

IN QUEST OF *BRUNSVIGIA BOSMANIAE*

by Gretchen Hesse, Waterkloof

The rains had come - somewhat earlier and more abundantly than expected. Our trip to the Bokkeveld had been planned for the last week of March to correspond with the small bulb season; but the bulbs had no intention of waiting for us and we set off a little despondently after hearing that flowering was past its prime.

Among the koppies in the Wildflower Reserve at Nieuwoudtville, however, there were literally thousands of *brunsvigia* plants with characteristic seedheads; exquisitely shaped tumbleweeds that would dislodge at a later stage discarding their seeds while being propelled by the wind. Here and there a few spectacular late blooms, their colour ranging from nearly white to dark pink, were proudly displaying their wax-like beauty. Amazing to see them protruding out of the bare, dry soil. The flat rosette of leaves appears later after soaking winter rains. Clusters of tiny pink *Haemanthus amarylloides* (pienkwas) as well as the miniature *Bulbinella divaginata* (herfskatstert) and *Brunsvigia minor* (kleinmaartblom) were scattered about in the veld.

We were not to be disappointed though; the next day we travelled along the plateau northwards towards Perdekraal. This is the northernmost extension of the Table Mountain Sandstone and thus covered in fynbos, mostly leucadendrons and *Pratea laurifolia*. At Kookfontein the Kotzes, both octogenarians, showed us their horse-operated grain mill, still in perfect condition.

Die Hel is a mountain pass leading down the western escarpment to the Knersvlakte; this was definitely 4x4 territory. There to our utter joy and amazement we discovered a hillside ablaze with colour, *Brunsvigia bosmaniae* blooms in full glory! Our mission was successful!

The Nieuwoudtville waterfall on the road to Loeriesfontein must be exceptionally beautiful in the Wit season as the canyon is quite spectacular, even when dry. Unfortunately we were too late for the *Crinum variabile* (riverlily) which had flowered a few weeks before. The Kokerboom Forest (*Aloe dichotoma*) at Gannabos is a sight not to be missed and we were pleased to see so many young trees - the forest extends on and on along the northern slopes of the low, arid mountains.

The little hamlet of Nieuwoudtville was busy gearing up for the onslaught of visitors in August and September - we were fortunate to have enjoyed a peaceful, informative and relaxing time there. ®

The author has been a member of the Botanical Society for more than twenty-five years and she and her husband are both keen indigenous gardeners.



Above. Maartblom, *Brunsvigia bosmaniae*, in the Wildflower Reserve at Nieuwoudtville. The author (left) and Rainer and Traudl Hagerman show their delight! Photo: Viktor Hesse.

Below. The Kokerboom Forest at Gannabos. Photo: Viktor Hesse. Below left. *Brunsvigia bosmaniae* flowering profusely at Die Hel. Photo: Rainer Hagemann.

