



BOTANICAL SOCIETY
OF SOUTH AFRICA

Veld & Flora: Guidelines for contributing feature articles

Key messages

- Use reader-friendly, accessible English.
- Submit your manuscripts as an MSWord document using South African or British English.
- Conclude with a sentence of author information for publication with the article, including a valid email address.
- Add a telephone number in case editorial queries need to be discussed.
- Send all images uncropped and unretouched in jpeg or tiff format, at least 1mb in size but preferably at least 5mb.
- Send files via email to veldandflora@botanicalsociety.org.za, copying info@botanicalsociety.org.za as a backup. Use DropBox (www.dropbox.com) or WeTransfer (www.wetransfer.com) if necessary.
- The Botanical Society of South Africa and the *Veld & Flora* editorial team reserve the right to amend, shorten and/or reject an article, or to request rewriting and resubmission by the author.
- Contributors consent to their submissions being used in both the print and e-editions of the magazine and confirm they hold copyright or permission to publish the material submitted.

1. Article content

Feature articles for *Veld & Flora* embody the Botanical Society of South Africa's motto – know, grow, protect and enjoy South Africa's indigenous flora. We are as interested in receiving contributions from members about an aspect of the plant world that has captured their attention as we are in receiving news of research findings from botanists and ecologists.

Typically, *Veld & Flora* articles focus on:

- Indigenous plantlife and ecology in southern Africa
- History and use of indigenous plants
- Conservation of indigenous plants
- Aspects of indigenous gardening
- Interesting or adventurous travel to see unusual indigenous plants in the wild
- Botanical art or photography featuring indigenous plants

We place particular emphasis on people and plants, trying to capture the human interactions and scientific debate that drive interest in a particular group of plants and/or reflect the challenges of researching them.

BOTANICAL SOCIETY NATIONAL OFFICE

Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden,
Rhodes Drive, Newlands, Cape Town
Landline: 021 797 2090
Email: info@botanicalsociety.org.za

Document Title

003-394 NPO
www.botanicalsociety.org.za
Facebook: Botanical Society of SA
Twitter: @BotSocSA
Instagram: botsocsa

To capture reader interest, make sure your article has news value (eg some form of discovery or extension of knowledge) or at least a fresh angle on a subject that is already known. Please send a short outline of your proposed article to the editor (veldandflora@botanicalsociety.org.za) to help make sure that nobody else is working on something too similar and also to help us with forward planning of issues.

We understand that professional botanists and ecologists are under pressure to publish their findings initially in peer-reviewed academic journals and may even have them made widely available through university or institutional press releases. Please let us know if this is the case and whether you retain copyright to material and/or images that you submit to *Veld & Flora*.

To avoid BotSoc members feeling shortchanged if they believe they have read a *Veld & Flora* article already in another newspaper or magazine, our editorial team is happy to work with you to pinpoint themes or angles that could be used to bring a fresh view of your work to our readers.

2. Plain language

Veld & Flora is published for members of the Botanical Society of South Africa. They are plant enthusiasts but often have little scientific training. It is important to remember that they read the magazine to relax while enjoying absorbing information about the plant world. The magazine is a form of infotainment without sacrificing scientific accuracy or, as *The Conversation* puts it, 'Academic rigour, journalistic flair'.

We use plain English to ensure that even the newest novice member can enjoy the magazine and be enthusiastic about the facts and ideas discussed. Princeton academic Daniel Oppenheimer summed this up in the title of one of his own articles, 'Consequences of Erudite Vernacular Utilized Irrespective of Necessity: Problems with Using Long Words Needlessly'.

Plain English uses shorter sentences: 20 to 25 words is a useful guideline. It also uses a familiar term if it adequately replaces a more complex one. The Writing Center at the University of North Carolina gives these examples:

COMPLEX	Simpler
Efficacious	effective
Utilize	use
Elucidate	explain
Proximal	close

3. Tell your story

For *Veld & Flora*, we are looking for a conversational and crisp tone that will grasp and hold the reader's attention and, where possible, a narrative that clearly and precisely brings alive themes from the making of science to the making of a garden.

- Field work and lab research have narrative highs and lows so take readers behind the scenes into the field and the lab, describing the moments of excitement and drama and those of concern and even doubt.
- For more analytical or statistical work, the drama and excitement are in the unexpected finding or conclusion. Consider using this newspaper-style as your opening to hook your reader's interest. Then backtrack to give the background or look ahead to new research avenues, conveying why you find this interesting and why it matters to the reader.
- Use a personal and active approach ('We found an interesting example') rather than the more formal and impersonal passive voice ('An interesting example was found') to engage

the reader and enhance the impact of any advocacy or community engagement that you wish to communicate.

- If appropriate, use figurative language and telling details ('We found the beautiful blue flower at last and whooped for joy') and showcase appropriate anecdotes.
- Bring your narrative to life and underline the amount of action involved in your research or exploration by using verbs rather than nouns ('We slogged up the hill as the midday sun beat down' instead of 'Obstacles included heat and a steep hillside').
- Consider using the dramatic or historic present instead of the past tense for at least part of your narrative.
- Remember that *Veld & Flora* has readers across South Africa, as well as some international readership. Help by your reader with orientation by specifying province names, not only places, and giving distances from a major city for particularly rural places or areas. Also consider adding national and international context or comparison to a few of the statistics you mention to support some of your points, or adding a statistics-led sidebar.

Consult recent issues of the magazine for examples of how this approach works in practice and also look at the way that other publications put across technical matters in an approachable way – for example, the *Conversation* (<https://theconversation.com/africa>), the *Mail & Guardian*, the *Financial Mail* and *Economist*, *Popular Mechanics* and *Wild* magazine.

4. Article length and structure

Article text should be a maximum of 1 200 to 1 500 words. Longer articles will usually be cut or condensed to meet this word limit. If you believe it is essential for your article to run longer, discuss this with the editor before preparing material for submission.

- Following the title, write a short introduction of less than 50 words that describes the kernel of your subject. This serves as a standfirst, essentially attracting a browsing reader to pause and read the article.
- Write a gripping opening for the main body of the article – typical ways of doing this include summarising the key who/what/when/why/where/how questions in an arresting way; or writing a scene setter that takes the reader into the field or lab with you.
- Add variety to the pace and presentation by using panels or sidebars eg for more detailed information, species lists and so on.

5. Key style factors

- a. *Plant names*: Use the recognised common name uncapitalised followed by the full scientific name in brackets and italicised. Source common names from: SANBI Red List (<http://redlist.sanbi.org/>); iNaturalist (www.inaturalist.org); or PlantZAfrica (<http://pza.sanbi.org/>). Where relevant, include the subspecies, form and/or variety as part of the full scientific name. Make sure the scientific name is correct and valid, using a reliable source such as The Plant List (www.theplantlist.org).
- b. *Citation*: Botanical author citation is not used (eg including (Roem. & Schult.) G.J. Lewis after *Babiana ambigua*) and will be cut during editing. Literature references will be used as 'Further reading' where space is available.
- c. *Dates*: Date style is day-month-year eg 1 January 2020.
- d. *Capitals*: Use as few capitals as possible ie only where absolutely necessary.
- e. *Numbers*: South African number convention is followed eg 1 500.
- f. *Formatting*: Do not use online style sheets or indent paragraphs.
- g. *Images*: Include captions and photographs for your images in your text file but send the images separately – do not embed them in your text file.

- h. *Credits*: Include a text credit for the author(s) and photographic credit for the photographer. If photographs have come from a range of sources, each will be credited individually so include 'Photo by Izzie Human' at the end of each caption.

6. Images

Supply photographs and other images with every article as these help attract the reader to your article and also supplement the text. Please include photographs of yourself in the field, lab or garden, busy at whatever you describe in your article.

All photographs should be in electronic format (jpeg or tif; not png, bmp or hard copies). Printing emphasises photographic shortcomings so ensure that you select photographs that are not grainy, small size, low resolution, blurred or over or under exposed. The *Veld & Flora* team reserves the right not to publish all photographs submitted with an article.

Check your images and make sure they are at least 300dpi and at least 1mb in size for quarter-page reproduction, preferably 3mb to 10mb or more for full-page to double-page reproduction. As a guideline, for larger-format reproduction, all digital images and scans should be a minimum of 210mm across from left to right ie the width of an A4 page.

Cellphone pictures can be accepted if you have used high-resolution settings. Be careful of autofocus and do not rely on electronic zoom.

Do not take images from websites without requesting copyright permission and supplying the source's preferred credit.

Do send maps and easily understood illustrative diagrams where these will assist your readers.

Name each image file with:

- Your surname
- Single-word filename for your article
- Image number
- Plant name and/or short description of a key feature of the site/image

7. Image captions

Include a full list of captions at the end of the article text or in a separate document if necessary. Each caption must include the image number and the credit for the person who owns the rights to the photograph. In most cases this will be the person who took the photograph. Without this information, we cannot publish the image(s).

When writing captions, ensure that any identifiable people in photographs are named in full and that you have their express permission for the photograph to be printed in public media. We do not publish photos of nameless people, particularly when they can be clearly identified and it is the author's responsibility to source names and ensure subjects have given permission for their photographs to be published.

If minor children are shown, written publication permission must be given by their parent or guardian. The faces and identities of children in care should not be published.

8. Other matter

Veld & Flora does not include separate acknowledgements – but you will usually find you can weave these into the text.

We do not include references but aim to publish short lists of further reading where space is available. Supply the author(s), title, publisher and date of publication. Any books or journals listed should be readily available to the broader public in libraries, bookshops or open-source online and not blocked behind paywalls or other similar devices.

9. Remuneration and magazine copies

The Botanical Society of South Africa, publisher of *Veld & Flora*, is a non-profit organization (NPO) and so does not offer any form of remuneration for articles or images.

Up to three complimentary copies of the relevant print issue in which the article is published are available to author(s): email your request to: info@botanicalsociety.co.za. An e-edition of the issue will also be made available to BotSoc members.

In addition, the article will also be posted on the internet as part of an agreement between the Botanical Society and Sabinet, and can be accessed at www.journals.co.za/ej/ejour_veld.html. Authors who do not have academic or institutional access to Sabinet can request a digital copy of the article to be emailed to them within one month of these becoming available.

10. Submission and processing of articles

Content is planned in advance so your submission, if accepted, may not appear immediately in the next issue but will probably be queued for layout and printing in a future issue. Once an article (with accompanying images) has been received and approved for publication, you will be notified of a proposed issue date and the period when it will be going through the editorial processes.

The edited Word document will be sent back to the author(s) to ensure that accuracy has been retained during the editing process and to resolve any queries. Turnaround time for the author(s) is usually 48 to 72 hours.

The author(s) will receive a pdf draft layout about a month to six weeks before the issue date. This is your final opportunity to proofread your article and to ensure that captions, credits and so on have been correctly matched with photographs. Turnaround time is about 48 hours.

We look forward to a successful and enlightening partnership in publishing your article.

Patricia McCracken

Editor: Veld & Flora

veldandflora@botanicalsociety.org.za