



~ Gardening with Bulbs ~

The Bulb Garden

What's Inside...

- > Kukumakranka Quest, by Robin Glascock, p. 2
- > Summer—It Would Have Been a Good Idea!, by Robin Hansen, p. 8
- > From My Point of View, by Marguerite English, p. 8
- > Excitement Reigns when Summer-Dormant Bulbs Awaken, by Nhu Nguyen, p. 10

Heirloom Daffodils in Jack's Garden

Jenny Randall

Jenny Simpson Randall oversees the Jack London Cottage garden situated in Jack London State Historic Park, Glen Ellen, California. She has been trained in both the UK and US with a background in garden design, horticulture, and garden history. She has been designing and mentoring in gardens around the San Francisco Bay Area for the last twenty years. — Ed.

There's something literary about daffodils. Wordsworth's golden host were *Narcissus pseudonarcissus*, the Lent lily or Easter flowers as they were called in the United States, found in the colonial gardens of old, and recorded as far back as the 1200s in the United Kingdom. In the first two decades of the twentieth century daffodils were stars in the garden of author Jack London.

Daffodils, of the family Amaryllidaceae, appeared in the gardens of Islam, during medieval and Renaissance times in Europe, and in the meadows of the eighteenth century. William Robinson used them in the “wild” gardens he designed in nineteenth-century England. William Hamilton loved to plant double

daffodils at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., and Mrs. Francis King, founder of the Garden Club of America, proclaimed in 1921 that she preferred 'White Lady' above all others. The Chinese considered the daffodil to be good luck—if one blooms in the garden on New Year's Day, your house will have good fortune throughout the year.

Daffodils are native to Portugal and Spain and eastward into western Asia. They first appeared in recorded history around 300 BCE and the Greeks, Ro-

mans, and Chinese grew them for medicinal purposes. *Narcissus poeticus* and *N. tazetta* daffodils were mentioned by Theophrastus in 320 BCE.

A surprising number of species and naturalized hybrids were described in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centu-

ries. *Narcissus hispanicus*, recorded in gardens by 1576, is a parent of today's yellow trumpets. 'King Alfred' is one of the most spectacular examples. *N. oval-laris*, the Tenby daffodil, grew wild along the coast of Wales in 1796. A species related to *N. tazetta*, *N. papyraceus* or “paperwhite,” was recorded as early
(continued to page six)

Board of Directors

Jane McGary, President
janemcgary@earthlink.net

Paul Machado, Vice President
Farmerquys08@gmail.com

Pamela Slate, Secretary
pslate22@yahoo.com

Arnold Trachtenberg, Treasurer
arnold140@verizon.net

Pat Colville, Membership
patrylis@aol.com

Dell Sherk, BX Director
ds429@comcast.net

Volunteers

PBS list: Mary Sue Ittner, Arnold Trachtenberg, Diane Whitehead

PBS wiki: Mary Sue Ittner, Nhu Nguyen, David Pilling, Mike Mace

The Bulb Garden: Jane Merryman, editor; Jennifer Hildebrand, co-editor

The PBS Directory: Pat Colville, editor

Publications Distribution: Arnold Trachtenberg

“I wander'd lonely as a cloud

That floats on high o'er vales and hills,

When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;

Beside the lake, beneath the trees,

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze...”

—William Wordsworth. 1770–1850

Kukumakranka Quest

Robin Glascock

Robin Glascock's garden is a small balcony in the San Francisco Bay Area. She enjoys the classic mediterranean climate, with light frost in winter and only a few really hot summer days. She favors winter-rainfall South African bulbs, mainly Iridaceae. — Ed.

“Mike Vassar was generous enough to give me an enormous orange-size bulb about three or four years ago. The first winter it sent out three thick roots and promptly started to rot. I manage to save it by drying it completely, a treatment which the bulb deeply resented since it refused to do anything afterwards.

“By the second winter, the bulb, now lemon-size, sent out two roots and promptly started to rot. I managed to save it, just in the nick of time, but the obstinate bulb again seemed to resent its condition and refused to show any foliage.

“This winter the bulb sent out four healthy roots and, without much

prompting from my part, started to rot. I suspect two things: 1) the bulb has now been conditioned (in the Pavlovian sense), or 2) I water too much. In any case, the bulb is now walnut-size. I have yet to see a single leaf and according to my calculations, if the

bulb cannot be deprogrammed, it will completely vanish (to the naked eye) by the year 2008. I have been thinking that next winter I should spike the water with a little prozac. I don't think it could hurt either of us.”

That's how Charles Gorenstein charmingly described what many have faced when trying to grow

Gethyllis—so why does anyone bother? The romantic descriptions of the heavenly fragrance of the fruit are what captivated me; South Africans have been enjoying it for many years: “They are highly aromatic and have a powerful sweet, fruity odour. The gathering of the inconspicuous fruit depends to a large extent on a good sense of smell. Kukumakranka brandy is one of the early Cape remedies for colic and indigestion. Traditionally an alcoholic infusion or tincture is made from a few ripe fruits in a bottle of brandy or witblits. The edible fruit was also highly valued to perfume rooms and linen” (from SANParks.org).

Then there are the enthusiastic accounts of successful growers, such as Gordon Summerfield. “I disagree ... that *Gethyllis* are not spectacular. The variation in the plant and leaf structure are unique as is the spear (missile if you like) protrusions of the flowers in the heat of summer and the finger like pods of fruit, either on their
(continued to next page)



Robert Jacob Gordon, “*Gethyllis polyanthera* of Hottentots Krokemakrank—A) the flower B) the fruit, being pleasant of smell and taste.” Kukumakranka brandy is made from the red-tinted fruit.

Kukumakranka Quest (cont'd)

(continued from previous page)
own or with the foliage in Autumn. Absolutely unique, fascinating and to my mind quite stunning!!!”

I was intrigued. I fantasized about serving kukumakranka brandy to my family and friends. Of course that would require having a generous supply of fruit, which depended on growing a generous number of plants, getting them to bloom, pollination A whole project, then.

I grow winter-rainfall South African bulbs (mainly Iridaceae) on a small balcony in the eastern part of the San Francisco Bay Area. All my bulbs are in containers, which I put out on a shelf during the cool season, where they get afternoon sun and winter rains (about fifteen inches per year). We get only light frosts in the winter, and the few days each summer in the 90s (°F) are offset by cool nights. When my plants die back in the late spring, I move the containers into cooler shady places, such as under the shelves. They remain totally dry all summer in our classic mediterranean climate.

Gethyllis species are in the Amaryllis family, and Amaryllids

are quite different from Irids in some of their requirements. Their seeds and bulbs are fleshy and seem to be more easily killed. For example, I can order Irid bulbs and seeds from South Africa in February, store them dry until August, and they'll come up very happily a month or two later. Researching all

Dylan recommended I try *Gethyllis villosa*, and so, in July 2008, I ordered three bulbs. I had decided if I were going to kill them anyway, there was no point in throwing away a large number when I could just as well destroy only a few. If I kept them alive, I could get more in the future.

Dylan also gave me some specific advice on growing media. He recommended #20 silica sand, which I had never used before. It's an inert grit that is sieved so the particle size is fairly uniform—the “#20” indicates the size of the grains. It is used in a type of pool filter and can be had at a reasonable price at pool- and spa-supply stores. I found “Leslie’s Swimming Pool Supplies – Filter Sand – Step 5 Enhancer – 20-grade sand,” which looks like bits of granite. Dylan’s recipe was 10 to 15 percent organic material added to the sand, so I decided to be conservative and use 10

percent (by volume) “Redwood Forest Compost” available from my local hardware store. Redwood is an insect-resistant softwood native to California, and the compost includes both coarse and fine slivers of wood with added iron and nitrogen. I thoroughly rinsed the sand

(continued to page four)



Although it was their fragrance that drew Robin to *Gethyllis*, many growers are attracted to the highly variable foliage. Left: *Gethyllis verticillata*'s linear-to-strap-shaped leaves, coiled at the tip, emerge from basal sheaths that are white and blotched and elaborately fringed at the apex. Top right: *Gethyllis* sp. Bottom right: *Gethyllis longistyla*. Photos by Bob Rutemoeller.

the accounts of adapting Southern Hemisphere Amaryllids to Northern Hemisphere gardens made my head spin, so I thought I would try to find some *Gethyllis* plants or seeds from American growers to increase my chances of success. I finally found just one source at a reasonable price: Dylan Hannon.

Kukumakranka Quest (cont'd)

(continued from page three)

and discarded all fine particles, then mixed it with the compost.

The dust from silica sand is hazardous to breathe so I moistened it before handling. In the future I think I will just hold my breath instead, to reduce the risk of rotting my bulbs.

Each of my three bulbs was about 1 inch tall and ½ inch wide, with a long neck of approximately another 1 inch. I planted them at 2-inch shoulder depth in a so-called “1 gallon” plastic nursery container that really holds about three liters of mix, and covered the drain holes with mesh so the sand wouldn’t fall out. In the medium underneath the bulbs I added 1 teaspoon Jack’s Classic ClassiCote 16-9-23 with minors, a controlled-release fertilizer touted to last four months. I also installed a fabric wick cut from a synthetic car-drying cloth—to prevent a perched water table that could encourage rotting. The wick hangs out of a drain hole and off my shelf and helps the *Gethyllis* pot drain thoroughly.

I normally use an acidic medium for my Irid bulbs, which helps offset our slightly alkaline city water. Since I wasn’t sure of the pH of the silica sand, I thought I should save rain water for the *Gethyllis*. As advised by Richard Doult (*Cape Bulbs*), Rhoda McMaster (PBS list topic of

7/21/04), and Gary Buckley (“Confronting God and Talking about *Gethyllis*” on Suite101. com), I chose to water my *Gethyllis* bulbs only once every two

weeks while they were actively growing. I cobbled together a clear plastic hat for their pot, using a container from a bulk pack of salad greens from my favorite warehouse store. I marked off every other weekend for rain, starting in October after the first leaves appeared. I put some chopsticks in the pot to keep the hat in place, with room for air circulation underneath, and used it to restrict watering to my planned schedule. If it rained on schedule, I took the hat off and let Mother Nature have her way. If it didn’t rain, I watered with



Above: Robin recommends 20-grade filter sand, available at pool supply stores. Below: Robin’s *Gethyllis* wearing their “hat”.



my saved rain, and if it was forecast to rain when it shouldn’t I put the hat on. My bulb balcony faces southwest, so it gets only afternoon sun. Gordon Summerfield recommends morning sun, but that side of my house is the frequent target of

squirrel excavation parties. Since the *Gethyllis* pot
(continued to next page)

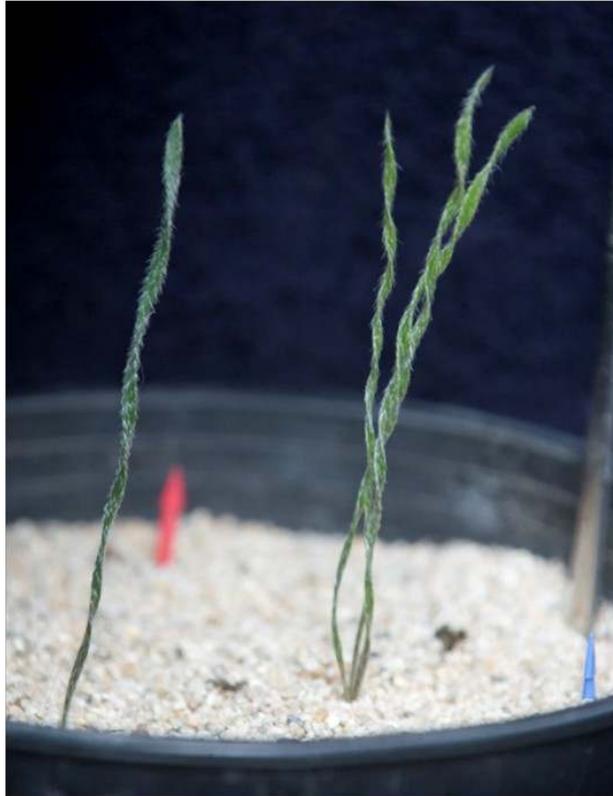
Kukumakranka Quest (cont'd)

(continued from previous page)

is surrounded by other containers, its sides do not get baked in the hot sun.

In 2008 I planted three bulbs in July, but only two came up in October. I found, after some careful digging, that the third had already rotted. A frightening harbinger of failure? I strengthened my resolve to strictly ration water for the rest of the season. One of the remaining bulbs had three hairy leaves, but the other had only one, so there was not a lot of room for slow deterioration. None of the leaves ever seemed to wilt, so I felt pretty confident as the months went by that this seemingly paltry moisture was sufficient. The spiraling, hairy leaves got longer and longer, and by the end of April 2009 started turning brown, so I stopped watering. After a few weeks I moved the pot to a shady dry spot where I could easily monitor it for any sign of blooming.

To my enor-



Above: Evidence of Robin's success—her *Gethyllis* in December, 2008. Below: The fruit produces a wonderful scent, but the flowers are welcome, too! Photo by Cameron McMaster.



mous delight, on June 18, 2009, without any prompting by summer storms (we don't have any), my three-leaved bulb sent up a flower. At first I couldn't decide whether to risk its health by trying for seeds, but of course in the fullness of time I couldn't resist. However, since the other plant had not bloomed, I could only self-pollinate the one flower, which didn't work. In early September I removed the top three inches of sand and mixed another teaspoon of fertilizer into the medium around the bulbs, then replaced the old mix. I didn't want to unnecessarily disturb the roots.

On September 27 I saw the first new sprout appear. I was excited to find both my bulbs had more leaves! I now had a four-leaf and a three-leaf plant.

My theory is the larger plant gained only one new leaf because it spent all that energy blooming back in June.

I waited a week to water for the first time, and watered the second time three weeks later, then resumed my normal two-week irrigation schedule. We had unusually good weather for plants this spring, with alternating warmth and cool rain—much more rain than usual, nicely spaced, and no early heat waves. My *Gethyllis* started to turn brown in early May, so I stopped watering them and am now watching and hoping for both of them to bloom. I will definitely try crossing them if they do! I have great plans for the seedlings . . .

Heirloom Daffodils in Jack's Garden (cont'd)

(continued from page one)

as 1597. In its heyday, the early nineteenth century, it could be found in every Victorian drawing room. By 1869 daffodil was also known as daffadilly and daffadowndilly, a corruption of *Asphodel/Asphodelus*.

Deliberate hybridizing did not begin until the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1880 Peter Barr grew about 500 different kinds. In 1907 the Royal Horticultural Society published 1,400 daffodils. The new register has 24,000 on the list.

Such was the popularity of daffodils when Jack London moved into his cottage, on what he called his Beauty Ranch, two years after he became America's most popular writer with the publication of *The Call of the Wild*. It was here that he wrote such classics as *White Fang*, *The Iron Heel*, and *Martin Eden*.

I began to volunteer at the park in 1997. Soon I was assigned to the cottage garden and paid by Valley of the Moon Natural History Association (VOMNHA). My charge is to maintain the garden and establish a balance between historic accuracy and visual pleasure for the visitor. VOMNHA restored the garden in the late 1980s and early 1990s. We constantly revise if we find new evidence of what was or wasn't there. The period from 1912 to 1916 is the period of significance that is used for interpretation of all things Jack London within the park.

With the help of photographs and letters as well as eyewitness accounts, parts of the garden have been restored to how Jack would have known it. A few of the trees in and around the garden are definitely from

his time. The rest has been planted to give a sense of place, using plant material that would have been recognized at the turn of the last century. Jack's second wife, Charmian, lived on at the ranch after his death and her contributions have to be taken into consideration as well.

I was told there had been a thick band of yellow daffodils and tulips lining the path wandering up from the ranch road. I soon learned that tulips wouldn't last long—deer were delighted by the flowers and the gophers were even more so by the bulbs. Daffodils were safe, though, because lykorine, the poison within them, protects them from being eaten by deer and most rodents.

As I began to work, I realized that if I were to add to the daffodils already growing in the garden they would have to be heirlooms. Since Charmian died in 1955, I felt that those cultivars registered in the 1950s and earlier were acceptable to plant around the cottage. Most of the daffodils I have purchased over the years are from regular bulb catalogs I receive annually. There are suppliers out there with even older and rarer stock, but my budget doesn't stretch that far.

We plant daffodils in every bed possible, in between the day lilies, hellebores, crocosmias, and Shasta daisies, as well as in the rosemary bed with the Star Magnolia. They are situated in areas that are obvious to the discerning eye of the visitor in this public park. This demands specific maintenance, and some leaves get tied up well before they should. Others I let die down and the leaves are cleared away during the autumn clean-up by my very patient and able crew of

(continued to next page)



Top: A 2001 photo of the Jack London Cottage garden with the tulips and daffodils that no longer exist. Bottom: Jack London Cottage garden in spring of this year, after most of the daffodils stopped blooming. Photos by Jenny Randall.

Heirloom Daffodils in Jack's Garden (cont'd)

(continued from previous page)
garden volunteers.

I have used many of the old favorites that we know and love, such as the 'King Alfred' with large, vivid yellow trumpets. This was registered in 1899 by John Kendall. I have a few 'Golden Ducat', registered in 1947, which is a sport of the 'King Alfred' in double form.

Narcissus tazetta 'Avalanche' comes up every year in profusion. It was registered in 1906, about the time Jack and Charmian came to the cottage. 'Avalanche' was found in the nineteenth century growing in abundance on a sea cliff in Isles of Scilly, UK. Once called 'Seventeen Sisters' because of its many little nodding flowers per stem, it was one of Thomas Jefferson's favorites.

I have included many *Narcissus tazetta* 'Silver Chimes', introduced in 1914. These daffodils begin to choke out our other plants with their strong naturalizing habits. Then there is 'Fortune' of 1917 with its pretty yellow perianth and marigold-yellow crown. 'Actea' of the poeticus narcissus group was registered in 1927 and 'Red Rascal' before 1950.

The 1938 'Little Gem' appears along one of the paths to show off its small size. The early season 'Ice Follies', with its beautiful yellow cup surrounded by a pale perianth, was introduced in 1953 by the plant breeders Konynenburg & Mark. I came across the 1927 'Carlton' when I was a horticultural intern at the Filoli country estate in Woodside, California. It's easy to grow and long lasting. I have it planted mostly among the day-lily *Hemerocallis* 'Kwanso Flore



From the top: 'Golden Ducat', 1947; 'Avalanche', 1906; 'Red Rascal', before 1950; 'Thalia', 1916.
Photos by Jenny Randall.

Pleno'. Probably my favorite is 'Thalia', the oldest garden form of *N. triandus*. Its whiter-than-white little dancing heads are a refreshing sight on a spring day, but you have to nurture them and make sure they are not crowded. I've lost some over the years. Quite a few nameless daffodils have come up in the garden and died back down to bloom another year. I lose a few here and there, but mostly they multiply.

Every year I look forward to late November when the first daffodils appear. They are usually blooming somewhere in the garden until mid-April, but this year they struggled into May because of the abundance of late rain. They would last longer every year if it weren't for an annual two- to three-day heat wave in February or March.

The daffodils around Jack London's cottage are the first glimmer of life in a garden that barely lays to rest. Their colors are full of happiness, chasing away any blues that I might have experienced during the winter.

References:

- Jack London State Historic Park: www.parks.ca.gov
Antique bulbs: www.oldhousegardens.com
Daffodils: www.aa-florist.com/Site Map-Narcissus.html#
Royal Horticultural Society: www.rhs.org.uk
Schweppe, Mrs. Charles H. *Beauty from Bulbs*. John Scheepers, Inc., 1931.
Walker, Violet Niles. *Development of the Narcissus during the 19th Century – A Review*. www.ahs.org/publications

Summer—It Would Have Been a Good Idea!

Robin Hansen

Robin gardens in North Bend, OR, just east of the Pacific Ocean on a property sheltered by dunes and conifers (slightly colder and hotter than USDA zone 9). She grows and sells cyclamen and a few other Oregon native plants. To ask questions or request her plant list, send an email to robin@hansennursery.com.

—Ed.

So much for summer! Here on the western edge of the continent we haven't had anything much resembling most people's idea of summer. You know—sunshine, warm temperatures, lazy days of swimming, boating and cold beer . . . Our coastal

summer has consisted of fog moving in and out all day long and cold northern winds pounding away every afternoon. And this morning, we had at least half an inch of rain, although it did clear off this afternoon.

My plants haven't been too impressed either, although some have done well, such as *Penstemon serrulatus* and *Solidago spathulata*. Some ornamental onions bloomed; some didn't. *Cyclamen purpurascens* was very happy to begin flowering in June and it still shows no sign of stopping.

The thyme looks wimpy, the rosemary is rosemary, *Phygelius* 'African Queen' keeps popping out its orangey trumpets, while three

other *phygelius* have pouted through the entire summer, and good old reliable *Leucojum autumnale* is presenting its delicate pink-tinted bells and wine-colored stems here and there.

The rock garden, consisting as it does of old sand dune, hasn't dried out as much as I would expect and alpines I thought would disappear settled right in with minimal watering. Of course, I'm trying not to mention the tons of sand we've all tracked in and the blasting afternoon winds that pitched in more behind us as we fled into the house, freezing. Perhaps we might hope for a politically incorrect Indian summer?

* * * * *

From My Point of View

Marguerite English

Marguerite gardens in Descanso, CA (east of San Diego). During her busy days filled with work (she and her daughter have just started their own business), she seeks out her garden for a little solace.—Ed.

I was neglecting a bunch of garden projects during May, putting them off until summer arrived. Then I managed to fall into a gopher hole and sustain a hairline fracture in one arm. I had several things waiting to be planted, a garden bed to finish, and a number of greenhouse tasks. The doc immobilized the whole arm with a giant cast, and I couldn't move or lift much of anything. I managed to plant about two items a day during June and weed another couple of square feet at a time. The cast is all gone now and I have done some catch-up, but the summer projects definitely didn't go as

planned.

What a lovely summer we had. The weather conditions made it cooler than usual, especially at night. Mid-August finally delivered some warm days. So what's a lazy gardener to do? No work for sure! Even the dog doesn't want to



The morning view from Marguerite's garden

do her chores—she hides her ball instead of bringing it to me for catch games.

I did get most of the tender bulbs lifted and sorted out for replanting later in the year. I usually start replanting in late October, when it's time to bring in any ten-

der plants from outside. I am experimenting with more of the bulbs in outside garden beds; they need less special attention there if they can manage to survive our winter temperatures.

I am writing in early September. The "nekkid ladies" (*Amaryllis belladonna*) are just finishing. *Lycoris squamigera* and *L. radiata* are also in the garden, but haven't bloomed so far this year. Gayfeather (*Liatris spicata*), crinums, and *Habranthus robustus* have mostly finished. The nights are starting to chill down and the plants are getting ready for winter not far behind. One

plant of *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen' brightens the entire garden. Sometimes it is so covered with the little golden finches, the branches bend almost to the ground. *Salvia leucanthus*, *Agastache*, *Asclepias*, *Chilopsis* (desert willow), a few penstemons, and other salvias have been

(continued to next page)

Board of Directors Meeting, June 2010

All officers and directors were present at the conference call. Jane Mer-ryman, editor of *The Bulb Garden*, joined us briefly before the regular busi-ness meeting. She requested that we encourage people we know to write arti-cles for the newsletter about their own bulb collections, parks and other public places to visit, botanic gardens with interesting bulb collections, as well as species accounts. A number of public gardens were suggested as sources and Pamela Slate agreed to send to Jane her list of the directors of large gardens. We agreed that articles on hardy bulbs would generate greater member inter-est. Even though we have technical difficulties in scanning watercolor draw-ings, all of us agreed it was an idea worth pursuing.

Since the last meeting we discussed through email the amount to charge for advertising in *The Bulb Garden*. The board voted unanimously to establish the rate at \$10 per column inch.

Treasurer Arnold Trachtenberg noted that expenditures are currently slightly higher because of the increase in international members. He sends to new members the most recent two issues in addition to a BX discount coupon. More people are using PayPal for BX transactions and membership, which is more efficient for all parties. The board agreed with Arnold in leaving PBS monies in the current account.

Dell Sherk reported that the BX is busy with seed and bulb donations coming in regularly. Paul Machado noted that some seed exchanges have stopped filling overseas requests and suggested that our BX might see in-creased international requests.

Michael Homick has volunteered to convert the membership list to Ac-cess. Pamela Slate will advise the board when renewal reminders are to be sent. It is the board's desire that the new directory be mailed with the fall issue of *The Bulb Garden*. Jane McGary and Jennifer Hildebrand agreed to encour-age members to send in updates to their personal information and interests for the new publication.

The next Board of Directors meeting was tentatively set for October 17, 2010.

Treasurer's Report, Second Quarter, 2010

BALANCE 4/1/2010	\$22,565.64
INCOME	
U.S. Members	\$ 280.00
Overseas Members	\$ 250.00
Contributions	\$ 18.00
BX Receipts	\$ 541.21
Investment Results	\$ 1.82
TOTAL	\$ 1,091.03
EXPENSES	
BX/SX Expense	\$ (265.81)
Board Conference Call	\$ (73.19)
Supplies	\$ (45.00)
Total Publications	\$ (995.00)
PayPal Expense	\$ (92.86)
Postage	\$ (403.14)
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$(1,875.00)
BALANCE 3/31/2010	\$ 21,781.67

From My Point of View (cont'd)

(continued from previous page)

putting out their last flush of bloom. The tomatoes have been providing lunchtime sandwiches for a month now. There is nothing better than living in a garden!

In the greenhouse I have most of the dormant bulbs in envelopes. There are a few put aside to send to Dell, but I have been preoccupied with other tasks and keep putting it off. The *Bomarea* puts out occasional bloom clusters. It's on a trellis and makes a lovely greeting as one enters the room, but most of the indoor gardening activities take place in winter.

My favorite time of day lately is dusk. I like to stop all computer work, move to the patio about 5 p.m., and read or daydream. Bulb catalogs beside the chair fuel the daydreams. When I look up, the bluebirds are splashing in the fountain and the little yellow finches are waiting on the fence to get their turn. There was a gorgeous red-tailed hawk sitting in the tree outside my bedroom when I opened my eyes yesterday. She was just resting, watching over her domain, and looking right into the window. Do you suppose birds have hobbies? A people-watcher hawk—could it be?



~Gardening with Bulbs~

It's time to renew !

We appreciate your support—we would hate to lose you!

Renewing is easy. You can renew **ONLINE** (\$20 U.S., \$25 international) via PayPal. Just use the button on our membership page, <http://www.pacificbulbsociety.org/membership.html>.

Be sure to contact Patty (patrylis@aol.com) if any of your contact information has changed.

You can also mail in your renewal. Please direct it to Patty Colville, 1555 Washburn Road, Pasadena, CA 91105.

Questions? Call Patty at (323) 254-9831. If any of your contact information has changed, please update it on this form, cut it out, and send it in with your payment.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Thanks again for your continued support of the Pacific Bulb Society!

Excitement Reigns when Summer –Dormant Bulbs Awaken

Nhu Nguyen

Nhu says he is classified as a “mycologist,” but he really loves plants and combines that passion with travel and photography. He is a graduate student at UC Berkeley and is also a painter. His work can be viewed on the web at www.flickr.com/photos/xeranthemum. — Ed.

Autumn is a time of excitement and revitalization for growers of mediterranean-climate bulbs. After many months of dry summer and seemingly empty pots that have bewildered the neighbors, something exciting is about to happen. During this time I constantly check my collection of pots for signs of life. Some days nothing appears but once in a while I am pleasantly surprised with a bit of green protruding either out of old leaf sheaths like some *Brunsgivia* spp. or just out of the ground. Some bulbs like *Gethyllis grandiflora* and *Strumaria truncata* will even produce a sheath (cataphyll) to protect their new leaves.

If I'm lucky, the fleshy protrusion will not be a leaf but the beginning of an inflorescence. What joy it is to witness a bulb that you have grown for many years flower for the first time! Soon the inflorescence will develop and turn into a beautiful display from the brightest reds of *Haemanthus namaquensis* to the simple and elegant white of *Strumaria truncata*.

Another joy during this time is being able to see first-year seedlings returning to the surface. It is generally understood (and has been demonstrated) that first-year seedlings have a lot of trouble during their first dormancy. Thus a return from first-year seedlings provides this gardener with yet another feeling of elation.

Some bulbs will start sprouting by themselves, whereas others will require a good soaking of water before they respond. South African amaryllids, such as some species of *Haemanthus* and *Brunsgivia*, generally do not require water as a cue, but others such as Californian bulbs or corms won't even break the ground until about month has passed since they received water.

The way in which leaves come out of the bulb is

also an interesting occurrence to observe and ponder. Since young leaves are delicate, these plants have evolved ways to protect them as they push through. Leaf sheaths are good for this if the bulbs are situated below ground. However, making a leaf sheath above the ground also solves this problem since the new leaves just follow the path left behind by the old ones. Species of the Themidaceae do it a little differently since their corms are buried deeper in the ground. If

you grow any members of the family, take a look at the tips of the emerging leaves next time one sprouts. You will notice that they are swollen and are fairly sharp. One can imagine that this is a useful structure with good support for the leaf as it tunnels its way to the surface.

A relevant and curious question related to this article that has been discussed multiple times on the PBS forum is how these bulbs know when to break dormancy. Some species respond very well to water, whereas others (like *Tropaeolum* spp.) generally skip a year or two even if plenty of water is available. And then there are some that do not require water at all. From the collective of experiences on the PBS forum, it seems that neither water nor light

is required. Bulbs like *Haemanthus* will break dormancy perfectly fine if kept completely dark in the garage. Temperature swings in addition to barometric pressure may be other contributing factors. However, these factors still need to be tested. Intrinsic biotic mechanisms have been proposed for the breaking of dormancy. One of these mechanisms is an internal clock that is set at the time the plant goes into dormancy and expires after a certain period of time independent of environmental input. This idea is supported by the fact that plants shipped from one hemisphere to another have a hard time breaking their dormancy. An enthusiast with controlled conditions and plenty of bulbs can perform some experiments to answer these questions. In the meantime, I will go seek out more green tips from my dormant pots. The joy and curiosity of growing summer dormant bulbs never ends.



New leaves sprouting with protective sheath on *Gethyllis grandiflora*. Photo by Nhu Nguyen.



All photos by Nhu Nguyen unless otherwise noted. Clockwise from top left: an emerging inflorescence on *Strumaria truncata*; a new leaf sprouts from the old leaf base on *Brunsvigia namaquana*; the emergence of an inflorescence on *Haemanthus namaquensis* (photo by Doris Terrill); *Haemanthus nortieri* sprouts a new leaf; old leaves remain as new leaves sprout from *Haemanthus pubescens* ssp. *leipoldtii*; a new leaf sprouts within *Strumaria truncata*'s protective sheath.

Gardening with Bulbs



Gethyllis sp., photo by Bob Rutemoeller. Read about Robin's experience growing *Gethyllis* on p. 2.

Inside This Edition:

Heirloom Daffodils in Jack's Garden <i>By Jenny Randall</i>	1
Kukumakranka Quest <i>By Robin Glascock</i>	2
Summer—It Would Have Been A Good Idea! <i>By Robin Hansen</i>	8
From My Point of View <i>By Marguerite English</i>	8
Excitement Reigns when Summer- Dormant Bulbs Awaken <i>By Nhu Nguyen</i>	10

The Bulb Garden © 2010

The Bulb Garden is the newsletter of the Pacific Bulb Society (PBS). It is published, if enough articles are submitted, around the third week of each quarter and is available to PBS members. This newsletter provides gardening or bulb related articles, news of interest to members, and announcements of the PBS organization.

Editor: Jane Merryman, jane@sonic.net; Co-Editor: Jennifer Hildebrand

Visit us online! www.pacificbulbsociety.org

Pat Colville – Memberships
1555 Washburn Road
Pasadena, CA., 91105

www.pacificbulbsociety.org