

# RHS Bursaries provide opportunities for trainee gardeners



Issue No.4  
Summer/  
Autumn 2007



ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

## BURSARIES

Newsletter

### Practical work experience at South African botanic garden for Kew scholar

Practical work placements are a popular way for horticultural students to improve on their horticultural skills. Nicola Wilkins, a rotational horticultural trainee from the Royal Botanic Garden Kew, was one such student and was awarded a **Coke Trust Bursary** to undertake a 3-week horticultural work placement at Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens in Cape Town, South Africa in October 2006.

Originally from Zimbabwe, Nicola was keen to experience the unique floral biodiversity that is the essence of the Cape area. She felt there was no better way to start than in a botanical garden composed entirely of indigenous plants set on the side of one of the most beautiful mountains in the world. The main aims of her trip were to improve her plant knowledge and horticultural skills, help maintain and build on the already positive relationship between RBG Kew and Kirstenbosch and also share botanical knowledge.

Nicola's time at Kirstenbosch was divided up between various departments: First she worked with bulbs alongside bulb expert Graham Duncan in his glasshouse, where she was shown how to pollinate plants within *Iridaceae* such as *Moraea gigandra*, *Tritonia crocata*, *Watsonia laccata* and *Gladiolus carneus*. This involved very gently taking pollen from the anthers of one flower to the stigma of another using a cotton bud and, in some species, to flowers on a separate plant. This was a new skill to Nicola whereby a process was mimicking nature by attempting to move the pollen as randomly as bees would.



Nicola Wilkins



Nicola Wilkins

*Gladiolus carneus*

Using a cotton bud to pollinate plants

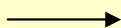
#### Inside this issue:

Practical work experience for Kew scholar	PAGE 1/2
The criteria for bursary awards	PAGE 2/3
Westonbirt curator researches New Zealand's native forests	PAGE 3/4
Dawn Jolliffe Botanical Art Bursary 2007	PAGE 4
Recent Awards	PAGE 4
Bursary Application Closing dates	PAGE 4

Following this, several days were spent in the Succulent Cacti and Lithops collection, housed in a special conservatory where the plants were kept cool and dry. In the Propagation Nurseries Nicola was shown how to take cuttings of *Scabiosa incisa*, *Phygellus capensis*, *Tecomaria capensis* and *Orphium frutescens*, using specific rooting hormones for each type of cutting.

A period was also spent with John Winter, the former Curator of Kirstenbosch, learning about *Clivia* and the practical side of looking after them. Along with some other students, Nicola assisted with the re-potting of several hybrids into larger pots with coarse material to prevent root rot. A day then followed working with the pollination, germination, planting and after-care of cycads, of which there are only two native genera in South Africa – *Encephalartos* and *Stangeria*. Nicola found these very slow growing plants quite fascinating in that they only reach maturity and produce their own cones after 12 years! Geckos and lizards are used as a form of biological control in the conservatory to keep down the number of aphids, cockroaches and other glasshouse pests which tend to attack lithops when grown under glass. To encourage these reptiles to stay in the conservatory, specially designed shelters have been built for them which are well hidden within the plant beds and contain lights and water supplies. The lights provide heat and also attract moths and other flying insects away from the plants; these are then eaten by the lizards.

Using lizards as a biological control in the conservatory



N Wilkins

The experience of seeing natural flora and studying the growing conditions first hand is a great learning experience for any horticultural student and adds to their appreciation of how to cultivate plants in ideal conditions. Nicola has been able to take back and share with her Kew colleagues the knowledge she has gained during her time at Kirstenbosch.

## The criteria for bursary awards

RHS Bursaries are primarily given to professional and student **gardeners**, but applications are also invited from serious amateur gardeners, botanists and related professions and institutions. They are not given for botany or habitat conservation, although related projects can be considered if there is a horticultural relevance to them.

Financial support is given for:

- Horticultural work placements
- Plant hunting trips
- Plant study tours
- Attendance at horticultural conferences and seminars
- Costs in connection with holding a horticultural conference
- Projects being undertaken by National Collection holders
- Teachers and administrative staff in botanic gardens and horticultural colleges
- The ongoing Professional Gardeners Guild Traineeship scheme
- Educational signage, plants and gardening equipment for horticultural establishments



Financial support is **not** given for:

- Multi-million pound ventures endowed by Lottery Funding
- Payment of salaries and household bills
- Educational courses or maintenance at colleges/universities (although short courses and PhD projects have been allowed)
- Commercial ventures (although occasionally support for book publishing is offered)
- Laboratory DNA studies where there is no direct relevance to horticulture
- Projects outside the British Isles by applicants who are not resident in the British Isles
- Incomplete, incorrect or out of date application forms
- Costs of personal equipment such as cameras, boots and clothing



Helpful hints for submitting a bursary application:

- i. Forward planning is essential. Projects completed or under way at the date of application are not normally eligible for consideration;
- ii. Applications must be accompanied by a detailed statement of predicted costs. This should be supported by quotations that indicate the most economical terms have been obtained.
- iii. Where appropriate, a detailed travel itinerary must be submitted;
- iv. Where named establishments are included in the programme, evidence of invitation or agreement to the visit must be provided;
- v. Applicants should show how efforts have been made to obtain funds from other sources, along with the extent of personal or corporate financial contributions;
- vi. A full curriculum vitae of an individual or, if a group proposal, of all the participants;
- vii. For college group expeditions, details of the horticultural course being attended by each participant needs to be given;
- viii. Careful consideration must be given where travel to restricted or potentially dangerous areas feature in a proposal.

NB: Applications will only be considered when submitted on an official RHS bursary application form; copies of application forms to other funding bodies are not accepted.

## Westonbirt Curator researches New Zealand's native forests

Simon Toomer, Curator of Westonbirt Arboretum in Gloucestershire, was lucky enough to be awarded the **Jimmy Smart Memorial Bursary** in 2006 to undertake a study project to New Zealand in January 2007.

Top of his list of objectives was to gain a better knowledge of the forests and trees of New Zealand, both wild and cultivated. He especially wanted to assess the suitability of New Zealand trees for accession to the National Arboreta collections, both for their botanical, ornamental and amenity value and, in particular, to consider the hardiness of plants from different areas of the country.

Simon's study trip commenced in the Waipoua Forest in North Island, where the sub-tropical climate results in a very rich and diverse forest flora. He wanted to see the old kauri trees (*Agathis australis*) for which the area is well known and to learn about the efforts being taken to re-establish areas of cleared forest.



S Toomer

← One of the many giant Kauris of Waipoua Forest

Simon spent four days driving down the west coast of South Island, with a detour to take in Arthur's pass and was struck by how quickly the rainforests can change over a relatively short distance from those dominated by nikau palm (*Rhopalostylis sapida*) to taller forests of rimu, kahikatea, miro and kamahi (*Dacrydium cupressinum*, *Dacrycarpus dacrydoides*, *Prumnopitys ferruginea* and *Weinmannia racemosa*).



The delicate foliage and bark of a young rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*)

S Toomer

A further 3-day trek through the Routeburn Track provided another opportunity to delve deep into the native bush. Much of the route was through forests dominated by mountain and silver beech (*Nothofagus solandri* var. *cliffortioides* and *N. menziesii*).

Overall Simon's study trip was very successful and his personal knowledge of the forests of New Zealand has been greatly enhanced. There are still many places he would like to see such as the forests around Taranaki, since time constraints did not permit him to see everything he had hoped. Nevertheless, he has returned home fired up with enthusiasm and ideas how to improve the tree and site management at Westonbirt in the years to come.

## The Dawn Jolliffe Botanical Art Bursary

In August this year, the **Dawn Jolliffe Botanical Art Bursary** for exhibiting was split between 3 people—**Lynda Gooda**, **Graham Reed** and **Amanda Steen**—all of whom were considered to display great potential with regard to their botanical art and who would benefit considerably from the experience of exhibiting alongside other Botanical artists.



Set up in 2005 by Mr Brian Jolliffe in memory of his wife, the late Dawn Jolliffe who was herself a keen botanical artist, this bursary provides financial assistance to a botanical artist to either exhibit at one of the RHS Shows or to travel to paint or draw plants in their natural habitats.

## RECENT BURSARY AWARDS

32 applications were received for the May 2007 Bursaries Meeting, for which 23 awards were made totalling £22,420.

31 applications were received for the August 2007 Bursaries Meeting, (6 being for the annual **Dawn Jolliffe Botanical Art Bursary** for exhibiting) for which 26 awards were made, totalling £13,088.

## Bursary Applications: Closing Dates 2007/2008

A bursary application should be submitted before the closing date to ensure it is considered by the Committee

- 30 September 2007
- 24 December 2007
- 31 March 2008
- 30 June 2008

The completed form should be submitted to:

The Secretary,  
RHS Bursaries Committee,  
RHS Garden Wisley,  
Woking, Surrey,  
GU23 6QB

*"I perhaps owe having become a painter to flowers"*

Claude Monet

