ging trenches and filling them with good compost, to encourage good root growth. This will produce larger, better-formed rhizomes with many new "eyes" to split off at the end of the growing season, for use in multiplying your plants.

In Durban, on our sandy highly leached soils — the plants have responded to high levels of organic matter. The form this organic matter takes is sludge! During 1989 we used a standard liquid feed to the plants once a week and they have grown very well indeed. However it remains to be seen whether this treatment will produce yet bigger or better rhizomes.

In 1986, when we grew the two different clones side by side, the bisexual clone produced three seed capsules. During February of the same year, when the capsules were mature and ready to split open, the seed was gathered, and sown in our standard seedling soil mixture. Well after about four months nothing had germinated so we turfed the tray out. A year since sowing (February 1987), a few canna-like seedlings appeared in our waste soil pile, which turned out to be our discarded ginger seeds. The next crop of seed we sowed in situ with their parent plants and, lo and behold, a year later the seeds germinated.

However, by far the most efficient way of propagating this species to date is by vegetative means, (a) simple rhizome splitting or (b) tissue culture. The latter has been done successfully by Kirstenbosch and they are now in the position to supply unlimited numbers to anyone willing to grow the plant.

All that remains to be said about Natal ginger, is that it is the easiest of plants to grow in a sub-tropical garden either in the ground or in a shallow container. It gives a most wonderful show once a year when in flower and it has never been attacked by any pests or diseases since I have had it in cultivation.

Plant Utilization Nursery
by Anthony Hitchcock, Horticulturist, Plant Utilization, Kirstenbosch

The Plant Utilization nursery was established at the National Botanic Gardens, Kirstenbosch during 1985/86 for the following purposes:

(a) selection and promotion of indigenous plants with horticultural potential that are not readily available in the horticultural trade and making them available to the public on a daily basis and

(b) provision of plants to the horticultural industry providing that sufficient material is available. As current facilities at the nursery are limited, only cutting material and seedlings are available to horticulture at present.

For the past two years, plants have been sold on a limited scale next to the Kirstenbosch NBG Information Centre. Progress has been slow, but a new Garden Centre should be completed on the same site in the near future. The Horticultural and Information sections at the National Botanic Gardens are co-operating in compiling information on the plants that will be available and are designing suitable labels for display at the point of sale.

In addition to daily sales of indigenous plants limited stocks of specially selected species which are difficult or impossible to obtain elsewhere will be made available to the public through special promotions. Such promotions will be advertised in Veld & Flora in the issue preceeding the release date. The selection of plant species for promotion will be based upon such factors as improved and superior colour forms, collectors’ interest, rarity and demand. As we will be releasing limited stocks there will be a limit of two plants per person.

Mimetes fimbriifolius

The name Mimetes was first coined when R. A. Salisbury established this new genus in 1807. The word is derived from Greek meaning “to imitate”, which is probably a reference to the foliage which is remarkably similar to those of other genera such as Leucospermum leaves. Mimetes are noted for their striking inflorescences which place them amongst some of the most beautiful species of the family Proteaceae. There are twelve extant species in the genus which is confined to the south western and southern Cape Province. Of these, only M. cuculla-
tus is widespread and commonly encountered whereas the majority are either scarce or restricted to very limited areas and therefore regarded as rare.

The promotion of Mimetes fimbriifolius is but the first of many promotions from the Plant Utilization Nursery. This majestic species is from mature stock. M. fimbriifolius may flower erratically from July to December but the normal peak flowering period occurs during September. Inflorescences consist of several capitula arranged in the axils of the upper leaves which, during the flowering period, have characteristic reddish-pink tips. The specific name “fimbriifolius” means “fringe-leaved” which refers to the fringe of delicate white hairs on the leaf margins.

Horticultural potential

There are numerous reasons for recommending M. fimbriifolius as a garden subject. It is important to be aware of its preferences as not all garden situations will be suitable. These preferences include well-drained acid soils derived from Table Mountain sandstones and an adequate amount of moisture. In nature, these plants receive good winter rain and moisture levels during the summer months are augmented by moisture laden south-easter clouds. As this species is concentrated south of Smitswinkel Bay where it is frequently exposed to strong buffeting winds, it may be suitable for some coastal gardens where there is a degree of protection. Please beware of planting in highly exposed areas close to the sea where it will be subject to fierce salt-laden winds.

M. fimbriifolius is one of the hardiest species of Mimetes and has a lifespan exceeding that of most of the species of the Proteaceae. A native specimen could prove an unusual feature plant in a medium to large garden with the added attraction of seasonal colour during flowering time. The flowers contain a nectar which serves to attract sugarbirds and sunbirds. The local potential of Mimetes fimbriifolius has been alluded to by Dr John Rourke in his revision of Mimetes “Trees are rare in open fynbos. Therefore the arborescent life form, so typical of this species, has inevitably made it one of the conspicuous and characteristic elements in the Cape Peninsula’s flora”. Limited numbers of these plants will be on sale next to the Botanical Society Shop from 09h00 on Saturday, 7 October, 1989. Due to limited stocks only two plants will be available to each member of the public.

endemic to the Cape Peninsula occurring on acid mountain sandstone soils from Table Mountain to Cape Point. It is the largest, and longest-lived, of the Mimetes and with age acquires the form of a strong densely-branched shrub or small tree averaging 3-5 m at maturity. A stout, clearly-defined trunk of about 0.5 m serves to support an attractive, rounded crown consisting of repeatedly dichotomous, interlocking branchlets.

The trunk and branches are protected by a thick layer of corky bark that helps the mature plant to survive veld fires. Regeneration after fire is by terminal shoots on the upper branches. It is one of the hardiest species of the Mimetes, but has a very slow growth rate with an average of between 12 and 14 years from germination to flowering. This drawback has been partly overcome by propagating the plant from cuttings which were rooted on heated mist propagation benches. Although the growth rate is still slow, the plants have the potential to flower within a shorter period of time, as the cuttings were taken from mature stock. M. fimbriifolius may flower erratically from July to December but the normal peak flowering period occurs during September. Inflorescences consist of several capitula arranged in the axils of the upper leaves which, during the flowering period, have characteristic reddish-pink tips. The specific name “fimbriifolius” means “fringe-leaved” which refers to the fringe of delicate white hairs on the leaf margins.

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INDIGENOUS PLANTS FOR CAPE COASTAL GARDENS

by A Barrie Low, Cape Flats Nature Reserve, University of the Western Cape

1. Soils and setting the scene

The challenge of developing a coastal garden in the Cape has often deterred the most resolute of homeowners. Faced with impoverished soils and the at times severe summer drought in the winter rainfall region, the amateur gardener often struggles to secure a plant cover which is hardy and functional, yet at the same time attractive.

This is the first in a three-part series on indigenous garden development along the Cape coast which, it is hoped, will encourage the reader to plan and produce a low-maintenance indigenous garden which will survive the elements. In general I shall be referring to the winter rainfall region of the Western Cape and to areas which have calcareous soils (see definition below). Plants which I recommend for these conditions are more than likely to survive on more fertile sites with summer or non-seasonal rainfall regimes.

In this article I discuss the importance of soil and how you can determine what type is present on your plot. Article two will feature a selection of appropriate indigenous plants, while the third will deal with planning your garden and landscaping.

To begin with, I will assume that readers of these articles are, like me, not homespun horticulturists and do not have the proverbial green finger or very much time for gardening. Personally I favour plants which can be introduced with a minimum of fuss and which require even less effort to maintain in an acceptable condition. Lovers of sophisticated exposes on “soft"