

SO LONG GERT.....



Gert de Kock was just 39 years old when he was tragically killed in a car accident a couple of months ago. His incredible knowledge and passion for people and plants made him a very talented nurseryman and special people person. He inherited his love of plants, sustainability and succulents from his mother, whom he took after in so many ways. One seldom had a discussion with Gert, without a mention of his mum or the farm in Napier.

Gerts' charm, heartfelt smile and ability to lighten the mood in the darkest of times, with that wicked sense of humour, will be greatly missed. He helped to build New Horizon Nursery from a small to medium enterprise in the 5 years he worked there.



Surely a respected man of many talents that has left everyone that ever had the privilege of meeting him with a little of that magic dust he carried around...

So long Gert.

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CAPE GREEN TIMES

NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY THE CAPE GREEN FORUM
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Wow, this is the 28th Cape Green Trade Day! Over the years we've been in some interesting place...who remembers the numbing cold at Thunder City and snow on Table Mountain one August? The flies at the Joostenberg Horse arena, the cavernous Builders Warehouse, the spooky 3 Arts Theatre or Pete's Farm? More recently there's been Paul Roos and the WoodMill in Stellenbosch. Over time, we have really grown and developed from a small event into something significant on the calendar of the horticultural industry in the

Cape. Our current venue, SunExhibits at GrandWest, offers so much - trolleys; pallet jacks and a fork lift, in-house security, assistance and great parking. We really have moved up in the world!

Please enjoy yourself at the Cape Green Trade Day, placed your Spring orders and support the local market. Thanks to all the exhibitors for the time and effort that they put into creating such beautiful stands.

Last month, David Davidson gave a wonderful audio visual presentation on the 2016 Chelsea Flower Show and emerging

trends in garden design, at the Hotel Verde. It was thoroughly enjoyed by those who attended. What a great ambassador he is for South Africa and our flora!

Get on your dancing shoes...celebrate 2016 at the Barnyard Theatre at a joint end year function with SALI and the Cape Green Forum. The show, 6 of the Best, will feature Freddie Mercury, Bon Jovi, Meat Loaf, Billy Joel, Cher & Pink. The evening will include snacks, pizzas and great music. Friday 9 December 2016. Why not fill a table and make it your company end year function?

POT FILLING MADE EASY

Michael Koch, Haifa South Africa

On a recent visit to some pot plant growers in Holland using Haifa's Multicote controlled release fertilizer, I was once again amazed at the level of automation which enhances the efficiency of labour. A simple carousel table with an outer ring of holes in which the empty pots can loosely fit, enables the worker to quickly fill a pot without the usual mess and spillage that needs to be cleaned up. The outer ring of the carousel is made up of a series of loose sheets which can be removed and replaced with another set with different diameter holes for the different size pots. The carousel rests on a spindle and is turned by the workers as they complete filling the pot in front of them. The table in this case is about 6 metres in diameter and allows for any number of workers to line up around it, making the filling quite a quick process. The table has an outer ridge to prevent the growing medium from falling off the table. On one side there is a worker that removes the full pot and replaces it with an empty pot. The full pots then get placed on a conveyor belt system that passes a planting station, where other workers quickly plant the plants as the pot moves past them, past an automatic filler that tops the pots up with a layer of pine bark chips, to reduce weed growth, before heading off through the nursery to where they get placed in the relevant blocks and begin the growing process. The one nursery



we visited had a conveyor line nearly 200 metres long. At the end of which just 2 men with contraptions that allow them to scoop 5 or 6 pots off the line at one time and pack them in neat rows on the concrete slab where they are watered and grow until ready for sale. The conveyor line is made up of a series of sections which can be added or removed or even turned around corners as required. In the picture you can also see a standard feed mixer where the growth medium is blended with the required fertilizers for the

plants for which the pots are being prepared. This allows for flexibility to treat different plants in the correct manner. The required dose of gypsum, lime, controlled release fertilizers and any other additives such as perlite etc. are added and mixed into the medium before filling the pots. It is even possible to blend different growth media, such as sand, compost, pine bark chips, cocopeat and peatmoss in this mixer, making the grower even more flexible to adjust growth media to each plant's requirements. The contents of the mixer is then deposited onto a belted lift which lifts and deposits the growth medium onto the rotating carousel and into the waiting hands of the pot fillers. In this way all the pot fillers have access to a constant supply of medium and the pot filling becomes a continuous process. New batches of medium can be prepared while the current batch is still being worked into the pots.

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I first came across the RootMaker pots at a Nursery in Dallas and immediately thought that this concept is ideal for the nursery trade in South Africa. The RootMaker pots are designed to create fibrous, non-circling root systems horizontally and vertically at all phases of production to equip plants for transplanting success.

The benefits of a fibrous root system are:

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I've recently started to plant our citrus trees in the RootMaker pots and have been really pleased with the results. The trees showed superior growth with strong and healthy roots.

Please contact Bruce Stewart from Reliance Nursery for more details about this plant technology on 021 300 0029.



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BLUE GOLD

"A blueberry muffin and a cafe latte to go, please" – Brett Young, Grow-rite



Blueberries have for a long time been our favorite blue addition to cakes and ice cream toppings, but recently blueberries have reached superstar status because of their unique health benefits.

Most health research on blueberries involves their phytonutrient content. Anthocyanins - the colourful antioxidant pigments that give many foods their wonderful shades of blue, purple, and red - are exceptionally high in blueberries. In fact, they have more antioxidants than any other fruit or vegetable, and it's these antioxidants that assist the body to combat free radicals, which can damage cellular structures and DNA. Clinical research shows that regular consumption of blueberries has cardiovascular benefits by improving blood fat balances, reducing cholesterol and maintaining healthy blood pressure. Although regarded as low-GI fruit, (not as low as blackberries or raspberries), they do have a higher fibre content and have been proven to have significant impact on the regulation of blood sugar levels. They are an ideal fruit substitute for people managing diabetes and obesity. Blueberries also assist with neurodegenerative diseases by maintaining smoothly working nerve cells and healthy cognitive function, and are beneficial for improving memory and combating age-related onset of mental illness. They are being investigated for relieving retina damage, while laboratory studies on anti-cancer benefits are also underway.

Obviously all these health benefits have helped to develop the blueberry's reputation as a superfood, and unlike kale and other antioxidant-high superfoods, blueberries are delicious! It's not surprising then that the growth in per capita consumption of blueberries in the global market has continued to increase year on year. To supply this ever-increasing



demand, producers around the world are ramping up production to supply retailers with a year round supply of fruit.

Just like our Ericas in the Fynbos, the blueberry belongs to the family Ericaceae. However, the blueberry, which belongs to the genus *Vaccinium* is indigenous to North America, where it was cultivated by Native Americans for thousands of years. Commercial cultivation started in the early 1900s but it remained a dominant northern hemisphere crop for many years as the early varieties with dominant *V.corymbosa* genetics, commonly referred to as Northern Highbush varieties, required a minimum of 800 hours of chilling units (total number of hours during the winter below 7 degrees C), to initiate flowering and fruit set. Fairly recently, hybrids referred to as Southern highbush varieties have been developed by crossing *V. corymbosum* with *V. darrowii*, a species indigenous to the South-eastern U.S.A. These southern highbush varieties now require no chilling units and this has made cultivation in South Africa from locations as diverse as the Cape, to Mokopane in Limpopo province.

In South Africa there are four main export groups. These groups manage royalties and breeders' rights on behalf of companies who have developed and own the varieties. These varieties are propagated by tissue culture or cuttings and then sold to contracted growers, who are then contractually obligated to sell the fruit back to the export company, which flies the fruit out to customers in Europe.

Fruit production is currently planted predominantly in the soil, either in the open or under shade/hail nets. In plantations such as this, plants are spaced at about 5500/ha. More interestingly I have been supporting growers with more intensive solutions, where fruit producers are opting for pots and substrate. Blueberries do not like their feet wet, so pot design is critically important to facilitate effective drainage. Perhaps more important is the substrate that goes into the pot and I work with the leading blueberry substrate producer - Legro Potgrond, based in Helmond in the Netherlands. Legro was tasked 10 years ago to develop a low ph substrate for container fruit production that would be chemically and physically stable for a minimum of eight years. Legro tested every substrate component they could get their hands on, and mixed these components in a myriad of variables, and then evaluated the performance every year. The winner of these trials and the mainstay of the blueberry mix today is a combination of peat, coir and perlite. Imported in big bales, 4,75 m3 each, we have also supplied a range of machines to handle the substrate, from big bale breakers to tray fillers and potting machines.

Positioned mostly under haygrove-style plastic multispan or shade net, blueberries produced in pots are easier to manage in terms of



watering and nutrition, and as a result can be managed to produce higher yields per plant with less risk of fruit spoil from adverse environmental conditions. With a managed growing environment and by selecting different hybrids and or geographical location, the fruit production window for many growers in SA is between July (very early) and November. In a global context, this fits nicely between fruits from Morocco (Dec-March), Spain (Feb-May) and the EU (May-August). Further advantages of pot production is that pots can be moved, so in year 1, you can plant at double density of 11000 per ha when the plants are smaller and with a 9-month-old plant expect to harvest 800g in the first year. In the second year, as the plants get bigger, remove every second pot and from year two and onwards producers can aim to harvest up to and over 4kg per plant. Last year most growers were receiving on average approx R120/kg, so I will let you do the maths regarding the potential return on investment. So not only is it a super fruit when you look at their health benefits, but so too is it a super fruit when it comes to profitable agri-business.

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MAMA NANCY AND THE MOYO WE KHAYA GARDEN

Jess Spiro, Crush Magazine (edited)

Abalimi Bezekhaya, the non-profit urban agriculture organisation, has a far and wide reach. They're responsible for 'greening' much of Khayelitsha and Philippi, as well as enabling residents to grow vegetables for themselves and their families. Any excess produce is bought for the Harvest of Hope weekly vegetable boxes. It's an incredible set-up, one that has changed the lives of many.

We met Mama Nancy, who is a pillar within the Abalimi project, she's been chairperson for the organisation for about the last ten years, and was part of the driving force that made the Moyo We Khaya food garden in Khayelitsha such a success. The garden was actually set up by Abalimi stalwart Christina Kaba, who then got Mama Nancy on board.

First things first, we'd love to hear the story of how you got into gardening and your role at Abalimi?

It was Christina Kaba who recruited me into Abalimi, and the garden. We met when I was still working [as a school principal] and Abalimi organised greening for the school. That was where Christina and I met and became friends. She recruited me for Abalimi in about 92/93, and then I subsequently joined the garden when I retired.

What did you know about gardening before you started? How did you learn so much?

Initially I helped with managing the people working in the garden, because I had experience with that. But once I got here, I just started growing vegetables and became very interested in gardening and I learned about all the varieties of each vegetable. I then went on to the internet and began to look up recipes, which I shared with the group here.

I learnt a lot about vegetables, also indigenous veg, which my mother used to cook in the Eastern Cape. What was very interesting to me is that the veggies have quite a lot of pests and they have lots of different troubles - just like humans! They need nurturing as well - just like humans! They are all different in many ways, they've even got companions, like humans! But I'm still learning, life is a learning curve. Now I've developed an interest in herbs and spices, so I've been googling everything about them. I even had a problem with my lumbar, it had been hurting for a very long time and I read about using cayenne pepper. Cayenne pepper is good for a number of things, I even lost weight when I was using it for my back. All I did was mix it with a little bit of water in the morning, and for the rest of the day, I never felt hungry and had loads of energy. It also helped my back beautifully! I can bend



and do everything now!

How big is this plot of land and what did it take to set it up?

The plot is one hectare. When we started, it was very difficult. It was completely covered in sand and I never thought that anything would grow. But then I read a book about a woman who went from one country to another because God told her to grow vegetables. And despite the land be-



ing barren, and people doubting her, she grew them. People thought she was crazy. We had the same thing, people questioned us the whole time, but here we are. The garden is two years old now. And this was my first garden!

So, what is your favourite vegetable to grow?

That's a hard one. I like spinach, because you can use it in quite a number of things. And we use spinach in our culture, in umfino [mixture of maize meal and chopped spinach, cabbage and potatoes]. So I like spinach, but I eat everything. I'm going to write all my recipes down and paste them on the wall to share the information. You teach a woman, you teach a nation!

What are the biggest challenges you face with the garden?

The biggest challenge in the garden is the pests.

The seeds don't cause many problems, but the pests do. We're not using pesticides, you see. There are moles and snails, it never ends. And we have to be friendly to the environment, which is frustrating. We have to be nice to them, even though they're messing up our garden. *What is your favourite part of the gardening process: the planting, the tending or the harvest?*

Harvesting is the best, because when you harvest you think back to how you have nurtured the veg, because it does need nurturing. If it's not growing well then you have to do something about it. Growing is very difficult, but when you harvest, you can see that you've worked very hard and you've nurtured the plants very well. It's like raising a child, there can be lots of frustration but once they're all grown up the parents can feel proud.

What has the community's reaction been?

People come and appreciate what we are doing here. Especially the elders, who wished they had joined us from the outset, when we started. They didn't realise that it was going to look like this. Only now do they come and ask that if there's a space, they would like to join. I thought that the youngsters in the area, who weren't working, would come and see me working in the garden and think "why not us". But they only marvel at me when I go home, and then talk to me and ask what I was doing.

They would ask me why I wasn't chilling at home, to which I would say, there's no time to chill in life. You have to keep busy. If I wasn't in the garden I would be doing something else. But I figure that it's close to home, and I'm enjoying it.

Can you tell us what's next for the garden?

Well, we intend to get the land next door. Initially we wanted both pieces of land, which together make two hectares. It was meant to be used for a school, but there are too many schools in the area so we applied for the land. It took us quite a while to get the first land, but we should get the new land soon. <http://abalimi.org.za/>



AUG 2016 CAPE GREEN TRADE DAY EXHIBITORS

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Arboreta Nurseries cc	021 864 3857	Trees & shrubs	johan@arboreta.co.za
Arnelia	022 723 1022	Proteaceae, Fynbos and Bougainvillea	www.arnelia.co.za
Atlantic Fertilisers	0860 110 110	Fertilisers & Soil Conditioners	www.atlanticfertilisers.co.za
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Cape Trees	084 712 4752	Trees	gerritschenck@gmail.com
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