



# Bermuda Botanical Society

## NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER 2012

### **PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT, AS PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, WEDNESDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2012**

Ladies and gentlemen.

It has been a year since we adopted our new constitution. We are now a smaller society, focused on the promotion of the science of botany and activities related to that science. To this end we have maintained our recent level of scholarship funding. Scholarships have been chaired by Peter Lee, himself a former BBS scholarship recipient.

We have staged a variety of events for members and guests, namely 2 open gardens, a propagation workshop, a quiz night, 2 Powerpoint-type presentations, including one held jointly with the Zoological Society, a plant show-and-tell presentation and, most recently, our annual plant sale. We also held the annual members' Christmas party.

The recent talk by Axel Bubenzer on rare and unusual plants was well attended. Axel had brought some 8 to 10 plants (on his bike!) and described each in turn. His enthusiastic presentation was both entertaining and informative.

Finally, many thanks to all those who responded to my appeal in the last newsletter for plant pots. I still have to catch up with one or two of the offers received.

**Nigel Chudleigh**  
**nchudlei@ibl.bm**



Pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsus*) – one of the rare plants Axel brought along. Blossoms above, seedpods below. The one in the pictures was photographed in the grounds of BIOS by the Editor.



# PIGEON PEAS

## *Cajun Cajunus*



Pigeon pea is a plant that deserves to be more widely grown in Bermuda. I have had it in my garden for a couple of years now.

This is the 'peas' of the popular West Indian dish, Peas and Rice. It is also widely used in India as the main ingredient of Dhal, a dish more commonly based on lentils in the West.

Pigeon Pea, being a legume, fixes atmospheric nitrogen in the soil, thus improving soil fertility.

The peas can be harvested green and used like fresh peas (*see photo on right*) or allowed to dry on the plant and then used like any other dried pulse in soups, stews, peas & rice etc.. I find the dried peas easier to shell. You can tell they are ripe by shaking the branch; ripe peas will rattle in the pods.

The foliage can be used as fodder, for mulching or in the compost heap.

The plant makes an effective wind break on the windward side of a vegetable patch or around young fruit trees. For the latter purpose, ensure the peas do not grow higher than the tree, thus overshadowing it.

Pigeon pea plants will grow to six or seven feet but can be kept to any desired lesser height by

clipping. Plants should last several years. They are said to self-seed readily, though I haven't seen that myself.

The plants may need to be staked when young, especially if grown in an exposed situation. Keep clipping them as they grow so the plants get sturdy, not tall and lanky.

The plants produce pretty bi-coloured pea-like flowers of yellow and red followed by distinctively-shaped pods containing four or five peas, mostly in the spring and summer. They are prolific croppers.



Another use for established pigeon pea plants is as a trellis for vining plants such as tomatoes and cucumbers.

Pigeon peas can also be used as green manure. I may try that next summer.

For anyone who would like to grow this plant, I will bring some seeds to the Christmas Party on 5 December. Or contact me at 293-0128

***Nigel Chudleigh***

## A CHALLENGE FROM GEORGE PETERICH:



What is the full name of this plant?

Hint for the solution: The label was found lying in the pond of the Sensory Garden. Please email your answers to [peterich@northrock.bm](mailto:peterich@northrock.bm)

I would like to ask the members if anyone has recently seen a WHITE coral vine (*Antigonon leptopus*).

It is several years ago (in the pre-digital era), that I took a photo of it here in Bermuda, but have not recently seen it.

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*The National Trust has started a new community garden. There are a few allotments left. If you*

*are interested contact:*

*David Outerbridge, Conservation Officer*

*Tel: 236-6483 X 224*

*davido@bnt.bm*

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Lyn Vaughan reports that in March she visited many lovely gardens in the UK - Hillier Gardens in Hampshire, the Eden Project and Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall, and Aberglasney Gardens near Carmarthen in Wales, and that she will bring the guides to these and other places to the Christmas Party, for perusal by anyone who is interested.

# THE SEA ONION

(*Drimia maritima*)

Last month I was sent some photographs of a plant and asked if I could identify it. The plant was thought to have been in the garden for 50 to 75 years. I had never seen it before. After a little digging, I determined that the plant was the sea onion or maritime squill. (See the photos below.) The tip of the flower stalk was approximately 6 feet tall and the largest bulbs are about 6 inches in diameter. The bulbs, according to Wikipedia, get “quite large, reaching over five pounds in weight. The plant is native to the Mediterranean and is common in cultivation.” According to the Kew Gardens website, “the flowers are insect- and wind-pollinated; traditionally, the bulbs have been used as an insect repellent, and the cut-flowers are used in floristry.”



The sea onion is in the asparagus (or lily) family and was once classified in the hyacinth family. The leaves have appeared now that the flowers have died. Has anyone seen this plant in Bermuda? If so, please email me at [elgreene@ibl.bm](mailto:elgreene@ibl.bm) or call me at 297 1804. I'm very curious to know if it is in other gardens.



Do you know what this is? It is the seed of a sapote, perhaps, the mamey sapote ( *Pouteria sapota*), or a similarly elongated sapote. The sapotes I have seen growing in Bermuda are quite round, if my memory serves me correctly. The seed was brought to me for identification and all I know about it, at the moment, is that it was found on a beach (presumably in Bermuda). Sapote seeds are known as drift seeds (seeds that float on the ocean's currents) so it is possible that it floated here, but sapotes are also grown here, but not commonly, I think. So again, if you know of sapotes growing here in Bermuda, can you let me know.

*Lisa Greene*

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## THE DEATH OF TREES?

“In the period of over two years (6 July 1942 to 4 August 1944) that Anne Frank spent in hiding in the secret annex, nature and her longing for freedom played an ever greater role. Through a window in the attic which was not blacked out, she could see the sky, birds and the chestnut tree. She wrote about the tree in her diary three times, the last time on 13 May 1944: ‘Our chestnut tree is in full bloom. It’s covered with leaves and is even more beautiful than last year.’ “

([Annefrank.org](http://Annefrank.org).)

On 23 August 2010 the more than 150-year-old tree collapsed, yet another horse chestnut to fall victim to a moth (*Cameraria ohridella*) which produces leaf-eating larvae and a bacterium which makes trunks bleed and die. The two form what has been called a lethal cocktail, destroying the magnificent horse chestnuts of Europe. Once a tree is under attack by the moths, it becomes much more susceptible to the bacterium, which will kill it.



Photo: [www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk) (Andrea Moro)

It is not known why this happened, but the moth became rampant through Europe at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, appearing in Britain in 2002. Five years later it was estimated that up to half of the two million chestnut trees in Britain could be infected.

In Europe, horse chestnuts are a hallmark of cities such as Paris, Amsterdam and Ghent, but they are dying with alarming frequency. (To read the full story, please go to <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/great-chestnut-trees-europe-are-dying>) We in Bermuda know all too well from the catastrophic accidental introduction of the cedar scale what devastation can be caused by a tiny insect.

Now Stephen Woodward, reader in biological sciences at Aberdeen University, has assessed that the British ash tree is virtually finished, because *Chalara fraxinea*, the fungus which threatens the ash, now seems to be established in the wild. This means that its spores will be spread nationwide by the wind.

“We could face losing a third of our woodland,” said Woodward. “My guess is (the ash has) twenty years (left). We will still have ash trees – we think some of them are resistant – but it will be a small proportion.” (Again, we are reminded of our own Bermuda history.)

More than forty outbreaks have been confirmed in Kent and East Anglia, and Britain has banned imports of ash, although it is possible that the outbreak in the wild has been caused by spores brought on the wind from Europe.

Woodward believes that the British Government must now ban imports of oak, pine and plane trees if they are to be saved from disease in Britain. All are under serious threat in other countries. In the past ten years the British Isles have seen the arrival of as many new tree diseases as in the previous forty. The Government is under fire for having waited three years to impose a ban on the importation of ash. It is too early to tell how it will react to Woodward’s warning about the oak, pine and plane.

(Condensed from “The ash is history – oak could be next”, [The Sunday Times](http://www.sundaytimes.com), 04.11.12)

*Helle Patterson*

[helle@northrock.bm](mailto:helle@northrock.bm)

## SCENES OF SOUTH AFRICA

Last month BBS Executive Committee members George and Marijke Peterich, with other rose fanciers from Bermuda, attended a meeting of the World Federation of Rose Societies in South Africa. Marijke was enchanted by the magnificence of the wildflowers, so different from those found in Europe or America, and known to her only as potted plants, and George supplied the following photos:



The special yellow Bird of Paradise, Mandela's Gold, bred at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, Cape Town, and named in honour of Nelson Mandela.



Spectacular scenery in Cape Town



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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

**Saturday, 8 December**

**5 – 8 pm BBS Christmas Party**

*Venue to be confirmed*, Botanical Gardens.

Free refreshments.

Come help us start off this festive season!

**Monday, 4 Feb., 2013**

**Deadline for submissions to next Newsletter**

Please send us your thoughts/experiences/questions/pictures of unusual plants

We are lining up various events for 2013 – please watch out for our emails and keep checking our website:

[www.bermudabotanicalsociety.org](http://www.bermudabotanicalsociety.org)

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