a vase in the house.

The appreciation of winter colour

One of the finest plants for the winter garden is *Viburnum bodnantense* 'Dawn'. Starting in



*Viburnum bodnantense* 'Dawn'.  
Photograph by David Sellars

in the garden is fleeting. The subtlety of the winter palette will soon be forgotten as the vibrant colours of spring start to take hold.

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*Viola cotyledon*, Volcan Villarrica, Chile (Jan. 2011)  
Photographs by Alan Tracey

