

Some botanical highlights in January in the Garden

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

The days may be short and the sky overcast but plants are still flowering here in Ventnor. If you have any doubts about whether there is much to see in the Garden at this time of year, the annual New Year's Day flower count by the Curator, Chris Kidd, revealed 217 plants in flower in the Garden. This was a higher count than last year although not as high as 2016. Much of the colour is concentrated on the South African Terrace and in the Japanese Garden.



Left: The Botanic Garden flowering in January



Right: Narcissi flowering in the carpark

In the **Herb & Medicinal Garden (2)**, *Fuchsia boliviana* continues to put on a good show of flowers alongside the Plantation Café wall, and the bush of *Buddleja colvilei* is also displaying a few of its splendid heads of deep purple flowers set against silvery leaves. It has the largest flowers of any *Buddleja* that can be grown outside in this country.



Left: *Fuchsia boliviana*



Right: *Buddleja colvilei*

On the rocks behind the waterfall, the succulent *Aeoniums* are looking magnificent. They grow luxuriantly in the cooler, wetter seasons, provided that they are not cut back by frost. Some of the plants are producing yellow flowers. The unusual rose, *Rosa x odorata Bengal Crimson*, growing along the pergola and originally from Chelsea Physic Garden, manages to produce a few flowers almost throughout the year.



Left: *Aeoniums* from the Canary Isles



Right: The Rose *odorata* 'Bengal Crimson'

There is plenty of colour on the **South African Terrace**. Particularly showy are the shrubby yellow daisy bushes of the genus *Euryops*. They seem to flower at their best during the winter months. Several species are grown here and are in flower but one of the best and most reliable is *Euryops pectinatus*. Also putting on a good show at the moment are the bushes of **African Hemp**, *Sparmannia africana*. These plants were cut back hard by the 'Beast from the East' in March of last year but are now re-growing and flowering well. This is generally grown as a conservatory plant.



Left: *Euryops pectinatus*



Right: *Sparmannia Africana*

Other South African plants flowering at the moment include bushes of *Anisodonteia capensis* with pink, mallow-like flowers; several Red-hot Pokers (*Kniphofia* sp.); *Hypoestes aristata* mounds of purple mint type flowers growing behind the carpark; and evergreen bushes of *Bowkeria cymosa* just starting to produce sticky white lipped flowers on single stems. Most of these are half hardy or tender plants that would struggle to survive in most gardens.



Left above: *Anisodontea capensis*; **Right above:** *Kniphofia* flowering on the South African Terrace; **Left below:** *Hypoestes aristata*; **Right below:** *Bowkeria cymosa*

In the **Walled Garden** the evergreen Magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Charles Dickens' is looking very showy. It had an exceptional flowering season and this has been followed by a display of red seed pods looking like upright cones which are beautifully set off against the neat shiny leaves. Growing against the wall, the winter flowering *Buddleja auriculata* is bearing clusters of highly fragrant flowers. This is an old plant from the Hillier days.



Left: *Magnolia grandiflora* Charles Dickens

Right: *Buddleja auriculata*

It is worth taking a detour to visit the **Japanese Garden** where many of the Camellia cultivars are coming into flower.



Whilst you are here, look for the clumps of flowering *Strobilanthes glutinosa* an unusual and rarely grown species from the Himalayas. On the lawn below the Japanese Garden, the Strawberry Tree is heavy with flowers. This particular one, with splendid cinnamon red branches, is the hybrid, *Arbutus x andrachnoides*, a cross between the two Strawberry Trees native to the Mediterranean.



Left: *Strobilanthes glutinosa*

Right: *Arbutus x andrachnoides*

In the **Arid Garden** one or two of the big succulents are producing flower spikes. Most noteworthy, is an Agave which produces a 'hedgehog' of sickle shaped needle foliage. It is rare for it to flower in this country but one of ours have sent up a striking tall slim flower spike for the first time bearing flowers with prominent anthers. This is *Agave striata* and ours was bought in as var. *falcata*.

By the steps leading down to the Tropical House from the Arid Garden, you will see another Strawberry Tree bearing heavy clusters of flowers. This one is *Arbutus xalapensis*, a New World species from central America. Also note the flowering *Albizia* with feathery foliage in the pots outside of the Tropical House.



Agave striata var. *falcata* in the Arid Garden



Left: *Arbutus xalapensis*



Right: *Albizia*

As you make your way out across the Top Lawn, you will notice several flowering bushes of *Correa*, evergreen bushes with hanging, bell-shaped flowers in cream or pink. There are around 11 different species and they are all native to eastern Australia.



Left: *Correa alba*



Right: *Correa reflexa*

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

There is always something new to see here throughout the year and every visit will bring new botanical surprises.