Botanical Society of South Africa
KZN Coastal Branch

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON SUNDAY, 27 JULY 2025
AT MUNIES HOCKEY CLUB AT 13H30

PRESENT: Suvarna Parbhoo Mohan (Chairperson), Muhammad Adamjee, Charles Botha, Julia Botha, Frances Callanan, Tony Dickson, Willem Engelbrecht, Amanda Engelbrecht, Graham Grieve, Kate Grieve, James Hallé, Di Higginson, Dave Henry, Rob Jamieson, Phyllis Jenkins, Barry Lang, Janet Longman, Adam Menne, Bertha Pitout, Elsa Pooley, Frances Roberts, Christine Sole, Naomi Stapersma, Marion Whitehead, Rose Williams, Zibuyile Zakuza, Sandra Dell (Minutes)

PROXY VOTES in favour of Suvarna: Marilyn Bodasing, Jane Troughton

APOLOGIES: Marilyn Bodasing, Dawn Booth, Victoria Brennan, Margaret Burger, Mary de Haas, Richard Foster, Megan Goschen, Eleanor Hollis, Pat Long, Denise Macpherson, Fiona Mann, Leko Mkhize, Grant Morrison, Zinhle Nkabinde, Alice Surmon, Bruce Surmon, Jane Troughton, Coral Vinsen, George Walters

1. WELCOME

The Chairperson, Suvarna Parbhoo Mohan, opened the meeting, welcomed all present and thanked everyone for braving the weather in order to attend this meeting which was being held at our former plant fair venue.

It was confirmed that 23 members present and two proxies of the 102 Branch membership comprised a quorum.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 21 JULY 2024

The minutes of the previous AGM were adopted by acclamation.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the previous AGM.

4. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Suvarna's report was in the form of an illustrated MS-PowerPoint presentation. [Please see Appendix 1.]

Suvarna opened the floor for questions. Charles Botha said that he had a complaint to make: Suvarna had made it difficult for the next Chairperson to replace her as she had set such a high standard, and she was therefore needed to stay on for at least another 10 years. This was met with applause. Suvarna thanked Charles and the meeting and said that it was good to have change, but she was able to stay on for now, but not long-term as she had other commitments.

The Chairperson's Report was accepted by acclamation.

5. TREASURER'S REPORT

Dave Henry presented the Branch's Annual Financial Statements.
Dave opened by commending Suvarna for her energy and drive.
Revenue was above R70,000 for the year ending 31 March. The Plant Fair had made an important contribution of R15,500. Interest provided R22,613, while Book Sales also contributed significantly (R8,255). Dave noted that our

late, knowledgeable member John Bradshaw had left the Branch a substantial amount in his Will. Dave would like us to invest this and to use the interest while not touching the capital – but this would be discussed once the amount was known. Dave, on behalf of the Branch and Umdoni Park Trust had bought John's environmental library. This had cost the Branch R1,250 and the balance had been bought by Umdoni Park Trust for the Botha House library. Branch sales of some of these books had already covered this cost.

The admin expense Dave felt was important for sustainability.

A surplus of just over R17,000 for the year had been achieved.

Accumulated funds as at 31 March were R292,000 of which R220,000 was held in the Bank.

Over the years Dave had taken a conservative approach which aimed for interest to underwrite the admin cost, since the branch levy was no longer received from subscriptions. The subscription fee of R200 was not enough to sustain the Society. Membership of 12 000 in Kirstenbosch Branch a few years ago to just 1 239 members at present showed the drastic decrease suffered since the loss of the SANBI Gardens concession. Our Branch now had the second-highest number of members. At one stage our Branch had 300 members but now stood at around 100 members. Our WhatsApp groups had at least 200 people that were not members.

Our Branch's finances were healthy. The Plant Fair makes a big difference; it also brings people together.

Dave expressed concern about National BotSoc's using reserves to fund projects. If there was no revenue, in four years there might be nothing left.

Dave took the opportunity to update the Branch on the Hawaan project. Dave had learned that the Sibaya Trust had not ever been registered. Pat Goss, an ex-Chair of the Natal Parks Board, was now living at Hawaan Estates. The front part of the Hawaan was now in their trust which meant it had formal oversight. They had established Bernard Chatikobo as a permanent guide. WESSA released R10 000 to fence the M4.

Questions were invited.

Marion Whitehead asked if our Branch was self-sustaining – or did it receive any funds from National? Dave replied that the Branch sustained itself and did not receive any funds from National at present. In fact, he was concerned that should National need the money that they might take our funds. Dave felt that it would be best to ring-fence our funds by our Branch going autonomous and self-sustaining, with affiliation to National.

Dave noted that by the end of March 2025 R3-million of national Reserves had been used.

Rose Williams however felt that National needed support, and that there could be merit in putting reserves to use for the future benefit of the Society. Elsa Pooley agreed with Rose. Elsa felt that all similar organisations around the world charged a high membership fee. It was shocking that thousands of members had just walked away.

Suvarna added that the remaining members wanted to be members of a conservation organisation. National was hoping to attract international funds for species recovery projects and channel this funding to the NGOs on the ground undertaking this work

Marion asked if there was a category of membership for students and if so whether the Maharishi Institute students could be given this student rate? Suvarna replied that that should be possible, as there was a Student category.

Dave was thanked.

The Treasurer's Report was accepted, by acclamation.

6. BOTANICAL EDUCATION TRUST REPORT

The Chairman of the Trust, Charles Botha, presented his Report. He opened by inviting members to view the new Botanical Education Trust website (www.botanicaleducationtrust.org.za) which was shown in the background of his presentation. [Please see Appendix 2 for the Report.] In conclusion, Charles noted that in any deceased estate 20% goes to the government but money left to the Botanical Education Trust through wills were tax-free donations.

Charles was thanked. The Report was accepted by acclamation.

6.1 Raffle draw of the winner of a signed copy of *South African Indigenous Garden Plants*

Charles invited Elsa Pooley, one of the co-authors of the book prize, to draw the winning number. Elsa activated a random number generator from the Internet which was viewable on the screen and drew no. 287: Sharon Liebetrau. Sharon was not present. Charles thanked everyone for participating in the successful raffle which had raised over R7,000 for the Trust. Elsa, in turn, thanked the Botanical Education Trust for its generous sponsorship of the book which had helped to make the price more affordable and available to everyone. Elsa was thanked.

Suvarna thanked Charles and congratulated him on this project which we were proud to be able to say, had emanated from our Branch.

7. ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Branch Committee comprised Suvarna Parbhoo Mohan as Chair, Janet Longman: Information Officer, website and Facebook champion and Acting Vice Chair; Sandra Dell: Branch secretary and outings, Dave Henry as Treasurer, Barry Lang who played a variety of roles; Christine Sole Environmental Educator and writer; Jane Troughton Social Media and Outings; Muhammad Adamjee as CREW Durban champion, outings, our link to Durban Botanic Gardens Trust and our new Plant Fair Chair. He was also very good with plant identifications and landscaping advice. The Branch was looking for a newsletter editor who would use a template either in Powerpoint or in MailChimp; or perhaps someone might know of a young person willing to take this on.

The committee was willing to stand again. Nominations for new committee members were invited. However, there were no new nominations from the floor.

The committee was re-elected *en-bloc* by acclamation.

Suvarna thanked the committee and looked forward to a good year ahead.

9. GENERAL

9.1 Auction of three David Johnson paintings

Charles Botha ran the auction inviting bids per painting starting at R100 each. After an amusing bidding tussle, Christine Sole won the auction at R600 [Christine later upped this to R800] for the three, to applause. Mark Liptrot and Cecily Salmon who had since emigrated were thanked *in absentia* for the donation of the paintings.

The floor was then opened for questions and suggestions.

Di Higginson suggested that the Branch became closer to the Durban Botanic Gardens Trust. It seemed sad not to use the Visitors Centre hall, as we had used it in previous years. A way to reduce their costs should be found. Suvarna said that we had been spoiled in the past, but it was expensive. We were looking at different venues for different events and were hoping to reach out to where it was closer for members.

Rob Jamieson said that as a Branch of a Society about Biodiversity, situated in the middle of a country with 3 of the world's 36recognised global biodiversity hotspots, there should be many more than 100 members. The Society was not being marketed. Even if they were not interested in plants, people know their importance and should support BotSoc. He suggested that we start a Friends of BotSoc where they could make a once-off donation, their details be added to the records, and therefore increasing the numbers supporting the Society, thereby giving it more clout. Suvarna said that the Public WhatsApp group was a sort of Friends group. We tried to give an incentive to become members by charging more to non-members at our events.

Marion Whitehead said that youth were needed. She suggested we include a year's Junior Membership with the Winter Holiday Programme. Suvarna said that we had made a concerted attempt to attract youth by offering 10 free memberships, twice, on the sponsored programme offered by National, but the youth mostly did not respond to attempts to involve them. It seemed to be a challenge globally to attract young people to existing environmental programmes.

Phyllis Jenkins suggested that people buying properties should be targeted. When property sales happen, a pamphlet could be put in boxes, encouraging the use of indigenous plants when they improved their gardens. Suvarna agreed that this could be tried.

Suvarna noted that outings to estates did not seem to attract many residents living there. When Suvarna gave iNaturalist training to Estates, she encouraged BotSoc membership.
National could do more marketing, however.

Christine Sole felt that the country was near a critical point on environmental issues. It was important for BotSoc to be the leader on the plant conservation, and to have input in, for example, the cutting of verges and trees being cut down. Suvarna noted that conservancies were more on the ground but that we were trying to work with conservancies.

Phyllis commented that there were 25 species of indigenous trees on her previous property and asked if there is a law so that they may not be cut down by new owners? Dave Henry said that the Dept of Forestry had given permission for 45 milkwoods to be cut for the Beachwood development. Suvarna noted that at a Conservancies meeting the eThekweni presenter had said how developers fast-track the process.

There were no further comments or questions from the floor.

10. TALK

Suvarna then introduced guest speaker, Kate Grieve, who gave a fascinating and informative illustrated presentation, *The Pondoland Centre of plant endemism.*

11. CLOSURE

The meeting then closed at 15h30.

Minutes recorded by: _____ Confirmed by: _____
Secretary Chairperson

APPENDIX 1: CHAIR'S REPORT

BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA

KZN Coastal Branch

Chair's Report
August 2024 to July 2025

'Know, grow, protect and enjoy South Africa's indigenous plants'

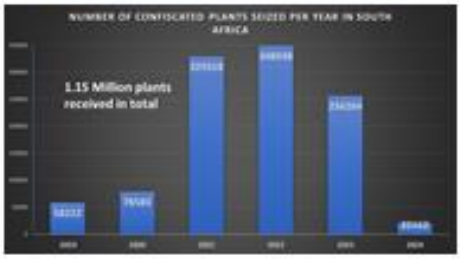
Botanical Society National Update

- National AGM postponed to 30 August 2025
- Hosted Branch Committee Engagement to discuss AGM planning 28 June
- Hosted Pathfinder convention to discuss BotSoc future planning on 20 July
- Monthly webinars covering a range of topics YouTube
- Veld n Flora, BotSoc Buzz, social media website
- For more info: https://botanicalsociety.org.za

Cover photo: *Phylica natalensis* (Pondo Hardleaf)a vulnerable species in need of conservation. by @muhammad_s iNaturalist

Supporting Implementation of the National Strategy on Illegal Plant Trade

- Since 2020, illegal succulent trade has surged — threatening SA's endemic flora.
- Conophytum genus hit hardest: 94% are SA endemics; all now at greater extinction risk.
  - 9 species functionally extinct in the wild
  - All listed under CITES Appendix III
- *Clivia mirabilis*: 90% of the wild population poached by 2023.
- CREW is taking action — monitoring wild populations, collecting seed, and helping manage confiscated plants.
- Genetic rescue is possible: Seized plants may hold the last wild genes — vital for future recovery.
- But we face a critical challenge: safeguarding these collections needs urgent capacity and support.



CREW Programme

CREW

Ixia ebrahimii, a new species discovered by the CREW CFR Node team

Arrowsmithia conferta recorded at high elevation on Ngele Mountain

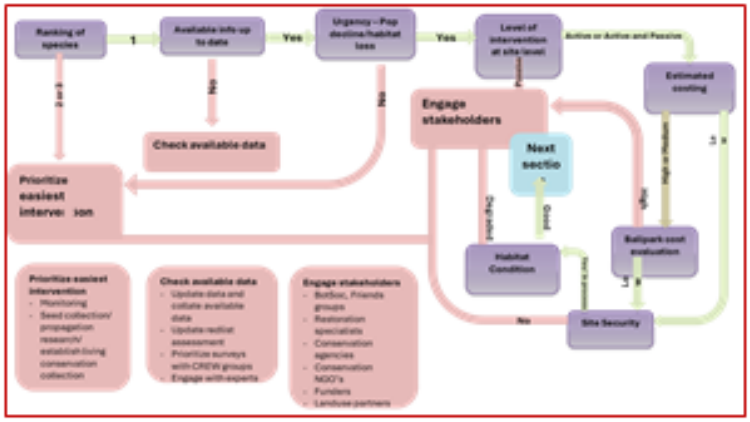
- 89 plant species rediscovered — including 4 in 2024 — not seen for years and thought extinct.
- 46 species recorded outside their known distribution ranges
- 102 plant taxa new to science recorded — including 3 in 2024
- 150 of 537 Critical Habitat species recorded — including Critically Endangered, Endangered, endemic, and restricted-range species (EOO <10 km²)
- Almost 500 field trips carried out by CREW teams across the country in 2024.

SANBI iNaturalist Mapula

Species Recovery and restoration

Smarter Approach

- CREW worked with Red List scientists & restoration experts
- Developed a ranking system using Red List status + scoring criteria
- Created a decision tree to assess suitability and guide interventions



Key Outcomes

- 293 Top Priority species identified
- Too many for immediate recovery action
- Decision tool guides where to act – and how
- Enables targeted, efficient conservation

iNaturalist

Since 2017, iNaturalist records from southern Africa have surpassed 1.35 million — more than 200 years of herbarium collections in the South African National Herbarium

City Nature Challenge

Botanical Society KZN Coastal Branch Update

Branch membership: 97 to 102

Multiple communication platform

268 supporters

2 400 Followers

Posts reaching 4400 people

Gifting merchandise

Earlier this year, we conducted a **Member Engagement Survey** to hear directly from you about what's working well and where we can improve. The responses have been grouped into six key themes and shared in our newsletter, guiding how we grow and improve together.

Outings 2024

Month	Activity/Event(s)	Notes/Highlights
July	Winter Holiday Programme	Enviro activities for children held at Burman Bush NR, Beachwood Mangroves, and DBG
August	Outing to Tanglewood Private Nature Reserve (Pinetown)	Survey *Cynorkis compacta* (Vulnerable) population with CREW
September	i. Annual Plant Fair ii. Great Southern Bioblitz	i. Plant sales and indigenous gardening awareness ii. Bioblitzes carried out across KZN coastal region
October	Tree Identification Walks at Umdoni Park & Hawaan Forest	Guided by Prof. Moll, with BotSoc members, WESSA guides and Hawaan representatives in attendance.
November	i. Outing to Meycol Stewardship Reserve (Tugela Mouth) ii. Outing to Umdoni Park Nature Reserve	Showcasing coastal and stewardship conservation sites

Outings 2024

Month	Activity/Event(s)	Notes/Highlights
February	Outing to Palmiet River Nature Reserve	Great turnout from Friends of the Reserve, Conservancy, and BotSoc members
March	Indigenous Garden Tour – Gail & Shaun Robinson's Westville Garden	Celebrating residential indigenous landscaping
April	City Nature Challenge	Members actively participated in global iNat event
May	Outing to Mount Edgecombe Country Club Conservancy	Guided walk focusing on creating urban biodiversity corridors
June	Gwahumbe Indigenous Nursery outing (Mid-Illovo) with KZN Inland Branch	Collaborative event highlighting indigenous flora

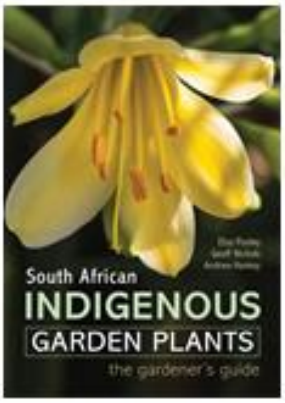
Indigenous Plant Fair (14-15 September 2024)

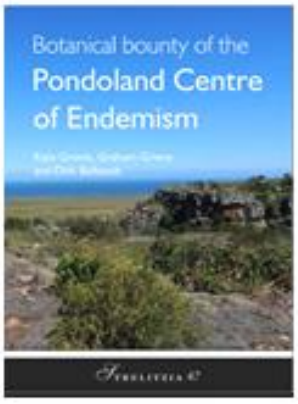
Plant Fair 2025: 6-7 September

Other Activities 2024

Orchid Show & Plant Fair with KZN Inland Branch
Autumn Fair @ Durban Botanic Gardens co-hosted stand with Flora and Fauna Publications Trust
Kloof Indigenous Open Gardens Public engagement & plant awareness

These events allowed us to connect with the public, promote indigenous gardening, and share BotSoc's work.





Winter Holiday Programme

- Third consecutive year hosting for children aged 10–15
- About 50 youngsters participated, thanks to generous BotSoc member sponsorships
- Held at three green spaces: Burman Bush, Beechwood Mangroves, Durban Botanic Gardens
- Each day featured guided environmental walks and fun eco-activities
- Team led by Christine Sole with guides Sim Cele, Melisa Nonjiko, Hazel Richmond
- Supported by BotSoc members Frances Callanan and Di Higginson, Sandra Dell, Janet Longman
- Great opportunity for children from diverse backgrounds to learn, explore, and build friendships

Branch Projects

PlantLife SA e-Journal

- Number of subscriber = 179
- Total pageviews to date for all digital editions from 74 384 to 89 839.
- These readers are from (in decreasing order): South Africa, USA, Singapore, Germany, UK, Romania, Russia, Mexico, France
- The next edition is to be published at the end of July 2025.
- Our heartfelt gratitude to Plant Life editor, Graham Grieve.

https://plantlifesouthafrica.blogspot.com/

Wally Menne Book Fund

- Honours former Branch Chair Wally Menne
- Raises funds through donated book sales
- Supports access to field guides and botanical resources
- Over the past year we raised R8,460 and donated books to 5 organisations
- Thank you for helping us grow this fund and reach those who need it most.

Thank You

- Our members for your ongoing support and participation
- Hosts / presenters for generously donated their time and shared knowledge
- Members and supporters for kindly contributing to our fundraising activities
- Activity participants for shared images for this presentation and for our various publications
- The Durban Botanic Gardens team as well as the Durban Botanic Gardens Trust for the use of the office, the plant fair venue, the donation of 'The Durban Forest' books and for other privileges in the Gardens
- The current committee for your ongoing enthusiasm, dedication and commitment

BOTANICAL SOCIETY
OF SOUTH AFRICA

Know, grow, protect and enjoy South Africa's indigenous plants'

http://www.botsoc-kzn.org.za/

APPENDIX 2: BOTANICAL EDUCATION TRUST

Thanks to our many donors, large and small, the **Botanical Education Trust** was able to make awards this year to six of the thirteen excellent applicants. The record total amount of R173 855 was funded entirely by income derived from the permanently invested donations. This illustrates how your support will help conserve our indigenous flora in perpetuity!

In addition to the grants, a substantial contribution was made to the production costs of the soon-to-be-released book *The Complete Guide to Indigenous Garden Plants of South Africa* by Elsa Pooley, Geoff Nichols and Andrew Hankey. This amazing publication is sure to be the apogee of indigenous gardening books!

Award recipients represent a variety of institutions from across the country, and it is very positive that two are promising young botanists.

Registered for an MSc degree at Stellenbosch University, Tallulah Glasby is studying biocrusts. Composed of entangled soil grains and microorganisms, these form layers on the soil surface improving stability, nutrient cycling, and water retention. The findings will help understand factors supporting native plants in nutrient-poor soils, such as in the Greater Cape Floristic Region, and will be relevant to conservation efforts aimed at preserving these fragile ecosystems.

Also busy with her MSc, Victoria Roetger of Wits University is working in the Drakensberg Mountains, a centre for both species' diversity and endemism. She is studying plant-pollinator interactions, which are crucial for maintaining ecosystems and biodiversity, and are expected to change with increasing temperatures due to global climate change.

Two promising young botanists Tallulah Glasby (left) and Victoria Roetger (right)

Willem Froneman, also of Wits University, received a further grant for his project entitled '*Barleria* in South Africa: Waterwise, Sun-loving, Beautiful and Prickly'. The resulting book will include an up-to-date revision of the genus, detailed descriptions, distribution maps and a painting of every species to facilitate identification. It will also cover horticultural aspects of this charismatic group of plants.

Citizen science is revolutionising certain aspects of biology by greatly increasing observations. Thousands of records of butterflies, interacting with flowers, provide a rich new source of information on species likely to be butterfly pollinated. Prof Craig Peter of Rhodes University aims to "ground truth" the relative importance of butterflies in pollinating the nectar plants thus identified.

Mr Pieter Bester of the South African Biodiversity Institute will undertake a much-needed taxonomic revision of the genus *Nemesia*. Of the nearly 80 Nemesia species currently recognized, around 10% have a significant threat status, one is extinct while for 13% the available data is insufficient to determine the conservation status. The revision will guide future conservation and management strategies.

Since 1978 Hillcrest Conservancy has been protecting vital remnants of natural grasslands and wild flowers within the urban environment; one area has not been disturbed since 1878. They have had an area declared part of the Durban Metropolitan Open Space System. Their relatively small award will enable them to erect educational signage to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands, grasslands and the associated natural flora.

Finally, we thank Dr Neil Crouch and Ms Zaitoon Rabaney who have stepped down as Trustees after many years of dedicated voluntary service. Botanists Prof Steve Johnson and Dr Wynston Woodenburg are welcomed as new Trustees.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information on the Botanical Education Trust by e-mail at charlesbotha@gmail.com or on 083 7777 078.

Charles Botha - (Chair of Trustees)