



FROM LEFT EVERGREEN INDIGENOUS BULB *ALBUCA BATTENIANA*; THE SWEETLY SCENTED, SEA-GREEN *IXIA VIRIDIFLORA*; THE SHOWY *AMMOCHARIS CORANICA* IS LOCAL TO THE SUMMER RAINFALL AREAS OF SOUTH AFRICA



Magic in Small Parcels

Franchesca Watson expounds the beauty and variety of our wild, indigenous bulbs

The world's richest haul of bulbous plants is found in the winter rainfall areas of South Africa – approximately 2 100 species. Add in the 400-plus species found in the summer rainfall areas of eastern South Africa and the total number exceeds 2 500 species native to our country. First finding their way into horticulture in England and Europe during the 17th century, many have been hybridised into the modern varieties of Freesia, Gladiolus, Nerine and Sparaxis known worldwide. The wild species, however, have an unsurpassed elegance that will add mystery and magic to your garden.

■ There are 3 major groups

Winter growing, summer growing and evergreen types. There are bulbs to suit almost all conditions, from sun to shade, wet and frost. They are relatively easy to grow and propagate. Wonderful naturalised into your grassy areas, garden plantings, at the edges of ponds or grown in terracotta pots and brought indoors when they flower, they will delight you unfailingly. For more information, Franchesca recommends reading *Grow Bulbs* by Graham Duncan, from the Kirstenbosch Gardening Series.

Lesser-known beauties to search out:

■ Summer rainfall

Ammocharis coranica Corana lily, magnificent pink flowers

Crinum delagoense A fantasy of candy-striped bells

Crocosmia pottsii Drifts of red stars

Cyrtanthus falcatus Fire lily, likes light shade

Galtonia candicans Majestic white spires

Gladiolus papilio Pale, drooping flowers

Merwillia plumbea Tall spikes of blue

Nerine bowdenii Large pink Nerine

Scadoxus multiflorus subsp multiflorus Bright orangey-pink spherical blooms

■ Winter rainfall

Bulbinella cauda-felis Katstert, lovely in mass plantings

Brunsvigia orientalis Red candelabra flower, tumbleweed

Gladiolus carneus Painted lady, many colour forms

Hesperantha bachmannii Sweet-scented, white flowers

Ixia viridiflora The curious, sea-green ixia

Melaspheerula ramosa Fairy bells, likes dappled shade

Moraea aristata Critically endangered but easy to cultivate

Sparaxis elegans Magnificent salmon-pink, needs a dry summer

Spiloxene capensis Peacock flower, loves moisture

Wurmbea stricta Grassy leaves and glorious pink spikes of flowers

■ Evergreen

Albuca batteniana Semi-shade, with white flowers borne horizontally

Cyrtanthus sanguineus Nahoon lily, bright-red or pink trumpets

Dierama pulcherrimum Deep magenta or purple bells

Hesperantha coccinea Very showy, good for damp plantings

Kniphofia caulescens Lesotho red-hot poker

Moraea buttonii Many sweetly scented, yellow flowers

Nerine undulata Long-stemmed and long-lasting flowers

Scadoxus membranaceus Great for shade

Scadoxus multiflorus subsp Katharinae Great spherical flowerheads, shade

Watsonia fourcadei Tall orange/pink spikes

■ Where to buy

📍 haakdoornnursery.co.za

📍 thesabulbcompany.co.za

📍 wildflowernursery.co.za

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