



# Garden Route Botanical Garden Trust

Trust No IT 2704-97

49 Caledon Street, George, 6529, South Africa  
Tel/Fax: 044-8741558 – Email: scherb@pixie.co.za

Patrons: Audrey Moriarty, John Reid

Trustees: D King, M Fick, D Day, I Donian, B McKenzie, H van Heerden, Y van Wijk

## Newsletter October 2004

A New Look Wildflower Show for 2004

# The Garden Route Botanical Garden on Show!

**Last year EFS donated a large plastic tunnel in which we built the Forest exhibit and held the memorable watery opening and AGM! But in March this year one of George's famous North Westerly Berg Winds demolished one end of the tunnel.**

**- So, ever resourceful and optimistic -**

**We decided that the garden itself now showcases enough of the Southern Cape Flora to be a show in itself! It is going to be great with information, posters, growing tips! At the Moriarty Environmental Centre will be - Named plant specimens, book & gift shop, & a bigger plant sale.**

**Gardeners and Volunteers will interpret their special sections of the garden.**

**Western Cape Nature Conservation Outeniqua Reserve, have kindly offered us the loan of tents this year for the AGM and opening, Trevor Sandwith of CAPE will be giving the speech. It can't pour 2 years running can it!?**

**NB – Fancourt are loaning us 2 Golf carts to make sure absolutely everyone can get round the garden.**

### "Room with a view" written from Jayne's office

Many of the folk that come into my office quite rightly comment on its wonderful setting. I doubt that there are many people who work so close to the centre of town that have such a great view whilst sitting at their desks. We have had a very busy six months since the last newsletter went out, and most of the time I seem to battle to reach just another deadline that is looming up fast and furious. It is always very calming to look at the Garden beyond and be reminded just how worthwhile everyone's collective hard work is.

Looking out I can also get a fair idea of what is going on in the Garden – even if it is just a small section, and sometimes it can all be quite distracting. What is not seen is often heard. A new bird call will from time to time have me running out to see if the bird can be identified. Oriole, Bokmakierie, Woodpecker have been some of the most recent visitors and even the little Black Crakes have ventured into the Office garden.

I also notice the coming and going of various visitors and it is wonderful to see how much the different sectors of our society use the Garden. Recently a group of pre-schoolers, brightly clothed, chattering and carrying backpacks passed by the office on their way to having a picnic in the Garden. What a wonderful way to herald the beginning of spring!

There are also the regular visitors, the dog walkers, runners etc. and over the weekend the numbers really swell.

Unfortunately I also see the actions of those who have little regard for the Rules of the Garden, which has me running out to educate them on the need to respect and care for the plants and Garden. There are those People who ride bicycles on the paths, dogs that run free and children who run through the Garden beds. I even found one child removing a plant to "take home to Mom" – one can only hope that his love of plants will one day see him becoming an avid Botanist, Horticulturist or Conservationist.

Appreciation of plants is not always shown in the manner one expects or hopes for.

*(Ed – in January this year, thanks to Audrey Moriarty's generosity once again, we were able to persuade Doreen Court (well known botanist and author of the definitive "Succulent Flora of Southern Africa") to come in part-time to curate the herbarium collection. She has thrown herself into the job with vigour and great determination which is transforming the herbarium into a fully functional research resource, and a group of amateur volunteers into really dedicated taxonomists! Doreen's part-time has grown into far more, and we cannot thank her enough for all the energy and attention she is giving to the herbarium, as well as to the special succulent collection outside Jayne's office and the Little Karoo Biome in the Bot Garden.)*

### **Herbarium News by Doreen Court**

In February this year we started to accession every specimen in the Herbarium. A Southern Cape Herbarium label was designed and when the details from the collectors' notebooks have been filled in it is attached to the herbarium sheet; the validity of the species name is checked in the Black Book and the identity of the species itself is followed up - only then is the specimen entered in the Accessions Book. Sheila Luck is nearing the end of this task in Asteraceae, Jenny Potgieter and Rion Munting recently started the same work in Ericaceae. Romary helps by re-admitting the specimens to the shelves after this process and generally attends to the genus-species order.

Sydney Ngcakana has joined the Herbarium team and has become expert at mounting dried specimens. He has, in a short while, learned how to check the specimens in the Quick Guide and in the Herbarium, and is regularly using his favourite books in the library. He is always ready to help with pressing plants, planting in the Little Karoo garden, and always leaves the Herbarium section neat and tidy. He attended Fynbos Forum and several field trips all of which have extended his knowledge and experience. Thanks go to Annemarie vd Walt for accession of many new books and journals in the library, which is the main tool for the Herbarium. We enjoy our visitors! - especially when they give us real help with identities of plants of our region (Brian Shire from Kew gave expert help with Indigofera). Also, grateful thanks to Jayne for helping in a hundred different ways.

### **Dudley King, in charge of GRBGTrust finances writes:**

Over the past year we have received sponsorships from businesses in George, and consequently all of our "friends" and associates should really be supporting these sponsors.

Palm Tyres make a monthly contribution to the cost of our fuel for the tractor and grass cutting equipment. We all use tyres and petrol regularly and urge you to fill up your car at Palm Tyres, Caltex Service Station in Courtenay Street.

The Spur Steak Ranch made a significant contribution to the cost of island garden in York Street. When next considering a lunch or dinner, make the Spur your preferred steak ranch.

Direct Security Systems repaired the electronic gates at the entrance to the Moriarty Environmental Centre at no charge. If you need electric gates repaired or installed on your property, call Mike at Direct Security for an excellent and price competitive job.

Chubb Security provides a free alarm system on an ongoing basis to the Herbarium and offices. For this service they also deserve our support.

Sponsors form an integral part of our ongoing aims and objectives. They will continue to support us if we make a concerted effort to support them. When you give them your support, tell them it is because they support the Herbarium and Botanical Garden. It will be appreciated!

Please remember that we have also received funding from the National Lotteries Board - so keep buying those Lotto tickets in the knowledge that valuable funds do get distributed to worthy organisations.

(Ed – Please forgive any omissions, and tell us about them!)



**CRITICAL ECOSYSTEM  
PARTNERSHIP FUND**

### **Gerry Burger reports for the Volunteers**

Charlotta and Rentia spent the past 6 months identifying and labelling plants in the garden. Currently they are also updating the data-base and printing and laminating labels for specimens for the Wildflower Show. Rentia has also designed and populated a Website for the Garden Route Botanical Garden Trust – it is hoped to have it up and running before the show as we have found a server to host it.

Sheilagh Goedvolk has taken over the scanning of Audrey Moriarty's paintings of plants in the absence of Natalie who with children is in Australia. Sheilagh is also responsible for the display of flowers in the George Library and in Jayne's office. Stella van Eysen has taken charge of press cuttings and articles for the Library – we always welcome anything you find about us or scape flowers etc.

Don finished making the wooden drawers for the Quick Guide room and is now transforming some of them into Cryptogamic holders (Mosses etc!). He has also made lots of plant presses for the herbarium which is very welcome, we will even have some to sell at the show.

A roofed addition to the propagation shed has been added so that the ladies can work even if it is raining. Cupboards have been installed and most of the lights in the house are now better and brighter.

Barry and Louise donated lovely curtains for the lecture room so we can now use the projector in daylight and Natalie let down the hems while Ed put up new tracks and hung them.

*(Ed – Gerry is very modest and never tells of all the things he does himself, he is always willing to mend, make and try something and also lives right next door so is called on for all sorts of things like motorbikes in the dam, rubbish bins on fire etc etc! thank You Gerry for being on the Management Committee for 2 years, Romary Wegerle has been nominated as the volunteer representative for the next two years).*

## Pat Gillespie – from the Propagating Volunteers

Having the Botanical Gardens on display for the Flower Show has given the garden volunteers a terrific boost, enthusiasm is flowing strongly.

We are all working hard propagating and generally pruning and fertilising the plants we will have on show and for sale in our nursery. We are also very proud to know that we have made a contribution to the medicinal plants on the Mound, and this is an ongoing process of propagating and replacing, and we also have quite a number of these herbs for sale for making useful home remedies. It is also very rewarding to know that with our sales money we can buy plants for the gardens that so far we have not been able to propagate, and therefore add to the display of plants which grow in this wonderful area of the Southern Cape.

*(Ed - Mitchell studied horticulture and landscaping and was active in this industry for a few years before getting into the computer field. We are so lucky he was hankering for a bit of gardening again as a change! In two short months he has made a huge difference in the garden).* **Mitchell writes:**

The ground work on the maze was back breaking work for the gardeners, but at last 668 young trees have been planted and are already growing vigorously, 3 minor prunings have already started them 'hedging'. These trees are found at most Rock Art sites in the area. A lot of new plant material has been added into the mound over the last 8 weeks (thanks to Ursula, Sylvia & Standford). Planting areas are starting to thicken from ongoing pruning. So far 2400 plants have been planted representing 20 different medicinal plant species (about 40 will be represented when planting is completed), all of which are still in regular use by communities of the southern Cape.

During a pruning course with the gardeners we carried out hands-on pruning tasks in various areas of the garden. I already see a difference in pruning carried out by the garden staff since. There was much overdue pruning to be done, especially old Erica's that needed heavy pruning and are already recovering and shooting. Opening up of these areas has allowed light to penetrate the soil allowing hundreds of Erica seedlings to germinate. Pruning of new plant material to encourage bushing is carried out on a daily basis.

Vast amounts of new plant material have been introduced to the garden. The Limestone Fynbos biome has been planted with suitable Proteaceae. Casual labour was used to dig 100 holes in preparation for schools planting on Arbor day. The area where the trees are planted will provide a wind break for areas of the garden that currently have wind problems. So far no trees have died.

Working closely with Yvette and the Garden Enthusiasts club, we researched & sourced the material for the exciting new Cultivated Garden beds (mostly from New Plant). Plants have to be hybrids, named garden cultivars or selections, and have at least one parent from the southern Cape! Beds no 1 and 2 have been successfully completed and Yvette and I are planning No 3, which will be filled with scented aromatic plants. These beds should be looking great for the show and in time to come it should be one of the highlights for gardeners visiting the botanic garden - to see what this area has given the gardens of the world and what they could be growing at home!

The tractor was unusable for some time with a flat tyre. Thanks to Thornton who managed to source a second hand tyre, fetched it from Oudtshoorn and arranged the fitment. It has been much needed to clear away all the mountains of prunings and to move sand, soil and bark-chips around the garden.

A new pelargonium garden bed has been started at the base of steps leading up to the dam. This has been planted with approximately 80% of the pelargoniums natural to this region and we are adding to this unique collection all the time. This promises to be a fantastic garden area once a few months of growth has taken place, we hope for some flowering for the show.

It has been a great pleasure working at the garden and getting to know everyone. We certainly have a special group of people who dedicate their time to this garden. I have enjoyed every moment and the work has been challenging and rewarding. I look forward to a long relationship with the botanic garden.

### **Lorraine McGibbon writes for GREEN (Garden Route Environmental Education Network)**

What a busy few months we've had in terms of environmental education projects. Several southern Cape schools are developing environmental management plans for the Eco-School programme and doing very exciting lessons across all the learning areas of the curriculum. Glenwood House is transforming their school grounds, as well as taking on community projects. York High is learning about planting and looking after succulents in the botgarden, under Selma's excellent tutelage. Holy Cross Primary did in depth research into the Gwaing River regarding users of the water.

The Adopt-a-Beach programme has been running since April. The area of observation stretches from Vleesbaai to Nature's Valley. Schools groups as well as conservancies are monitoring different aspects of the beaches. Amongst all the fun of trips to the beach, some interesting learning is being done and groups getting a "picture" of their beach during the different seasons.

Three schools celebrated Arbor Day with us in the botgarden. Up with Downs, Carpe Diem and Heidedal Primary really rolled up their sleeves and got dirty. A most enjoyable day for all of us and the children left with apples and oranges protruding from their mouths as well as their pockets! Pick 'n Pay donated all the fruit. Journalists from Die Burger and George Herald joined us

The botgarden is becoming an important source of learning as well as a fun outing destination. More and more school groups are using it as a resource when learning about fynbos, succulents and medicinal plants. We recently had a school from Wellington on a tour and two more distant school groups are booked. George High School's eco-tourism learners visited twice and found the garden to be a great destination.

Another 'new' for the botgarden, was the Treasure Hunt organised by Peet Peens & his B Tech Saasveld students for WESSA. Five schools enrolled & it was won by Glenwood House. Everyone agreed that they would love to do it again next year.

The Schools Environmental Expo 2004 displayed projects done by 13 schools in the area. A coup was having small farm schools from Sedgfield & Hoekwil participate. The standard of projects was streets ahead of last year. 2000+ learners visited the Expo.

Margaret Herron and I reworked "Fat Plants & Thin Plants" during our 10 day course in KZN (funded by CEPF). It was difficult, however, both of us are delighted with the final product. The Afrikaans version is due to be printed shortly.

## What we have been doing since the March 2004 newsletter, GRBGTrust Chairperson reports:

**APRIL** – The big event of course, the Plant Sale – thanks again to Ena & Bob of Bot Soc Garden Route for organising this, a magnificent R21 000 profit was made. The month started with an IMITHI workshop for diabetics in Conville Library Hall. Michele & Phumla from Agricultural Land Care gave the second of two workshops for the GRBG gardeners on Personal Motivation and Work Ethic (Lottery funded). A Trustees meeting was held.

**MAY** – May is always The Schools Environmental Expo which keeps getting better and better (see Lorraine's report). Jayne & Yvette visited the Eco Lakes development site. A weekend IMITHI course was given for the public. The CEPF funded Project continued with in-house meetings and planning. Margie Herron gave one of her very popular Basic Botany courses for the public. Heiletta from Sout Cape College gave an excellent series of Access classes to Jayne and volunteers who use data-bases for the herbarium (CEPF funded).

**JUNE** – Adrian Hanekom from Caledon Fynbos Nursery gave a Fynbos propagation & management workshop for the gardeners (Lottery funded). A wonderful trip up Tierkop was enjoyed by the gardeners with Adrian, Jayne & Yvette (thanks to WCNC Outeniqua & the Lottery). Then Adrian gave a workshop for the public on Fynbos propagation & management over that weekend! The van Wijk's, Leggatt's and Potgieter's enjoyed a luxurious weekend doing a vegetation survey at Groenefontein Guest Lodge at the foot of the Swartberg. Mitchell Krog offered his services as a computer specialist and got taken on as horticultural manager as well (funded by Lottery)! Sydney moved into the Herbarium from the garden to train as herbarium assistant under Doreen.

**JULY** – A meeting with local Government, Agricultural Land Care, and a private town planner was held (CEPF funded). A meeting with local Conservation Organisations was held (CEPF funded). Dave Edge gave a fascinating public presentation and talk on "Butterflies and Plants" (he visits the herbarium regularly for his research and has donated lovely plant specimens too). Brain Shire and Susyn Andrews visited from Kew England and gave a wonderfully inspiring talk to the volunteers as well as working with Sylvia and Sydney while Brian identified and checked our collection of Indigoferas and Susyn went through Yvette's collection of Lavenders. Nick Leggatt gave a wonderful presentation using our new data projector (CEPF funded), on his record breaking round the world yacht race (no plants but great because Audrey Moriarty was guest of honour as her husband had lent Nick his first sailing boat when he was a little boy!). The month ended with a very well attended Tree Identification course in the garden with Peet Peens.

**AUGUST** – Jayne, Sydney, Sylvia & Yvette headed off to Fynbos Forum in Langebaan (read about their adventures in Jayne's news). Jayne & Yvette attended a GRI (Garden Route Initiative) meeting which ties in with the CEPF Project. A GRBGTrust Management meeting was held. Mitch held a hands-on pruning demonstration day for the gardeners and you can see the benefits everywhere you look! A band of intrepid Erica hunters spent a weekend in the Tsitsikamma with Connie Smits, exploring an area we do not often visit, and which is slightly different to our local fynbos so usefully extends our collection and knowledge of Ericas in the southern Cape.

**SEPTEMBER** - The Garden Enthusiasts Club and Mitchell were at last able to start planting our new "Cultivated Garden" beds – these are in the old "rescue beds" and they are going to be spectacular! (you simply have to come and see them during the show and find out more). Yvette and Sydney tackled two vegetation surveys and Mitch and Sydney another, in the Mossell Bay area and poor Doreen is drowning in specimens to identify! Andrew and Wesley, two young horticulturists from Kew Gardens England visited us, they were taken up Tierkop (in sun, rain, wind & sleet) by the Potgieter's and van Wijk's, and marvelled at the dense forest and fynbos vegetation, they tend many South African plants in the temperate houses at Kew, they also gave the volunteers a talk about their work. The month ended with an exciting Succulent Weekend led by Doreen Court and Dr Johan du Toit at Klaarstroom.

**OCTOBER** – The first half is of course devoted to getting the garden absolutely ready for the show as well as everything else! The volunteers and staff are on the go non-stop – the second half is for everyone to wind down theoretically, but actually it never happens as there is never time to relax and be lazy. The final very important meetings and workshops will be held for the CEPF project. A workshop with the Traditional Healers Association from the Southern Cape is planned centred on the Medicinal Mound and the IMITHI project.

**NB - Coming up after the Wildflower Show** – More meetings for the CEPF project and hopefully a rivetting report sent to CEPF in America and a really inspiring and workable "Way Forward & Business Plan" will have emerged for the GRBGTrust. The report and the feedback we get on it at the Wildflower Show AGM will feed into this final document which will be circulated to all "Friends of the Garden & Herbarium" who get this newsletter.

**Birding and Frogging** - an afternoon & evening on the 13<sup>th</sup> November headed by two experts, (names to be confirmed). Please book for this with Jayne, bring your children or grandchildren, it was huge fun last year and this time it includes the birds as well as the frogs.

**Digital Photography** - A very important and interesting workshop is being planned for the end of November for all those who have taken the plunge and aquired a digital camera – the emphasis will be on photographing plants, but the main thrust will be on how to use your new cameras to the utmost and how to use your PC to manipulate them and send them and print them etc etc. Mike Leresche from CapeTown is an expert in all this and a wonderful photographer as well and he will leading this course. Please book with Jayne immediately to be sure of a place.

**Christmas party** – we are teaming up again with WESSA and The Garden Route Botanical Society on the 4 December at 5pm for a picnic bring and share "Sunset Supper" in the garden. Please let us know if you can come?

**John Reid Signing off** – This was the subject heading in an email we got shortly after John Reid's death recently. It is really sad to say goodbye to someone who did so much for the Garden Route Botanical Garden. John was instrumental in getting the whole thing going, and together with Dudley King and Hennie van Heerden in getting the Trust deed and lease with the George Municipality drawn up and through. He was chairman of the Trust for many years until failing health forced him to take a back seat. He never lost touch with us though, and earlier this year ordered a whole lot of special Erica plants for his fynbos garden at home from the April Plant Sale. He even visited and was driven around the garden with an IV bottle still attached after he came out of hospital in George recently. We would like to extend our condolences to his family and friends - and say to John, once again, Thank You for all your hard work and sage advice on behalf of the Garden Route Botanical Garden.

You are invited to a special viewing of our new look

# **Wildflower Show & The Garden Route Botanical Garden on Display**

**On Friday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2004**

Plus a very important

**AGM**

in the

**Moriarty Environmental Centre**

**49 Caledon Street – 6.30pm**

The speaker will be – Trevor Sandwith of Cape Action  
Plan for People & the Environment (C.A.P.E.)

We would like you to come to the main entrance to the Botanical Garden sometime between 4.30pm and 5pm - earlier if you have time to spare - so that our dedicated volunteers and gardeners can show you round the Garden, which will be “On Display” with special posters, signage and information handouts on each biome, special feature, & new project. Wear walking shoes to get around the garden (we will even have a wheelchair donated by Anglo American, and 2 Golf Carts loaned by Fancourt, available to make sure you see it all!)

**As well as looking round the garden, you must come to the Moriarty Environmental Centre to view the Named Species displays as well as the Indigenous Plants on Sale - Book Shop - Gift Shop and GREEN Coastal Display**

**At 5.30pm Wine and Snacks will be served**

while you continue to browse or to take out to sip while enjoying the evening colour over the water as it reflects George Peak to the chorus of the birds going to sleep and frogs waking up!

The AGM will start at 6.30pm (for 7pm) in the tents (loaned by WCNC Outeniqua Reserve) at the Moriarty Centre. Trevor Sandwith is well known to many conservation minded people and as we be reporting to you on our CEPF / CAPE funded project and Trevor is OC of CAPE, his presence is very welcome and we hope he (and you, our members) will be as excited by the project results and prospects as we are!

It is extremely important to us that you should attend this AGM (having read the following pages!) and give feedback to our draft Business Plan – we prefer to call it our “Future Development, or Way Forward, Plan”

Your input will inform its final form and will be a vital step towards initiating “The Way Forward”

## **The Main Objective of the CEPF funded project is:-**

### **“Ensuring an Effective Role for the Southern Cape Herbarium and Garden Route Botanical Garden in Conservation in the Southern Cape, South Africa”**

We are nearing the end of this CEPF funded project – a great deal has been learnt and many interesting challenges and possibilities have arisen in the course of the numerous meetings and workshops we have held. We will present a report for the AGM and ask for input from those present. To make sure everyone knows enough about it, we felt we should give more information in this newsletter.

It is extremely important for us to identify ourselves as a potential Central Hub in the southern Cape for Botanical & Environmental Data and resources. In this way we can attract funding and preferably longterm support. Much has been achieved over the past few years and funding has been found – but it is hard hard work getting it as well as managing and reporting on it. We desperately need the security of knowing we can employ the much needed staff to roll out the various GRBGTrust projects to their full potential. We feel we can make a huge contribution to the George and Eden Municipal areas as well as the other southern Cape municipalities, and to formal as well as informal Conservation initiatives & organisations.

It has become very clear that our services are very much needed in many areas and we need to now itemise these and their potential for generating income to support staffing – prioritise them for the value they can deliver as well as our capacity to implement them – determine our Way Forward ensure our future! This is where we need your input and support?

*(Jayne’s speech at Conville really sums up so much of what we are trying to do and say that it is included here in full):*

## **PRESENTATION FOR THE SITTING OF THE WESTERN CAPE PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT**

### **THE THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE**

Presentation by: Jayne Harrington - Garden Route Botanical Garden Trust

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament and invited participants – the Southern Cape Region lies within the Cape Floristic Region, and in order to remind us of what this means in terms of the value that we can attach to our region, I would like to go through some of the “Gee Whiz” facts that I have taken from Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (which is an international conservation initiative’s) fact sheet.

- “The Cape Floristic region sits entirely within South Africa and harbours more than 9000 plant species, 70% of which are found nowhere else in the world.
- Its floral region contains the highest density of plant species in the world.”
- It is considered a “High Priority Endemic Bird Area by BirdLife International.”
- It has the highest concentration of threatened plants in the world according to the World Conservation Union.

If we are looking to find where our asset value is, in Global terms - we should surely recognize the uniqueness of our biodiversity and the value that this brings to the economy. Then having recognised this - we should protect it and invest in it.

Is this happening?

Widespread concern with regard to development throughout the Southern Cape Region, suggests that investment and protection are lacking, and that the “goose that lays the Golden egg” is dying and little is being done to stop it.

As a result of the diverse habitats and unique scenery, the area has become well established as a tourist destination and eco-tourism continues to provide economic opportunity. People across various social strata are moving to the region making it one of South Africa’s fastest growing urban areas. Development proposals including those for golf courses and polo fields are being submitted to the relevant government departments at an alarming rate, all promising to contribute to the indisputable need for sustainable economic growth.

One reads that this is fast becoming the new California, and that this is a desired option. It seems incomprehensible that, as if parodying an extreme makeover, the region seeks to become one of a number - when its intrinsic value lies in its uniqueness. It also seems difficult to understand why ten years down the road of our new democracy we continue to aspire to match Eurocentric ideals instead of Afrocentric ones.

If we continue down the path that we are on, we stand to lose our priceless biodiversity. “So What?” some might say. Biodiversity sounds like just another fancy word used to put a stop to development. To quote from the City of Cape Town’s Biodiversity Network’s brochure, which I am sure many of you are familiar with – “Biodiversity is not ‘something out there’ to be worried about by the so called ‘green fringe’, whilst the rest of us go about our daily lives. Biodiversity is the food we eat every day, the stuff which packs our shelves in the supermarkets, the plants in our gardens, the microbes which disease us and the medicines which cure us.” The

need for the protection of healthy and vibrant biodiversity is non-negotiable and should be viewed as a cornerstone to the economy of the region. Development if it is to be sustainable cannot be at the expense of the natural environment.

I would also like to mention another threat to biodiversity in the Cape Floristic Region – alien invasive plants. Again I quote from the CEPF fact sheet: “without adequate measures to control invasive plants, approximately 30 % of the remaining natural vegetation is likely to be invaded within the next 20 years and many species will face extinction as a result.” If we don’t take urgent action now, we will continue erode the natural environment capital, and the economic returns will diminish.

At the African Botanical Gardens Conference in Durban the following point was made.

- “The loss and fragmentation of natural areas will get worse as land-hunger follows population increase. Higher per capita income will not improve this but make it worse as the higher income bracket demands far more land and services and is more destructive to the environment in the long run.”

How then do we maximise the opportunities for economic development, whilst ensuring that there is minimal negative impact on the environment and that “sustainable consumption” is successfully achieved?

The Garden Route Botanical Garden Trust which incorporates the Southern Cape Herbarium has over the past few months been involved in a CEPF funded project which has involved a series of workshops and meetings with, amongst others, organisations and NGO’s who are involved in conservation. These meetings have given us insight into what is needed in this area.

Minister Essop’s commissioning of a cost-benefit examination into the consequences of establishing Golf Estates is welcomed, but there urgently needs to be clear planning parameters that set out what is the most environmentally appropriate development for identified areas.

It was encouraging to read in Minister Essop’s budget speech of her concern that if a piecemeal approach to planning is taken it will destroy the value that the natural environment and the historical and cultural heritage brings about.

It is recognised that our Country’s Constitution and the different Environmental acts and laws reflect recognition of the importance of maintaining a healthy natural environment – but when it comes to implementation there is a very alarming shortfall.

A sad reflection of the lack of environmental vision in the Western Cape is the fact that the City of Cape Town is the only Municipality to have signed up to partner CAPE (Cape Action for People & the Environment). Perhaps a lack of capacity in the Municipalities is the reason. This needs to be addressed.

Public Participation processes are in place, but civil society has little knowledge or access to relevant information or data in order to make meaningful contributions. This too needs to be urgently addressed.

Integrated Development Plans and Spatial Development Frameworks are essential – but what is informing them? A lack of vision in the Garden Route is resulting in ad hoc inappropriate development. Groups such as the Wilderness & Lakes Environmental Action Forum & the Eden to Addo Initiative amongst others have been calling for a Strategic Environmental Assessment, and this call was reiterated at the Garden Route Initiative Stakeholder meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> February. Subsequent to this a Rapid Biodiversity Assessment has been requested by DEAT.

Through our communications with representatives from various organisations, we know that there is strong consensus that the process needs to be fast tracked and that instead of expensive and time consuming new research and surveys – all existing holders of Garden Route / Southern Cape data – inclusive of species lists, biomes, vegetation types, aerial & GIS maps – be encouraged to pool their knowledge. This would provide an immediate tool for decision makers, planners or developers before they work on their plans.

It is also very apparent that a centralised and fully functional hub of easily accessible and understandable data is very urgently needed in the Southern Cape, and that various agencies are willing to make available their data for pooling. The Garden Route Botanical Garden hopes to become capacitated to full fill the need for this Regional data Hub and believe that the opportunity exists for a Public Private Partnership in this regard.

We believe that whether it is a strategic assessment or rapid assessment – this needs to be done urgently and the vegetation surveys need to be done to species level. Plants are a vital component of biodiversity and they need to be identified, researched and afforded the necessary protection. The importance of plants in the everyday lives of all people cannot be stressed enough. They provide food, shelter and fuel etc; they enhance the environment and protect the earth. The economic value of indigenous plants in this country has yet to be fully realised. The potential for job or sustainable livelihood creation is huge. Researchers continue to research the medicinal properties of plants that have been used by Indigenous people, and medicinal plant remedies are being used as effective and affordable remedies for treating opportunistic infections in HIV and Aids patients. All this potential could be lost if protection is not offered.

Mr Speaker our appeal is for an increased investment in the preservation of our natural heritage and the economic value that it holds.

## **Results of the Questionnaire filled in by participants & roleplayers**

Respondents identified the following services and resources which **could** be offered by a **fully capacitated** GRBG & Southern Cape Herbarium as those most needed (Listed in order of importance as perceived by respondents):

1. A central, user friendly, easily accessible, one-stop shop / hub / repository – that would provide a speedy service to “professional botanical” researchers, conservation organisations and to the general public
2. A resource centre enabling access to information relating to IDP’s, SDF’s & EIA’s, plus related environmental legislation, documents and reports - Independent comment and input into EIA’s
3. Taxonomic expertise and a collection of herbarium specimens that are fully representative of the southern Cape flora – identification of plant species for a range of users
4. The correlation and production of data for plant or species lists & vegetation surveys, for particular areas or vegetation types – the capacity to do impartial vegetation surveys
5. Species distribution lists, Red Data lists. Possibly electronically available with pictures! The means / ability to interpret the above data
6. An educational facility (both garden & herbarium) for learners and students as well as for the general public and tourists
7. A training facility for conservation rangers, conservancies, large scale developments, gardeners, rural and previously disadvantaged communities and small scale farmers, as well as for the general public. Subjects would include: botany; biodiversity; veld / vegetation management; alien invasive vegetation removal and management; horticulture; medicinal & edible plants and their sustainable use and harvesting.
8. A comprehensive library & resource facility for all the above
9. A facility which adds value to George as a Tourism destination

**SO this is what we are aiming at!**

**The following is part of a memorandum which we sent to important decision makers and other roleplayers in September – it has crystallised out of all the meetings and workshops held for the CEPF project:**

A universal concern is that areas of important biodiversity continue to be lost to ad-hoc development for two major reasons. Firstly, on a fine scale there is an apparent lack of comprehensive and accessible information regarding the value of these sites and on a broader scale there is no strategic vision to guide development.

This concern has been echoed by Province with their call for a rapid review of the impact of Golf/Polo estates and by the funding for the GRI from DEAT for a strategic assessment. Unfortunately what appears to be happening is that the study that will ultimately be commissioned by the GRI will not address either the fine scale i.e. taxonomical problems nor will it address the lack of vision at a strategic level. The information shared with us at a stakeholder meeting Aug 18<sup>th</sup> confirmed this.

The GRBGT feels strongly that fine scale information with cadastral/erf relevance is what is needed if these problems are to be effectively and timeously addressed. Thus we undertook a cursory survey of relevant databases in the region and concluded that a wealth of very valuable biodiversity information exists in government departments, the private sector and NGO’s. Although this information is not in a useable state at present since it resides in a variety of formats and sites, we believe that if it is collated properly, it can be used by planners and decision-makers as a tool to guide where development should and should not take place. In addition, if existing information is used then costly primary research can be limited to specific sites and tasks that help to give practical relevance to coarser bioregional data like STEP, SKEP and the municipal SDF’s.

We therefore conclude that funds directed at the Garden Route in an effort to assist planners and decision-makers should be spent on gathering together all existing information into a consolidated, accessible, dynamic database and accurate map of land use and special biodiversity features that clearly indicate no-go areas according to biodiversity priorities.

*(Ed - NB – We feel that we can make a big contribution to these objectives by making our facilities available for meetings and implementation of these ideas, our herbarium and library fulfilling their roles as taxonomic resource centres. BUT specialist expertise is needed and will have to be paid for and by working in partnership with a wide range of committed roleplayers we feel we can successfully access this funding.)*