

Some botanical highlights in the Gardens in December

The numbers refer to the gardens as shown on your map.

Evenings may be drawing in, but it is still worth a visit to the Garden to see what's still in flower. Here are some of the specialities which you may enjoy searching for.

If you go into the **Plantation Room Café (1)**, take a look at the Gardens from the balcony. Below you there is a collection of succulent *Aeoniums* (**left below**). They do most of their growing during the winter months and they are spectacular at the moment, their succulent rosettes of leaves looking a bit like large green rubbery flowers! The majority of species come from the Canary Isles. They are monocarpic, meaning they die after flowering. *Aeoniums* are very susceptible to frost damage.

In the **Herb & Medicinal Garden (2)** you will notice a striking, red flowered sage bush. This is the Pineapple Sage, *Salvia elegans* (**right below**), one of the latest of the Mexican sages to come into flower. It is named because of the pineapple scent given off from the crushed leaves.



Left: *Aeoniums*



Right: Pineapple Sage, *Salvia elegans*

On the **South African Terrace (3)**, look out for the bushes of African Hemp, *Sparmannia africana* (**left below**). There are several bushes here and each year that they survive the winter cold, they get bigger and more spectacular. This shrub is native to South Africa and Madagascar and is usually grown as a houseplant in this country. It bears clusters of white flowers each with a central mass of red and yellow stamens which are sensitive to touch. When an insect or finger brushes against the mass of stamens, they puff out even further. This is an aid to pollination, ensuring that the visiting insects get covered by pollen.



Left: African Hemp, *Sparmannia Africana*



Right: Giant Poker, *Kniphofia multiflora*

Also here look out for the late-flowering Giant Poker, *Kniphofia multiflora* (**right above**). Although this is a Red hot Poker, it looks very different with a tall thin flowering stem bristling with small, upward facing yellow flowers. It comes from wet mountainous areas of South Africa, where it is rare. It is on the borderline of hardiness in this country.

As you enter the **Palm Garden (7)**, look for the fruiting Ginger Lily, *Hedychium densiflorum* (**left below**) growing on the south facing bank. This is high altitude Himalayan species. The dry fruits, or capsules, split open along 3 seams to expose bright orange fleshy seeds that attract animals which eat and spread the seeds. Fruiting in this country requires long mild, frost-free autumns. The tall Yellow Angel's Trumpet, Brugmansia Apricot Queen (**right below**), continues to produce its spectacular hanging yellow trumpet flowers. The night fragrant flowers of this South American plant are pollinated by long-tongued moths. Our plant has stood outside unprotected for several winters.



Left: Ginger Lily, *Hedychium densiflorum* in fruit
Brugmansia Apricot Queen



Right: Yellow Angel's Trumpet,

From the **Palm Garden (7)** look up to the Plantation Café and on the planted terraces below the Café you will see a bush covered in purple flowers. (You can follow a path to get closer to this plant). This is the South African Ribbon Bush, *Hypoestes aristata* and it will flower throughout the winter if the weather is kind. As well as being showy and providing an important nectar source for insects, it is eaten as spinach in some parts of South Africa while traditionally, crushed leaves are used as a poultice for sore eyes. You can also see *Hypoestes aristata*, growing with

flowering African Hemp bushes at the top of the South African Terraces from the carpark when you leave.

In one of the beds in the Palm Garden, you will see a clump of *Nerine undulata* (**right below**) in flower. It is a native of open grasslands and wetlands in the Eastern Cape Province. It is much later flowering and has more dainty pink flowers than the hardier Nerines usually seen in gardens.



Left: Ribbon Bush, *Hypoestes aristata*



Right: *Nerine undulata* in the Palm Garden

In front of the **edulis restaurant (9)**, in the **Mediterranean Garden (10)** and elsewhere in the Gardens you will notice that the evergreen bushes of Strawberry Tree (*Arbutus*) are currently loaded with bunches of waxy white bell-shaped flowers, a little like Lily-of-the-Valley. After pollination, these flowers give way to orange 'strawberry' fruits but fruit development is delayed for about five months after pollination so that you can sometimes see flowers appearing alongside the previous year's developing fruits.



As you walk down the **Long Border (13)** towards the Walled Garden you will see that many varieties of Salvia continue to put on a colourful show. In the shelter of the **Walled Garden (13)**, look for the spectacular Red Angel's Trumpet, *Brugmansia sanguinea* (**left below**). It is the bush at the front of the border with large hanging red trumpet flowers. This plant, which is poisonous, comes from the Andes where it is pollinated by hummingbirds. Growing close by you can see the Tree Fuchsia, *Fuchsia arborescens* (**right below**) a bushy species from the cool mountain cloud forests of central Mexico. It looks nothing like a typical Fuchsia with its large

clusters of tiny rose pink flowers. Both these plants are generally grown in conservatories in this country.



Left: Red Angel's Trumpet, *Brugmansia sanguinea* **Right:** *Fuchsia arborescens*

Also in the **Walled Garden (13)** you will find Willow-leaved Jessamine, *Cestrum parqui* Cretan Purple (**right below**). The usual form of this Chilean shrub bears clusters of yellow-green night-scented tubular flowers. Cretan Purple, an attractive colour form, originated as a cross between *Cestrum parqui* and *Cestrum elegans*. Both of these species can be seen elsewhere in the Garden.

In the flowerbeds in front of the **Tropical House (18)**, is another unusual scented flowering bush. Look for a tall willowy bush bearing drooping clusters of whitish flowers turning yellow on the insides. This is the Honeybell Bush, *Freylinia lanceolata* (**right below**), so called because the sweetly honey-scented flowers are a good source of nectar. In the wild, it is found in moist areas such as along streams or the edges of marshes in South Africa. Its name derives from when it was first cultivated in Europe, in the garden of Count Freyolino outside of Turin in Italy in 1817, where it caused quite a stir. With us, it is an irregular flowerer but can produce flowers right through the winter. There are other bushes of this plant growing in the South Africa Garden. They used to flower sporadically but in the last couple of winters, they have put on a good flowering display.



Left: Willow-leaved Jessamine, *Cestrum parqui* Cretan Purple **Right:** Honeybell Bush, *Freylinia lanceolata*

As you make your way out across the Top Lawn, near by the **Tropical House (18)** you will notice several flowering bushes of *Correa*, evergreen bushes with hanging, bell-shaped flowers in cream or pink. There are around 11 species and they are all native to eastern Australia. *Correa backhouseana* (**left below**), sometimes called Tasmanian Fuchsia, has clusters of creamy flowers. The largest of these is the Grampian Mountains *Correa* *Correa lawrenceana* (right below) which has drooping pink flowers with long green stamens extending out beyond the petals. You can see this one just at the edge of the Top Lawn. This species was first described by William Jackson Hooker, in 1834. He was Director of Kew Gardens and friends with the botanist explorer Sir Joseph Banks. The specific name *lawrenceana* was given in honour of the Tasmanian botanist Robert William Lawrence who collected the plant material and sent it to Hooker.



Left: *Correa backhouseana*



Right: *Correa lawrenceana*

We hope you have enjoyed looking at some of the special plants which make Ventnor Botanic Garden unique.

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