

# The Bulb Garden



~Gardening with Bulbs~

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**PBS list:** David Pilling (List Administrator), Eugene Zielinski, Diane Whitehead  
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**The Bulb Garden:** Robin Hansen, Editor; Jennifer Hildebrand, Co-editor  
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## IN MEMORIAM - ROD and RACHEL SAUNDERS

As many of you know, the plant world, and in particular, the bulb world, suffered a tremendous loss in February of this year with the abduction and subsequent deaths of Rod and Rachel Saunders, owners of Silverhill Seeds in Kenilworth, Cape Town, Republic of South Africa. In the last few years both were dedicated to a project to locate and image all known *Gladiolus* species in Southern Africa, and were on a field trip to KwaZulu-Natal Province in search of one last *Gladiolus* photo of the species *G. uitenhagensis* when they died.

The Saunders spent much of their time traveling around Southern Africa collecting seeds, even in some areas not necessarily known for plants. One story Rod told – while traveling, they arrived at a border crossing and the border official confiscated their food. Rod thought he wanted it for himself as some of it was packaged and therefore not at risk of anything. Rod emptied it all on the ground rather than have the man keep it...



Rachel and Rod Saunders, Silverhill Seeds, South Africa. Photo: Mary Sue Ittner.

They spent much of their time photographing plants, collecting information for the many talks they gave and collecting seeds for their many customers. They were responsible for many new plant introductions, and their catalog is detailed and extensive, representing the incredible number of plants indigenous to Southern Africa.

In addition to the seed business and small-

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## Saunders *cont'd*

holding (small farm), the Saunders had a tissue culture lab with partner Andy (Andrew) Hackland at Brakenfell where their memorial service was held. They grew some plants in greenhouses there and trialed annuals in beds along with the tissue cultured plants they sold, but they also had some native bush where they would sprinkle excess seed, consequently having some interesting plants growing there. They spent a great deal of time clearing the area of exotics before they started sowing their seed.

As you can imagine there were any number of stories family and friends told through the many years of knowing Rod and Rachel. Here is one published in the Indigenous Bulb Association of South Africa.

### “Of Plant Names and Sacred Cows”

I trained as a horticulturist in amenity horticulture and worked for many years tending parks & open spaces, sport fields & motorway



Rod Saunders. Photo: Mary Sue Ittner.

verges. Mid-way through my career I had a crisis, decided that I did not want to do this for the rest of my life & had the impudence to apply for the post of nursery manager at South Africa's premier Botanic Garden. To my surprise I got the job! For the first few months I lived in awe working at Kirstenbosch. Here I was surrounded by all those experts who previously I had only read about in botanical journals, and now I

could count them as colleagues!

Working a few minutes past home time one night, a friend ambled past my desk, idly flicked a white *Agapanthus* flower onto it and wished me good night. A wicked thought passed through my mind and with the single white bloom I went into the nursery. I selected and filled a pot with soil and placed the flower at ground level so that it seemed to emerge from the soil. I then cut some *Nothoscordum* leaves (onion weed) and arranged them in a fan with some florist wire, and they too were placed emerging from the soil next to the white flower. The entire pot surface was covered with some decorative gravel to hide my handiwork and I sought a plant label with which to name my specimen, *Albocrocus virgineus*. I accorded it an author and a fictitious collection and accession number, left the specimen on my desk and went home.

The next day I arrived early, took my specimen into the tea room where we commenced the day's activities and showed off the beautiful flower which had emerged overnight. What had started off as a light hearted joke now developed into a serious discussion on the beauty of *Albocrocus*! My colleagues had heard of it, yes, and knew that it wasn't South African, and it was the first time that any of them had seen it. I could barely contain myself as I answered their questions regarding growing and flowering the plant. The bubble had to pop somewhere! One of the volunteers working in the garden walked into the tea room, looked quizzically at the plant and said, "It looks just like an *Agapanthus*", and thus ended my subterfuge. My credibility was in tatters and nobody ever believed me or took me seriously ever again!

The Saunders were, by any gardener's reckoning, total plant addicts, and they went to great lengths in pursuit of *Gladiolus* species for their book, as evidenced by a quote from their January 2016 newsletter:

“Two other rare *Gladiolus* species that we

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## Saunders cont'd

photographed last year are *Gladiolus antholyzoides* and *Gladiolus phoenix*. *Gladiolus antholyzoides* used to occur in large numbers around Sasolburg in the Free State south of Johannesburg, as well as around Pretoria. Due to urban encroachment and mining, most of its habitats are now gone, except for a few plants left in a wild area of a friend's garden. We have been communicating with him and he agreed to let us know when the plants were coming up to flower. Lo and behold, despite the drought, in November he phoned and told us to come quickly as several plants were about to flower. So we booked flights to Johannesburg for the following week, hired a car, drove to Sasolburg to photograph the *Gladiolus*, and flew back to Cape Town the same day. An expensive *Gladiolus*!!

*Gladiolus phoenix* is one of the species that we thought we would not find. It only flowers in the first year after fire, and it only occurs in the Bainskloof Mountains behind Wellington in the SW Cape. However, early in 2015 Bainskloof burned, so we vowed that from November onwards, we would do weekly searches of the area until we found it! We were so lucky – on our first search, there it was, right next to the road! What a gorgeous plant – a large tall branched inflorescence with masses of clear pink flowers all open at the same time. It is amazing that such a striking plant has only recently been described, and we assume that this is because of the position of the plant in relation to the road. The road is extremely narrow with a precipitous drop on one side, and most people would have their eyes glued to the road rather than looking for plants up the bank!”

They were very active and extremely supportive members of the Indigenous Bulb Association of South Africa. Rod had chaired the association and Rachel was treasurer and editor of the yearly Bulletin for many years. Both were long-time members of the Committee (Board).



## From Ondine Schrick, Horticulturist, Silverhill Seeds

Rachel was born on March 1, 1954 in Johannesburg, South Africa. She received a Ph.D. in Microbiology from University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. She was active in the Mountain Club of South Africa where she met Rod. They married in 1976 and her interest in plants started after meeting him.

Rod was born on February 15, 1945 in the United Kingdom (U.K.) and came out to South Africa with his family as a young boy. He attended school in South Africa and went on to study horticulture in Pretoria. He then applied for a job with the Pretoria Parks Department, moving on to work with the Johannesburg Parks Department where he worked in the Brixton Cemetery, followed by a stint at Joubert Park.

At the end of 1983, Rod and Rachel moved to Cape Town where Rod got a job as nursery manager at Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden. They enjoyed the lifestyle that Cape Town had to offer, cycling, windsurfing, diving for crayfish and climbing mountains to look at wildflowers. They even bought a kiln and made

pottery.

When the opportunity came to buy the seed business, they both took the risk of leaving their jobs, turning Silverhill Seeds into one of the most successful seed businesses in the world. Travelling extensively throughout Southern Africa, they collected and procured a vast range of plant seed. Their large and extensive internet-based catalogue speaks of their collecting dedication and depth of knowledge. Seed was sold to a range of plant enthusiasts, collectors, breeders and commercial businesses worldwide.

Rod and Rachel were also enthusiastic mountaineers and hill walkers, activities that took them to remote parts of Africa. Often these trips would yield new plant discoveries and

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Rod & Rachel Saunders. Photo: Maria Perry

**Saunders cont'd**

uncover the rarest of species. In the last few years both were dedicated to a project to locate and image all known *Gladiolus* species in Southern Africa, and were on a field trip to KwaZulu-Natal Province when they died.



Rachel Saunders with *Romulea omibergensi*. Photo: Mary Sue Ittner.

*Ondine Schrick has worked for Silverhill Seeds for twenty years. She goes on to say that the Saunders touched many peoples' lives with their kind, generous natures. Their contributions to the botanical and horticultural world are and will be greatly missed; the world is a richer place for their time spent here, however short.*

*Ondine continues... The first thing Rod said to me as I walked in on my first day working with them was "Keep your ears and eyes open and your mouth closed and you will learn a lot." which she says she has done. Both Andrew and she owe their love for plants to Rod and Rachel. At this time Ondine, who has inherited Silverhill Seeds from the Saunders, will continue to run the nursery and seed collection will be done mostly by others.*



**From Mark Perry, Rod's cousin, who farms 85 acres and has a small herd of pedigreed English Longhorn cattle.**

Some 50 years ago as an impressionable young boy (aged 7) I first met Rod. My family had emigrated from the UK to Swaziland and

stayed with his family en route. We had traveled by boat to Cape Town and by train to Johannesburg, where Rod and his father collected us. They had already procured us an old Holden station wagon for the last leg of the journey to Manzini (Swaziland), where my father was taking up a position as a Medical Practitioner.

Tall, bearded and friendly, I had never met anyone like Rod before - knowledgeable about everything small boys like, such as animals (domestic and wild), the African "bush", cars, mountains, etc. Unusually he treated me as a complete equal, never patronizing and with (in retrospect) infinite patience and time for an irritatingly inquisitive and awestruck boy. We immediately struck up a strong rapport which has lasted for half a century (and if anything was strengthened when he married Rachel).

Some months later Rod came to see us in Swaziland in his battered old Land Rover (another of his interests at the time) whilst his aunt/my grandmother was staying with us. She wanted to visit a game reserve in South Africa (a couple of hours' drive over the border in Natal (now Kwa-Zulu Natal Province)). My sister and I did not have passports (children didn't in those days) so about a mile short of the border control post Rod just drove the Land Rover off the road and took a detour round to avoid it! He wasn't at all bothered about officialdom or presumably the consequences of being found with us on the other side. With him as our guide we then experienced the most amazing trip into wild Africa.

Over the next half century Rod and Rachel have been a constant presence in my family's lives (my parents, brother, sisters and my own wife and children), both when they visited UK and when we visited Africa. Unlike Rod, Rachel was a prolific correspondent and kept in close touch via regular emails, so we were able to maintain a feeling of closeness and continuity in spite of the challenges of geographical dispersion. I would describe her as force of nature (something of a cliché, but very accurate for her). A talented academic, with a warmth and disarming honesty which she radiated like a beacon; her open generosity

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## Saunders *cont'd*

was legendary.

When the news of their abduction came through in February, the effect on our family (after the initial disbelief and shock) was to unite us in a way that could not have been predicted. We immediately mobilized to ensure that all efforts were focused on securing their safe return. As Rod and Rachel were British nationals, the UK family took it upon ourselves to work closely with our Government as we believed this represented the best way to try to find and save them. We engaged extensively across multiple levels in order to ensure that their case was given maximum priority: all of us (including our children) wrote to our respective Members of Parliament (probably more than ten, who in turn all lobbied the Foreign Office on our behalf) and in some cases actually met with their Members of Parliament to ensure there was continued focus and understanding that Rod and Rachel had a concerned and involved UK family. We had direct contact with the Foreign Secretary and assurance that the Prime Minister was being kept briefed, and I spoke with the FO case officer and South African Police Service liaison officer on a daily basis up until the point that it was clear that there was little hope they would be recovered alive. I tell you all this to demonstrate that although Rod and Rachel chose not to have a family of their own, they were in fact very family-oriented and **much** loved by us all.

One of Rod's quotes that his cousin (Mark Perry) remembers above all – "A horticulturalist is taught. A plantsman is born."

*Mark has been in close contact with the BBC about a memorial episode of Gardeners World with whom they were filming just before they were abducted and this is likely to be broadcast early next year once the trials are over.*



### From Maria Perry, Mark's daughter

Two years ago I went to stay with Rod and Rachel for a month at their house in Cape Town. I had finished my first year at university and wanted a new experience during my summer holiday. Having known them all my life, I'd not seen them in a while, but as soon as I arrived I was greeted with the warm-

est welcome, I was given the full tour - going to their farm, travelling to Bainskloof, the Cedarberg, Hermanus, the Bottelary Hills. Their knowledge on plants and the land never ceased to astound me. Rod and Rachel seemed to know everything about everything. My favourite memory comes from climbing Table Mountain - we parked at the bottom and climbed up the less touristy side (which meant it was much steeper). At 62 and 71, Rachel and Rod powered through the 2000-foot (610 meters) climb! At the age of 19 (and not unfit), I was trailing behind wondering how they did it. They had so much energy and vitality - both with a glimmer of inquisitiveness and spark in their eyes. When I (finally!) got to the top I was greeted with a big high five and a friendly grin from them both. Rod and Rachel had two loves - their plants and each other. They made the most of every moment and always had each other by their side. It's not an exaggeration to say they were "one of a kind" people. Their memory will live on in everyone's lives they touched no doubt - for their kindness, friendship, warmth and of course botanical prowess. Rod gave me many words of advice whilst I was out there, but this one stays with me, especially in light of the events surrounding their passing: 'Get theoretical, not angry.' This was their attitude on life. Their thirst for knowledge and rationale is what contributed to their inspirational success in the world of botany.



### From Rod's cousin, Phillip Maynard, now living in Canada

My memories of Rod are largely based on when the Saunders family stayed with us at my parents home before they went to Africa. Being the same age (Rod was 3 weeks older than me), we went to the same school. I remember a very energetic - wild almost - tough boy who I was in awe of, perhaps a little afraid of, but he protected me at school (we were only 7 or 8).



## Saunders *cont'd*

### From Mary Sue Ittner, PBS member and long-time friend of the Saunders

I first met Rod and Rachel Saunders in 1999 when I invited them to visit us when they were traveling in California. I was somewhat in awe of them and their seed collecting business, but shortly before they arrived I started wondering about how we would get along. Never did I suspect that it would be the start of a very special friendship with people who lived about as far away from us as possible.

Besides our common interest in bulbs, we discovered that we four liked hiking and looking for plants in the wild. They were easy companions and before their visit was over, we were working as a team and very comfortable with each other. Over the years we visited them four times in South Africa, staying with them for a portion of each visit. We met them in Denver to hike when Rod was on a North American Rock Garden Society speaking tour. And in June 2017 they returned to California and we spent a week together exploring new territory and introducing them to some of our favorite places where we live.

Like so many others we benefited from their kindness. I had fallen in love with South African *Erica* species and on that first visit to California Rod sat down with me and we went page by page through my *Erica* book while he suggested which ones I might be able to grow. Rachel in the background would say they didn't have seed of that one and he would say, "Some day we might." And he gave me clear instructions for how to grow them from seed, something much more challenging than growing bulbs, I found. I have quite a few established long flowering plants in my garden from their seed and many volunteers as well, thanks to Rod, and they will always be reminders of his kindness.

On our first trip to South Africa in 2001 we were arriving the morning of the IBSA (Indigenous Bulb Association of South Africa) trip to Middelpos. We hadn't made our decision to come in time to stay at the hotel in Middelpos or where others were staying in Nieuwoudtville. Rachel offered to drive our rental car the first

day as we would be too jet lagged and made arrangements for the four of us to stay some place else in both places. They took time off to travel with us for part of the time. We were returning to Cape Town and Rod and Rachel from visiting Cameron and Rhoda McMaster in the Eastern Cape on September 11 when the terrorist attacks occurred in the United States. We weren't sure when we'd be able to get home. Rod and Rachel did their best to distract and comfort us and for that I'll always be grateful.

In 2009 we were debating about going on a trip led by Cameron to the Eastern Cape in January 2010. January isn't a great time for us to travel because of my husband's business and I wanted to be sure if we went that we'd get to see Rod and Rachel too. Rachel emailed that if we went so would they and that led to the "Friends Trip" with five of us from California and six expert delightful South Africans. We were so fortunate



Rachel at her computer. Photo: Mary Sue Ittner.

to be on this memorable trip. One day I lost a close-up attachment to my camera. I was very disappointed, but after a cursory look didn't find it and didn't want to hold the rest of the group up by further searching. We went on and I was feeling the loss when Rod suddenly announced we were going back to find it. And did find it next to an orchid I had photographed.

Rod and Rachel were experts at going under and over fences and they and the other South Africans always had a helpful hand for those of us

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## Saunders *cont'd*

who needed one.

On their last visit to California we were hiking in the Trinity Alps in a wet year so there was still snow on higher elevations and rushing streams of snow melt water to cross on some of the trails. This didn't slow down Rod and Rachel at all, but it did give me pause. As I was debating following them on the last day there, Rod called from across the stream that I could do it. "Take off your shoes and wade across. I'll hold your hand as you cross," he said.

Knowing about all their adventures and seeing how fit they were when out hiking reading them described as an "elderly couple" in the early news stories gave a whole new meaning to the word elderly. They camped in caves and on top of their vehicle; they forded rivers suddenly created; they searched for *Gladiolus* in remote spots hard to get to; and they retreated when threatened by thunderstorms faster than most would be able to move.

I considered Rachel one of my very best friends. She and I communicated very often by email. We had so much in common. We were both very involved with our bulb organizations; we probably



Rod and one of many rescued and beloved feline friends.  
Photo: Mary Sue Ittner.

spent too much time on the computer intent on finishing whatever we started; and we wrote emails that were very long. We shared advice of what worked as

we dealt with similar health problems. We even chose the same camera without consultation with each other. She was kind enough to contribute to the Topic of the Week on the Pacific Bulb Society list when I was in charge and to send me photos for the PBS wiki. We were also compatible in our food preferences. Rod had long ago taken over cooking as Rachel would be on the computer and we were treated to some great pasta and fish dishes as well as big bowls of fruit. We laughed at the same things. I will miss her encouragement and support and hearing about her latest adventure, but will always feel lucky to have known her and Rod. As I look through photos we took of them over the years, she was often laughing. And often Rod was looking at her with love. I'm glad we have those as anchors for our memories.



Many customers and others who came into contact with the Saunders were entranced with bulbs in their catalog and were so strongly influenced and so dedicated that some such as Diane Chapman at Telos Rare Bulbs started nurseries that over time have become well-known for their wonderful selections of bulbs grown from Saunders seed. Others heard them speak around the world and began to grow new or unusual bulbs and other plants that the Saunders, uniquely positioned as they were in one of the most incredibly diverse areas of Africa, made available to gardeners world-wide. Following are contributions from people who were impacted in a permanent way by the Saunders' contributions to a vast new world of seeds from one of the most diverse and richly endowed plant areas of the world.

**From Rhoda McMasters, Napier SA: (Rhoda and Cameron McMasters own and operate African Bulbs, [www.africanbulbs.com](http://www.africanbulbs.com) in South Africa and are members of IBSA.)**

I think I speak on behalf of quite a few of us in SA who are fellow bulb enthusiasts and good friends with Rod and Rachel. They have been held in great esteem by many, and have been the mainstay of our Indigenous Bulb Society, caring and generous in many ways, so that they touched us all to a lesser or greater extent.

The news of their dis-

*Continued on next page*

**Saunders cont'd**

appearance was an enormous shock. And now there has been no news for so long about their fate. Hopefully they did not suffer too much. There are no words to express our grief and many of us are devastated.

But as some of the PBS members have said, we just have to look at our bulb collections to be reminded of Rod and Rachel, and in that we can think of all the positives and the many happy times we shared. For the moment though, a huge sadness, grief and sense of loss is my overriding feeling.



**From Diana Chapman, owner of Telos Rare Bulbs in Ferndale, California**  
([www.telosrarebulbs.com](http://www.telosrarebulbs.com))

Like others, I am in a state of shock over this. I am at an age when I am losing friends and family, and I am comforted when I feel bad by working with my bulbs. Now when I enter the greenhouses I am reminded of Rachel everywhere I look.

I started growing South African bulbs from seed in 1989 and by the early 90s was ordering seed from Silverhill. Without a computer or the internet, Rachel and I corresponded by mail, and I still have her delightful letters. I decided to start a bulb nursery; it was supposed to be a small hobby type business

to keep me busy when I retired from medicine. Rachel gave me so much encouragement, supporting my decision to leave the medical profession since she had done something similar, leaving her prior profession in research to start Silverhill with her husband. I can't say how important her encouragement and support was back then, so for about thirty years she has been a constant presence in my life,



*Gladiolus orchidiflorus* By Andrew Massyn [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>) or GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>)], from Wikimedia Commons

although I only met her and Rod once. I can say without hesitation, that without Rachel and Silverhill, Telos Rare Bulbs would probably never have come about. I feel as though I have taken them for granted in recent years, expecting them to always be there. I am devastated by this loss. I can't begin to imagine what the people close to them are feeling.



*Grateful thanks to Ernie de Marie for permission to post his memorial of Rod and Rachel Saunders, published in the Summer 2018 issue of the NARGS Rock Garden Quarterly.*

**In Memoriam: Rod and Rachel Saunders**

Our community of plant lovers is a relatively close-knit extended family of sorts, and these last several weeks have been a tough time for many of us who knew Rachel and Rod Saunders. Reports first surfaced in February that they might have been kidnapped by ISIS sympathizers in the Drakensberg in South Africa, and, to our horror, we have learned over the following weeks that four criminal terrorists were involved and that Rod and Rachel are no longer with us.

Rod and Rachel were best known as the owners of Silverhill Seeds and provided seeds of innumerable species of southern African plants to plant enthusiasts worldwide. They were passionate about their craft and their collective knowledge of the local flora and its cultivation was immense. I was one of many people that have had the great honor of being hosted by them on a couple of visits to South Africa back in the early 1990s when I worked at the New York Botanical Garden. I remember staying with them as one of the highlights of my life. They were kind, knowledgeable and just

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## Board Minutes - April 22, 2018

Meeting was called to order at 1:13 pm EDT. All officers and directors were present.

Treasurer Arnold Trachtenberg reported a balance of \$43,746.36 in the UBS account. The Board decided that anyone over \$25 in arrears for the SX/BX would no longer be allowed to order. Some members continue to struggle to label their membership renewal payments properly, failing to follow the explanations. Additionally, Arnold has corresponded with Anne Wright regarding illustrations for the next *Bulb Garden* as well as for new book marks designs.

Minutes were approved as read.

Membership Director Jane McGary said that paid-up membership stood at 310, up from this same time last year. More members are staying with us instead of dropping out after a year. Reminders will continue to be sent when it is time to renew.

Editor Robin Hansen has sent the latest Bulb Garden issue to Arnold for printing. Jane suggested that PBS look into opportunities to trade ads with other plant societies.

SX/BX Director Albert Stella reported that donations are picking up. PBS has bought into a seed-sharing cooperative in Brazil, and President Nhu Nguyen suggested that, as many Gesneriad seeds were received the last time, PBS should indicate that more *Hippeastrum* seeds are wanted.

Nhu also updated the Board about our electronic media presence. Since David Pilling migrated the PBS site away from Ibiblio, there have been no further glitches on the wiki, the website, or the forum. Arnold has updated the ownership of the current domain, and PBS will continue to maintain our materials on Ibiblio as a backup.

PBS is looking into the possibility of publishing a book on *Hippeastrum*. Nhu has arranged to have some of our expert members look it over and continues to search for someone to format the book. Print-on-demand services are also being sought. Jane pointed out that printing bound copies will be expensive and offered to look into formatting costs. Jane and Nhu will continue to explore possibilities.

Nhu reported that he received two applications for our annual Mary Sue Ittner Grant. Graduate student Christian Valdes Ibarra's proposal involves studying the diversity of Mexican endemic *Zephy-*

### Treasurer's Report for First Quarter 2018

	<b>1st Quarter 2018</b>
<b>Balance Jan. 1 2018</b>	<b>\$ 42,528.74</b>
<b>U.S. Members</b>	<b>\$ 1,800.00</b>
<b>Overseas Members</b>	<b>\$ 1,625.00</b>
<b>BX Receipts</b>	<b>\$ 1,667.49</b>
<b>Investment results</b>	<b>\$ 609.17</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>\$ 5,701.66</b>
<b>BX/SX Postage</b>	<b>\$ (926.85)</b>
<b>BX/SX Supplies</b>	<b>\$ (66.93)</b>
<b>Board Conference call</b>	<b>\$ (52.25)</b>
<b>Treasurer's Supplies</b>	<b>\$ (276.45)</b>
<b>Publications</b>	<b>\$ (1,560.00)</b>
<b>Publication postage</b>	<b>\$ (635.35)</b>
<b>PayPal expense</b>	<b>\$ (207.23)</b>
<b>Bulb Garden editing</b>	<b>\$ (700.00)</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ (4,425.06)</b>
<b>Balance March. 31, 2018</b>	<b>\$ 43,805.34</b>

*ranthes*. Second-year Ph.D. student Anika Smith proposed travel to Chile to collect samples of three *Tropaeolum* species for genetic analysis and to study flower morphology and the way that genes control that morphology. The board unanimously supported both applications for a total of \$1,250.

A memorial for Rod and Rachel Saunders was discussed including ways that we might memorialize them and their many contributions to the study of geophytes. Arnold will research a meaningful donation. The meeting was adjourned at 2:13 p.m. The next meeting was set for 1 p.m. EDT July 29.

Respectfully submitted,  
Kathryn S. Andersen  
PBS Secretary

## Saunders *cont'd*

really nice company. I learned what a “middelmannetjie” is from them - it’s the dirt part of the driveway between the cement tire tracks they parked their “bakkie” (van) on. It’s a



good Afrikaans word that we really don’t have a simple translation for in English. I remember vividly the numerous flowers growing in their middelmannetjie from the leftover seed chaff they would scatter there after cleaning seeds. The Ursinias, Arctotis and other flower heads of the taller species would bounce up and down as we drove over them when taking the bakkie out for another floral adventure.

We went to the Tulbagh area one time to look for seeds of Babianas and other bulbs along the road verges and I drank water from a mountain waterfall, somewhere near Franschoek, I think. They told me with confidence that it was safe so I just stuck my mug into the cool fast moving water and drank it, something I would never have done had I not been with such experienced hikers.

I learned from them not to press the button

above the bed I slept in because it was a “panic button”, a not uncommon feature in South Africa that brings the neighborhood private security squad barging in the front door as the local police aren’t necessarily reliable nor quick.

I also think I first had honeybush tea at their place; it is the better known rooibos tea’s cousin. It is also made from a fynbos legume, in this case *Cyclopia intermedia* rather than *Aspalanthus linearis*, which is the source of rooibos (red bush) tea. I also remember being tasked by them to look for seed of *Aloe microstigma* when I went off with Ernst Van Jaarsveld to the Klein Karoo. I did manage to bring back a decent quantity of it and no doubt there are plants from that collection growing around the world. I helped clean seeds and learned the value of using different sized screens to separate seed from chaff.

Rod and Rachel were great conversationalists and gracious hosts who ably represented the best of South Africa. They had several long-term employees (along with Rachel’s mom) who worked for many years with them and they were also close to their cats, mostly rescues that changed over the years but were always well cared for. I had seen them briefly a few years ago here in New York after a talk they gave to the Manhattan



*Boophane haematoides* By mmmavocado [CC BY 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

NARGS chapter and I corresponded often with Rachel over the years.

When we got our current house in 2012, I was finally able to create the gardens of my dreams on the 0.63-acre (hectares) plot. It includes a large South African garden, but there are many South African plants in all of the gardens (There is no lawn; I converted all land and even some patios to gardens.). Many of those plants came from Silverhill Seeds. Indoors, when winter is at its harshest, many bulbs and other wonders of the Cape flora sustain my soul

*Continued on next page*

## Saunders *cont'd*

under lights; again, many if not most of them coming from Silverhill Seeds. I cannot look inside nor outside our home and not be reminded and grateful for what Rachel and Rod have done over the many years I have known them.

We often have a dream of some sort that we hope will come true one day, and one of my dreams was that I would return one day to South Africa, perhaps after my retirement in a few years. I would meet up with Rod and Rachel, and we could wander the veld in search of treasures again. Or that one day they would come to the U.S. again and stay with us so that I could return the kind hospitality they showed me, and I could show them the fruits of their labors in my extensive gardens. I know I have invited them to do just that if they had a chance one day. Now Rod and Rachel have been taken from us, and these dreams of mine will remain unfulfilled. However, my memories of Rod and Rachel cannot be taken, nor will the wonderful plants I grew from their seeds. I am inspired, as I am sure many others are, to work even harder to preserve their legacy in our gardens and collections in the future.



We are exceedingly grateful to family, friends, employees and others who have been kind enough to contribute the following biographies, stories, photos and memories of Rod and Rachel Saunders.

### SILVERHILL SEEDS

#### Contact information:

The R. Saunders Trust has been established and donations to it for publication of the species *Gladiolus* book the Saunders were nearly finished with will be accepted through Silverhill Seeds, but must be marked specifically for the book publication. Publication is not anticipated at least until 2019-20 since editing and layout have not begun. Please contact Ondine Schrick at [www.silverhillseeds.co.za](http://www.silverhillseeds.co.za). Donations may be made to the R Saunders Trust to assist in publication of the *Gladiolus* book. by using PayPal or credit card, but please contact Ondine first for instructions before making a donation.



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**You can also mail in your renewal.** Please direct it to Arnold Trachtenberg, 140 Lakeview Avenue, Leonia NJ 07605

Whether renewing online or by mail, please contact Jane McGary ([janemcgary@earthlink.net](mailto:janemcgary@earthlink.net)) if any of your contact information has changed. Please remember that you must be a member to order bulbs or seeds.

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

**Arnold Trachtenberg  
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Leonia NJ 07605**

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**Rachel Saunders with ice plants. Photo: Mary Sue**

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