Dear Member

**NEWS FROM THE KIRSTENBOSCH BRANCH OFFICE AT THE STONE COTTAGES:**

The Kirstenbosch Branch of the Botanical Society of SA has continued its support of the upgrading of the hard landscaping at Kirstenbosch (reported in *Veld & Flora* September 2007) and has donated an amount of R1 508 529.51 to this project. Camphor Avenue has been re-surfaced with aggregate brick as well as the following sections in the Garden: Section 11 from the sun shelters near the Erica Garden to the Useful Plants Garden; Section 3: from the Restio Garden intersection to the Protea shed; Section 6: from the sun shelters to the Cussonia trees (Arboretum) and Section 8: Rycroft Gate to the Tennis Court at the Director’s house.

Kirstenbosch Branch has also donated R35 000 to Kirstenbosch for metal benches in the Streptocarpus House and R8 000 to the highly successful Biodiversity Expo which took place in Kirstenbosch in May.

**Owl Box Project:** Several members have phoned the office enquiring about how to obtain an owl box, and after investigation we managed to contact this organisation. The project was initially established in response to the nearly 200 baby owls which environmental organisation EcoSolutions receives into its care every year, orphaned because of the lack of suitable nesting sites. In existence for four years in Gauteng and newly available to residents of the Western Cape the Project is designed specifically to address this shortfall in suitable nesting/breeding sites for owls within suburban greenbelts. By installing an owl box in your garden you can provide an owl family with a nesting site, which will in turn offer them a safe haven from the perils that exist for owls in urban environments. Owls are a superb natural resource and an incredible urban asset: just one family of owls can consume up to 2,500 rodents a
year, making a dramatic impact on the rodent problems while helping to conserve one of our best-loved birds and cutting down on the irresponsible use of rodenticides. To find out how you can become involved in the Owl Box Project and help preserve one of our finest environmental assets please contact EcoSolutions on 072-365 9777; email: ecosolutions@absamail.co.za or visit their website: www.ecosolutions.co.za.

The Botanical Society Bookshops at Kirstenbosch: We were sad at the end of July to say goodbye to staff member Priscilla Fabris who for the past 10 years has been such an integral member of the branch staff.

PHOTO

Caption : Priscilla Fabris and Astrinita Matthews

Priscilla originally started work at the old Garden Centre and in the last 3 years has managed the satellite bookshop. She has also been a huge support during Kirstenbosch Garden Fair – volunteering both days to work at the tills and help in the office. Replacing her is Astrinita Matthews, who for the past two years has worked at the Visitors Centre bookshop. Astrinita also worked at the old Garden Centre for two years from 1999 and returned to work at the bookshop in December 2005. We would like to take this opportunity to wish Priscilla all the best in her new venture and congratulate Astrinita on her new position.

Kirstenbosch Craft Market: the market re-opens after the winter recess on Sunday 28 September 2008. Our grateful thanks to Nedbank for sponsoring the printing of the Kirstenbosch Craft Market 2009 calendar bookmarks. Nedbank have sponsored the printing of these bookmarks since 2002 and their continued support is greatly appreciated.

The Botanical Society Conservatory was built to keep plants dry, not warm like other conservatories and the scientists at Kirstenbosch needed living collections to observe and study plants. It is the only conservatory of its size designed to house arid-adapted flora because not all plants can grow on the wet side of Table Mountain. The conservatory had been a vision of the Botanical Society since 1989. After much hard work and support from our members, as well as donors including Anglo American and private individuals, it was completed in 1996 at a total cost of R6 200 000. The Kirstenbosch glasshouse, named the Botanical Society Conservatory, was opened in August 1997. There are about 10 000 specimens of succulent plants in the world and nearly 46% of them are found in South Africa. Housed in the Botanical Society Conservatory is the largest succulent in the world, the Baobab Adansonia digitata which was donated to Kirstenbosch by the Venetia Mines.
The conservatory is open on three sides and covered with wire mesh to keep birds out, but to allow insects in for pollination. The layout denotes the natural biomes of South Africa and contains rocks found naturally in that biome. The design of the glasshouse reflects the climate and the impact of animals on the plants of each region. Biological warfare has to be used to control pests in the conservatory. The California mite controls the Red Spider mite on the Baobab. The Cape chameleon and the Slugeater were introduced into the Eastern Cape Valley Thicket biome to eat the snails. The Skinks control the flying insects. The Praying Mantis is a voracious eater of aphids and other pests. In addition, in 2005 the Kirstenbosch Branch of BotSoc committed themselves to funding the much needed re-painting of various sections of the conservatory and raised a further R287 234 to achieve this.

If you haven’t yet visited this amazing conservatory, it is located at the Visitors Centre (Gate 1), Kirstenbosch. For more information, see www.sanbi.org.

NEWS FROM KIRSTENBOSCH BOTANICAL GARDEN:

KIRSTENBOSCH VOLUNTEER GUIDES CELEBRATE 25 YEARS

Come & join us for 10 days on our fantastic special garden walks

For the past 25 years volunteers have been taking visitors on guided tours round Kirstenbosch gardens. During these years the gardens have changed and developed and the numbers of visitors, especially foreign visitors, have grown considerably.

Currently there are 28 volunteer guides who meet once a month to discuss matters relating to the gardens and to walk through the gardens to observe new developments or plants which are of interest. The guides offer a free guided tour every day (except Sunday) at 10h00, this is usually a general tour taking in plants which are most interesting at that time of the year. These tours are popular with the foreign visitors who want to see as much as possible in a short time. The guides are also frequently requested to help with the growing number of private tours which take place round the gardens.

To celebrate their 25 years the guides are offering a very special programme to the public, this will take place every day from Tuesday 4 November 2008 to Friday 14 November 2008 including the weekend.

Over and above the daily 10h00 tour 3 other tours will be offered every day during that period which will be theme based and will concentrate on specific plants, insects, special aspects of the garden. Here are some of our suggestions:
Early morning or evening - nature lovers walk; what's blooming in the garden; a poetry walk; what's in a name; walking through the sculptures; these are a few of my favourite things; pond, vlei and river stroll; shady secret paths; remarkable trees; historical walk through the gardens; the ficus trees of Kirstenbosch; survival strategies in the conservatory; twilight fireflies; understanding proteas, ericas and restios; fabulous fynbos – waterwise gardening; a culinary walk; medicinal plants etc. We will also have a pram walk for mums and babies with fun activities and for senior citizens who are less mobile or who are wheelchair bound.

These walks are primarily targeted at local Capetonians but all visitors are welcome so mark it in your diary and invite all your friends along. Closer to the time the scheduled timetable will be advertised in the local papers and on the radio. Fliers will also be available at all entrances to the gardens.

Don’t miss this great opportunity to celebrate with us and to learn more about our environment and the plants in our famous Kirstenbosch gardens.

Tel. Kirstenbosch Info at 021-799 8783.

Wednesday Talks at Kirstenbosch presented by Room to Grow, Sanlam Hall, Kirstenbosch at 10:30 Enquiries: Cathy Abbott, tel. 021-465 6440/072-201 2535 cathya@wol.co.za.

3 September: Kirstenbosch: A Haven of Biodiversity by Augustine Morkel, Kirstenbosch Estate Manager.
5-14 September: Chelsea Spring Festival – see below.
17 September: Talk vacation – there will be no Wednesday talk.
1 October: Daisies in Flower (Blooming Daisies) by Norma Lucas, Horticulturist, Kirstenbosch Garden.
30 and 31 October: Cape Town Flower Show cancelled for 2008 – space to be filled with talks at Kirstenbosch – details to follow.
12 November: Garden Maintenance by Sandi Gillman
26 November: Cherise Viljoen, Kirstenbosch Wholesale Nursery Manager – subject to be confirmed

Chelsea Spring Festival at Kirstenbosch, Sanlam Hall:
5 to 14 September 2008 – talks and exhibitions

- Floral Art (co-ordinated by Emmie Pabst) – floral artists will be displaying their arrangements in the front and veranda of the Sanlam Hall
- Flower paintings will be hung in the passage and Hall
- Lecture Series: every day from Monday 8 September to Friday 12 September:
  Mon 8 Sept: Chelsea 2008 – the Heat is On by David Davidson
  Tues 9 Sept: The other side of Chelsea by Linda Keevy
Weds 10 Sept : Urban Farms – Urban Jungle by Jenny Louw
Thurs 11 Sept: Waterwise Planting by Ernst van Jaarsveld
Fri 12 Sept: Planting Indigenous Plants in Pots by Anna Celliers

Enquiries: please contact Cathy Abbott tel. 021 465 6440/072-2012535 email: cathya@wol.co.za ; Roomtogrow Tel. 021 797 8975 email: info@roomtogrow.co.za

Moms and Tots Workshop Report Back:  on a wintery Wednesday 2 July Room to Grow, supported by the Kirstenbosch Branch of BotSoc, hosted a Moms and Tots Workshop in the Sanlam Hall, Kirstenbosch. Kids were taught how to pot plants by Kirstenbosch horticulturist Norma Lucas and could then take their proudly planted work home. They made cupcakes and also enjoyed colouring in and a book reading. It was a great success and organiser Cathy Abbott says it will become an annual event, possibly taking place over two days next year.

Message from Kirstenbosch Garden Centre:

It is almost 5 years since the new retail nursery, Kirstenbosch Garden Centre opened its doors to the public on 1st October 2003. We thank you for your loyal and valued support. However, it is apparent that some members of the Botanical Society are confused by the current situation and we hope that the following helps to dispel the confusion.

Kirstenbosch Garden Centre is a privately run business owned by Richard Jamieson and Trish Hutton-Squire. SANBI is our landlord and we pay a monthly rental to this institution. Although we have a good working relationship with the BotSoc we are in no way affiliated to the Society. Through negotiations with the BotSoc and the management of Kirstenbosch we agreed to offer a 10% discount on all bagged and potted plants to valid, card carrying members of the Botanical Society. This discount does not apply to seedling trays, pots, compost, plants on special or any other merchandise in the shop.

We sincerely hope that all current members of the BotSoc take note of this communication and present their membership cards to the cashier on duty in order to receive the relevant discount on their purchases. We look forward to your ongoing support and wish you all a happy and colourful spring! Richard and Trish.

Biodiversity: Inspiration for Art making course will take place at Gold Fields Centre, Kirstenbosch on 25, 26 and 27 November 2008. Presenters are Wendy Hitchcock and Janet Ranson. To find out more information about the course please contact Wendy at 021-712 3966 email: hitchcock@mweb.co.za or Janet at 021-671 6045 email: janran@cybersmart.co.za.

Kind regards
Tessa van Rooyen
Kirstenbosch Branch Secretary