

Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle



Issue 16

ISSN 2575-9744

December 2023



In my last issue of *Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle*, I lamented that my issue was sparse due to a lack of recent gardening activity in my life. The American Daffodil Society National Show in Atlanta and my speaking engagement at the Garden Club of Georgia Convention had preoccupied my time, and I did little else of significance in terms of gardening-related activity in early 2023.

The second half of 2023 was not much different. Here in the upstate of South Carolina, we experienced extended periods of dry weather, which compounded the stress heaped upon my garden by the Arctic blast of Christmas Day 2022. A number of my daffodils, particularly some in containers, had not survived the extreme lows of 2022, and more of my plants succumbed to 2023's drought. For some of my autumn-blooming bulbs, the arrival of heavy rains in December finally coaxed some foliage above ground, and I anticipate having blooms from these daffodils in early 2024, much later than is the norm. Better late than never, right?

As president of the Georgia Daffodil Society, I was thrilled that we had a great bulb sale on October 29 at the Peachtree Road Farmers' Market, held at the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta. We even picked up some new members there. A delightful and enthusiastic young couple from nearby Brookhaven joined on the spot, and another gardener representing her community's gardening committee just down Peachtree Road joined our ranks some weeks later. Plans are underway for our 2024 show, which will be held at Johns Creek Baptist Church in Alpharetta, Georgia on March 8-9. This year, the Georgia Daffodil Society is hosting the American Daffodil Society Southeast Regional Show.

Like the last issue, this one will not be excessively long, and you might even detect a

On previous page...Small clumps of *Crocus chrysanthus* 'Dorothy' are making an early appearance along a rock border in the garden. These diminutive crocuses are a welcomed sight on a sunny afternoon during an otherwise cold period.

North African theme. In keeping with my Mediterranean obsession, of late I have been hung up on Morocco, Egypt and other North African locales and their connections to various plants. It has been enjoyable exploring this part of the world in literature, film and reference materials, and I hope to travel to some of these places someday. In the interim, I will settle for writing about them, and growing plants that thrive within their environs and, in some cases, hopefully mine.

Thank you for taking an interest in my gardening endeavors. As always, I wish you the very best in the year to come, and I look forward to the possibility of seeing you in 2024 should our paths cross at a show or speaking engagement. Happy Gardening!

Greg Freeman, Publisher

What's Inside?

- 3 – *Cyclamen africanum*: A Plant Collector's Dream**
- 8 – Historic North African Hotels and their Gardens**
- 14 – From the Sahara Desert to the Carolina Foothills: One Painting's Journey**
- 16 – Out of Africa: Okra and Its International Devotees**
- 19 – Photograph: Autumn Dragon**

Cyclamen africanum A Plant Collector's Dream

Not as well-known and widely distributed as *Cyclamen hederifolium*, *Cyclamen africanum* is exceedingly rare in the commercial plant marketplace and most certainly underappreciated by gardeners whose efforts to enjoy it in the garden often end in disappointment.

Christopher Grey-Wilson, author of *Cyclamen: A Guide for Gardeners, Horticulturalists and Botanists*, describes *C. africanum* as the “North African counterpart of *C. hederifolium*,” stating, “It is a very handsome plant in its finest forms but few gardeners find it hardy in their gardens which is the prime reason for its neglect by all but the collector of cyclamen species, for plants need to be nurtured in a frost-free environment, or at the very least an environment from which all but the mildest frosts are excluded” (2003, 120).



Be sure to check out www.GregFreeman.garden for original video content and other helpful information.



Eric in SF, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons

North African Roots

Native to Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia, *C. africanum* is easily mistaken for *C. hederifolium*, but specialists typically regard the species as ‘bigger and more robust looking’ than its European lookalike and other differences exist upon closer examination, particularly with the tubers. *C. africanum* tubers often have a distinctive round shape with an indentation or hollowed center above. Additionally, *C. africanum* features “rooting all over its surface” while the tubers of *C. hederifolium* “are flatter and not hollowed above, rooting primarily on the top and the shoulders, leaving the base underneath free of roots” (Grey-Wilson 113).

From Alpine Houses to Windowsills

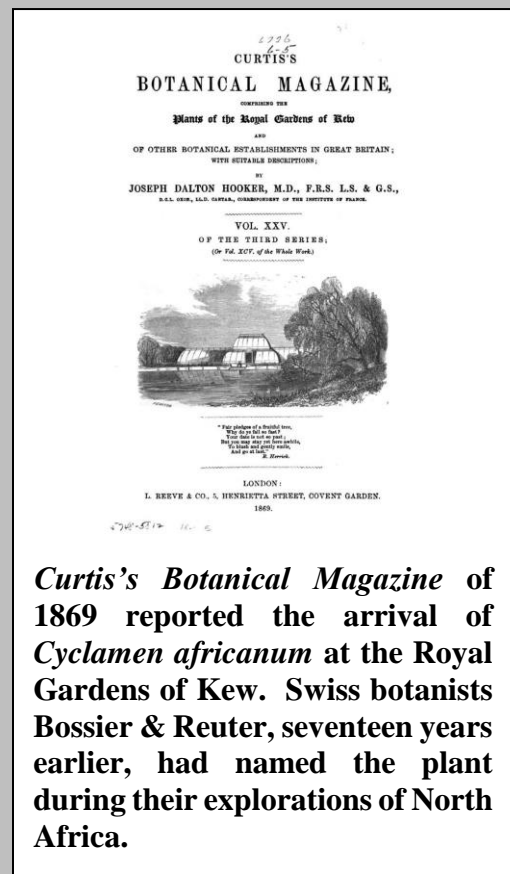
In its native habitat, *C. africanum* undergoes a dry summer dormancy and flowering takes place as the autumn rains come. Plant lovers can imitate these growing conditions by growing *C. africanum* in containers with protection from frost. Grey-Wilson states that the species “does in fact make an extremely good pot plant for the alpine house. It can, incidentally, be readily grown on a cool but sunny windowsill in the house, where the flowers can continue, sometimes from the autumn almost until Christmas” (2003, 120). As a houseplant, *C. africanum* will benefit from neglect in June, July and much of August, at which time late summer watering will prompt flower buds to appear. The cyclamen can receive regular watering (although don’t overdo it) from November through to early spring during the growing period when foliage is evident. By the end of spring, the plant will begin to return to dormancy, and the watering can virtually cease until time for the next blooming season.

As for soil, indoor-planted cyclamen should be grown in the same types of soil conditions in which one might expect them to thrive in the garden. I grow my cyclamen exclusively in terra cotta containers, simply because I find plastic ones tacky and unattractive. That said, I opt for a combination of quality potting mix, cactus soil, perlite and chicken grit to ensure drainage. I have used liquid plant food in my watering to ensure my plants, especially developing seedlings, receive decent nutrition, but I have done so sparingly.

While *C. hederifolium* flowers before its leaves appear, *C. africanum* can be more variable. Grey-Wilson explains, “I have found that this differs from season to season and is related to some extent to when water is first applied in the autumn; water applied early, before the flower buds appear, generally results in a plant with a lot of leaf development by the time the plants are in full flower” (2003, 121-122).

Historically Speaking

Since the authoring of its taxon by Swiss botanists Pierre Edmond Bossier (1810-1885) and Georges

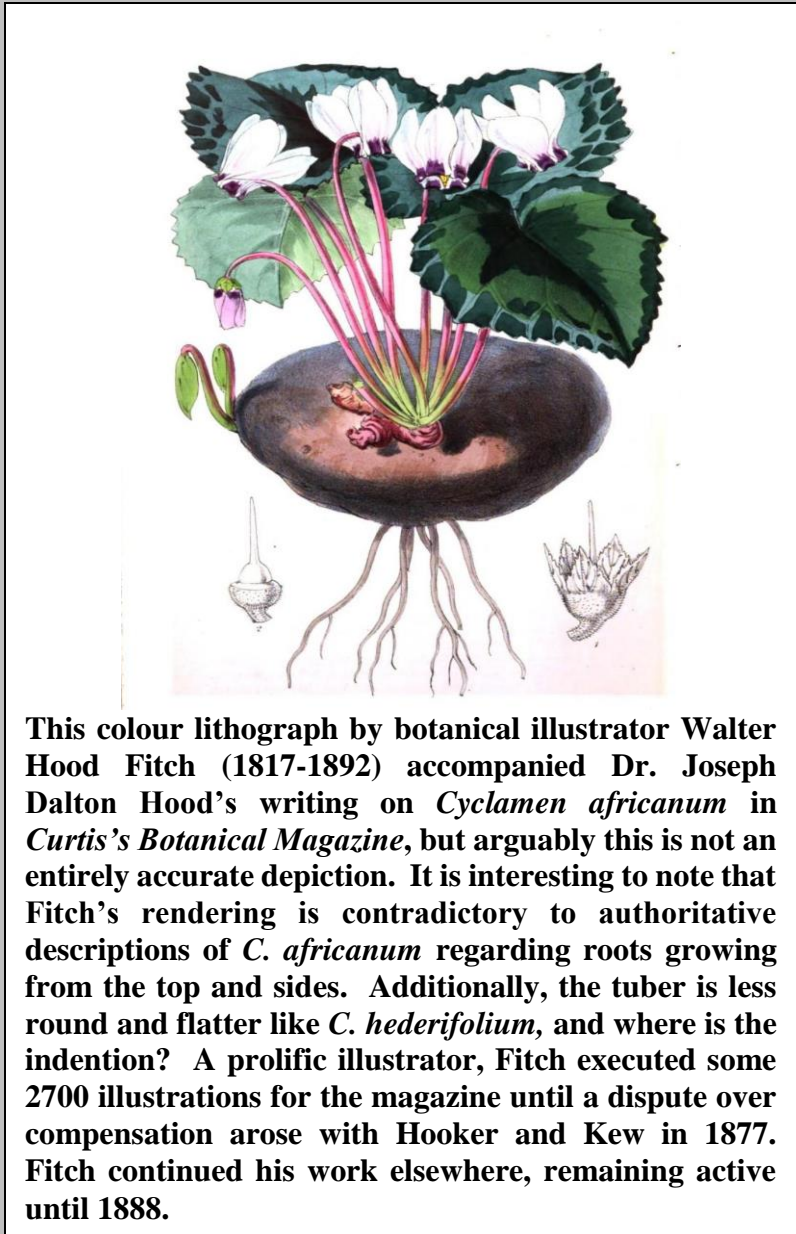


Curtis's Botanical Magazine of 1869 reported the arrival of *Cyclamen africanum* at the Royal Gardens of Kew. Swiss botanists Bossier & Reuter, seventeen years earlier, had named the plant during their explorations of North Africa.

François Reuter (1805-1872) in *Pugillus Plantarum Novarum Africae Borealis Hispaniaeque Australis*, 75, in January 1852, *C. africanum* has been on the consciousness of plant collectors, hybridists and botanists throughout the world.

Dr. Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817-1911), writing for *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, stated that *C. africanum* is the “largest species of the beautiful genus to which it belongs, the tubers sometimes attaining the size of a large turnip. It is a very common Algerian plant, and was sent to the Royal Gardens by Giles Mumby, Esq., Col. Playfair, Consul-General of Algeria, and other parties, and it flowers abundantly in September” (1869). A trained medical doctor and botanist, Hooker an admirer of evolution theorist Charles Darwin (1809-1882), with whom he corresponded extensively, served as botanist to the Geological Survey of Great Britain, beginning in 1846. He became Assistant Director for the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in 1855 before being named Director in 1865, taking the reins from his father, famed botanist Sir William Jackson Hooker. On expeditions to collect plants for Kew, Hooker's travels took him to the Himalayas and India from November 1847 to December 1850, Palestine in the fall of 1860, Morocco from April to June 1871 and the American West in 1877. Dr. Hooker would go on to be knighted, becoming Sir Joseph, and it is unclear if his Moroccan travels afforded him the opportunity to collect more specimens of *Cyclamen africanum* for Kew.

C. africanum even made its way down under, as evidenced by its appearance in the *Catalogue of Plants Under Cultivation in the Melbourne Botanic Gardens* of 1883, further demonstrating the plant's wide distribution by plant enthusiasts prior to 1900.



This colour lithograph by botanical illustrator Walter Hood Fitch (1817-1892) accompanied Dr. Joseph Dalton Hood's writing on *Cyclamen africanum* in *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, but arguably this is not an entirely accurate depiction. It is interesting to note that Fitch's rendering is contradictory to authoritative descriptions of *C. africanum* regarding roots growing from the top and sides. Additionally, the tuber is less round and flatter like *C. hederifolium*, and where is the indentation? A prolific illustrator, Fitch executed some 2700 illustrations for the magazine until a dispute over compensation arose with Hooker and Kew in 1877. Fitch continued his work elsewhere, remaining active until 1888.

C. africanum even made its way down under, as evidenced by its appearance in the *Catalogue of Plants Under Cultivation in the Melbourne Botanic Gardens* of 1883, further demonstrating the plant's wide distribution by plant enthusiasts prior to 1900.

Commercially speaking, the venerable London-based nursery, Barr and Son, was offering *C. africanum* in its catalogues by the early 1890s, describing the species as having “enormous heart-shaped, dentated leaves, with large silvery-green zone, very handsome” (1894, 16).

Best known for their contributions to the daffodil world, Barr and Son also offered an array of crocuses, colchicums, cyclamen, paeonia and other plants, much the same way companies such as Brent and Becky’s Bulbs, Old House Gardens and John Scheepers do today. There has been a market for both spring- and autumn-blooming plants as long as consumers have had expendable income to devote to pleasure gardening. Offering diverse selections to the gardening public is not a new concept. Business is business, and Barr and Son sought to capitalize on this stream of profit, exploring offerings beyond their extensive listing of daffodils.

Sourcing *Cyclamen africanum* in the Twenty-first Century

While *C. hederifolium* is easily acquired from specialty sources and the availability of the houseplant, *C. persicum*, seems universal among florists, nurseries and the garden centers of chain home improvement stores, *C. africanum* is obtainable but not without some effort. If one is especially interested in cyclamen, a membership in The Cyclamen Society might be merited. Members can take advantage of seed exchanges. Additionally, specialty growers abound internationally wherever cyclamen are grown, and a search engine is far more likely to uncover sources for seeds than plants. There is great satisfaction attained in growing a plant from seed, however, and the wait for blooming-size plants to develop is well worth it.



Greg Freeman

This terra cotta pot contains a number of *Cyclamen africanum* seedlings. Two-years-old at the time of the photograph, the seedlings resulted from seeds acquired by the author from a source in Israel.

Grey-Wilson, Christopher. *Cyclamen: A Guide for Gardeners, Horticulturalists and Botanists*. Portland, Oregon: Timber Press, 2003.

Hooker, Joseph Dalton. “Tab. 5758: CYCLAMEN AFRICANUM: Algerian Cyclamen.” *Curtis’s Botanical Magazine*, Volume XXV, 1869.

“Hardy Autumn-Flowering Cyclamen.” *Barr’s English Hardy Daffodils, for Spring-Flowering In or Out of Doors*. August 1894. (12 King Street, Covent Garden, London, England).



WHEN DAD AND I WENT FISHIN'

buy it or stream it and take the kids fishing!

Greg Freeman



Tel: (864) 723-3693

Cheryl Murphy

bellscreekwildflowerfarm@gmail.com



Visitors by appointment only.

"I'm thrilled that my neighbor, Cheryl Murphy, has started a small specialty nursery, offering native plants ranging from azaleas to beautiful pollinator-attracting wildflowers. I've since added Echinacea pallida to my coneflower collection! If you're in the Oconee County, South Carolina area, check out her quality selection." – Greg Freeman

Historic North African Hotels and their Gardens

A number of hotels throughout the North African nations on the Mediterranean Sea were favorite haunts of Great Britain's aristocracy, celebrated authors and other prominent figures throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is little surprise that these hotels, noted for their exotic locations and luxury appointments, would also feature lushly planted gardens and courtyards. These landscapes served as oases for hotel guests in oppressively hot locales (depending on the time of year), providing mildly venturesome travelers the opportunity to immerse themselves amid the native flora in the shadow and safety of their accommodations. Such settings would even figure prominently in various literary works and their film and television adaptations.

Far off the beaten path of any Grand Tour embarked upon by members of the British nobility, destinations such as Casablanca, Tangier, Cairo, Algiers, Alexandria and Tunis were out of the comfort zone of the European Continent. If Geneva, Venice, Florence, Rome and Athens had been obligatory stops for sons of the landed gentry who were seeking cultural enlightenment prior to 1900, perhaps cities further south on the African side of the Mediterranean were for the more adventuresome by the 1920s.

While various editions of *Bradshaw's Guide* had promoted European travel and even travel to Turkey, Syria and Palestine in the 1800s, other publications were touting the exoticism of North Africa, expounding on the wonder of the pyramids of Giza or the allure of the High Atlas Mountains. One such publication, *Mediterranean Winter Resorts* by Eustace Alfred Reynolds-Bell (1858-1928), must have played a significant role in an era devoid of high definition travel television shows and viral internet reels. The guides described exciting destinations and featured advertising by preeminent hotels, which were owned by British interests or otherwise catered to a British/European clientele.

If the Pillars of Hercules, the two promontories on either side of the Strait of Gibraltar, serve as a theoretical starting point for a tour of North Africa's notable cities, perhaps no one could have given the vantage point a more inviting introduction as did Reynolds-Bell when he wrote, "From Europa Point a glorious view bursts upon the spectator. Literally pinnacled in air, he has before him a horizon taking in two seas and two continents, extending from the snow-clad Sierra Nevada range to the Atlas Mountains in Africa" (1908, 293). From the Pillars, one can travel by motorway along the Atlantic Coast from Tangier to Casablanca today, but a hundred years ago foreigners arrived by ship. Even Agadir, a hugely popular seaside resort today, was merely a sleepy vestige a century ago.

On North Africa's Mediterranean Coast, on the other hand, stand some nations and cities which saw much patronage by the British and other Europeans with means to seek a warmer winter clime. Naturally, various hotels welcomed their perennial visits. One must surmise that North Africa, whether coastal or further inland, saw its share of archaeologists, anthropologists, botanists, Egyptologists and other explorers from Great Britain and the Continent, but these, generally speaking, were not the ones keeping such hotels afloat. Their careers dictated that they "sleep rough" from time to time, as they delved into areas lacking commercial development and the comforts of a western-style hotel. British Colonial hotels, in particular, were appealing to dignitaries and members of the aristocracy, who often arrived at such locales for diplomatic or

business reasons, as well as holiday stays. Given the Brits' penchant for horticulture, it is little wonder that verdant gardens were so important to hotel developers and hoteliers targeting the British traveler. The gardens and public spaces of many hotels' gardens had been given as much planning and consideration as the architecture and interior design of the hotels themselves. Particularly notable among these hotels and gardens were Tangier's Villa de France, Algiers' Hôtel Saint-George, Cairo's Shepherd's Hotel and Aswan's Old Cataract Hotel.

Villa de France, Tangier

A century ago, Tangier, Morocco, was in the middle of what was regarded politically and diplomatically as the International Zone. The city had already developed quite the reputation for attracting celebrities and artists by the time the 1920s lured a ragtag assortment of eccentric British and Continental expatriates, including tax exiles, spies, homosexuals (who surprisingly found sexual freedom in Tangier's freewheeling milieu in an otherwise ultra conservative Muslim nation) and other nonconformists. Much has been written academically about the city once being a destination for paedophiles and patrons of prostitutes, reflecting poorly on both the city and some of its visitors. The city's tolerance is alluded to in popular culture, including the phenomenally successful British television series, *Downton Abbey*, in which subtle references to bachelor Peter Pelham's sexuality, including his cousin Bertie Pelham's description of him as a delicate fellow and Mrs. Pelham's rebuke of Peter's less than moral lifestyle, are made. One deduces that Peter failed to live up to the hyper-masculine ideals of British aristocracy and that he had found sexual liberation among likeminded fellow expats and local chaps in Tangier, a perceived Sodom, of sorts.

Before the establishment of the International Zone, renowned fauvist painter Henri Matisse (1869-1954) and his wife, Amelie, arrived in Tangier, checking into the Hôtel Villa de France on 29 January 1912.

Originally built in 1880 by Lucien Bruzard, the building served as a residence for a French diplomat before opening as a hotel. Author Richard Hamilton writes, "By the time Matisse visited Tangier, the city was already swarming with artists, who had followed in the footsteps of Delacroix in



search of the exotic. In 1889, Edgar Degas had set up his easel in the nearby Hotel Continental.

It looked as though half of the modernists in Paris might descend on Tangier, asking Matisse to reserve them a room” (2019, 108).

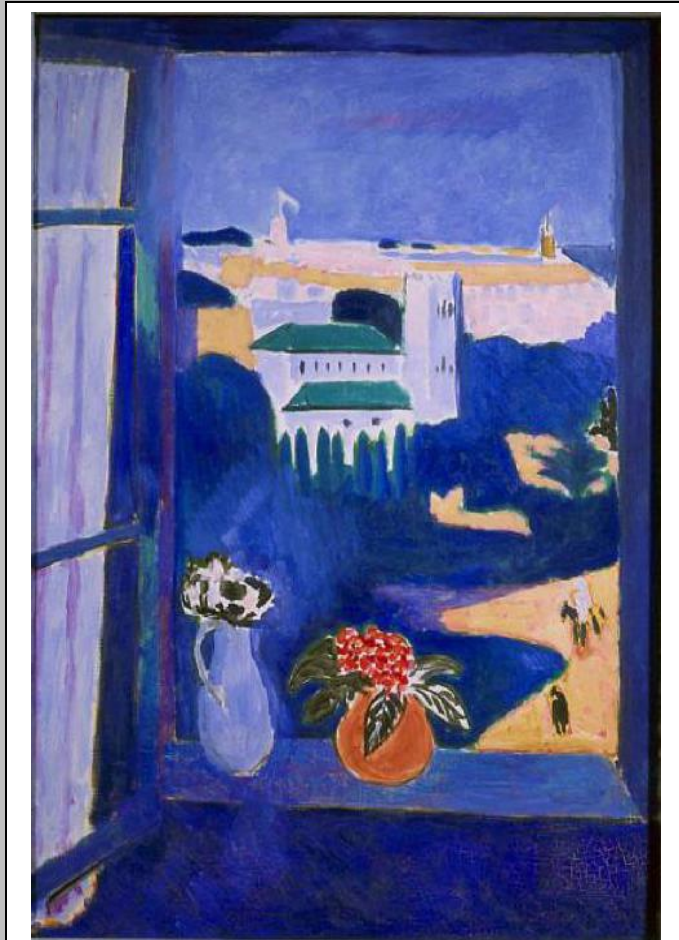
Though characterized by some as overrated, substandard and even dirty, Villa de France was hailed as one of Tangier’s finest hotels for a number of years, being eclipsed by Hotel El Minzah in 1930. The hotel, now operating as the Grand Hotel Villa de France, suffered a decline and quite possibly would have been razed to make way for something sleek and modern, but the hotel was declared a historic monument in 2003 after public outcry prompted the attention of King Mohammed VI. A renovation began in earnest, and the hotel is once again one of Tangier’s most distinguished places of lodging.

Since its inception, the hotel has stood amidst a magnificent garden that spans some distance to the historic Saint Andrew’s Church. An advertisement in 1888 stated that the hotel had been “recently refitted and enlarged, is situated in a lovely Garden, on an elevation outside the gates of the City, commanding a magnificent view of the Town, Bay, Straits and surrounding country” (211).

Upon arriving in Tangier in 1912, Matisse and his wife, were inhibited by heavy rains that did not let up for days, keeping them indoors and largely miserable for a space of time. Writing to his friend, noted feminist and art patron Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), Matisse asked, “Shall we ever see the sun in Morocco?” After all, it was the sun’s reflection – credited to the unique reflection of light created by the coming together of two seas, the Atlantic and Mediterranean – that prompted many artists to paint in Tangier in the first place.

Nonetheless, Matisse made liberal use of fresh flowers, painting still-lives, as well as the noted *La Fenêtre à Tanger, Paysage vu d’une fenêtre* (or *Landscape viewed from the window, Tangiers*) from his window in Room 35. Today, the hotel room serves as a museum and is popular among tourists.

The Grand Hotel Villa de France might not be as near the water as Hotel Continental, but it still affords guests amazing views of the medina and the sea, and its garden views are no less stunning and inspiring in the twenty-first century than when Henri Matisse looked out his window at the lovely expanse and began putting paint to canvas.



Pushkin Museum of Art, Moscow, Russian Federation

Henri Matisse (1869-1954), *La Fenêtre à Tanger, Paysage vu d'une fenêtre* (or *Landscape viewed from the window, Tangiers*, or *Window at Tangier*), 1912, oil on canvas

Hôtel Saint-George, Algiers

While Algeria was a French Colony in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the nation still received its share of British travelers, and the Hôtel Saint-George was often on the itinerary of Brits when visiting the country's capital city, Algiers, on the Mediterranean coast.



Opening in 1889 as a hotel after serving as a boarding school and before that, a Dey's palace, the property entertained notable guests, including King Edward VII (1841-1910), Alexandra of Denmark (1844-1925) and Winston Churchill (1874-1965). During World War II, Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890-1969) used the property as the Allied Forces' Headquarters. Subsequently, the hotel suffered significant damage from German air raids.

Joseph C. Hyam described the hotel as “high on the Mustapha Hill, surrounded by lovely large gardens,” and stated that the hotel was “patronized by the best class of English and American society” (201, 202). A 1908 advertisement for the Saint-George informed visitors to Algiers that the “electric tramway passes the gardens every quarter of an hour.” In the twenty-first century, the hotel is now Hôtel El-Djazair, and the structure remains surrounded by lush, expansive gardens.

Shepherd's Hotel, Cairo

Established in 1841 by Samuel Shepherd, the legendary Hotel des Anglais (“English Hotel”), later rechristened Shepherd's Hotel, of Cairo, Egypt, was regarded as one of the world's finest hotels from the mid-nineteenth century well into the early twentieth century.

By the time the original hotel was destroyed by the Cairo Fire of 1952, the establishment had already secured its reputation as an elegant and luxurious place of lodging as evidenced by its distinguished guests, including Aga Khan and Winston Churchill. Its presence in the fictional *Crooked House* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1949) by Agatha Christie (1890-1976), and other creative works, has secured its place in popular culture.

In addition to the Shepherd's sumptuous interior, the hotel boasted of a resplendent garden where its patrons could enjoy tea amid the shade of the palms. One late nineteenth century book discusses the property's *Sabal princeps*, now regarded as a synonym for the palm species, *Sabal bermudana*: “Some nice plants may be seen in the gardens of Shepherd's(sic) Hotel at Cairo”

(Draper 36). As illustrated on antique post cards, the Shepherd’s garden was home to many colorful flowers and blooming shrubs.

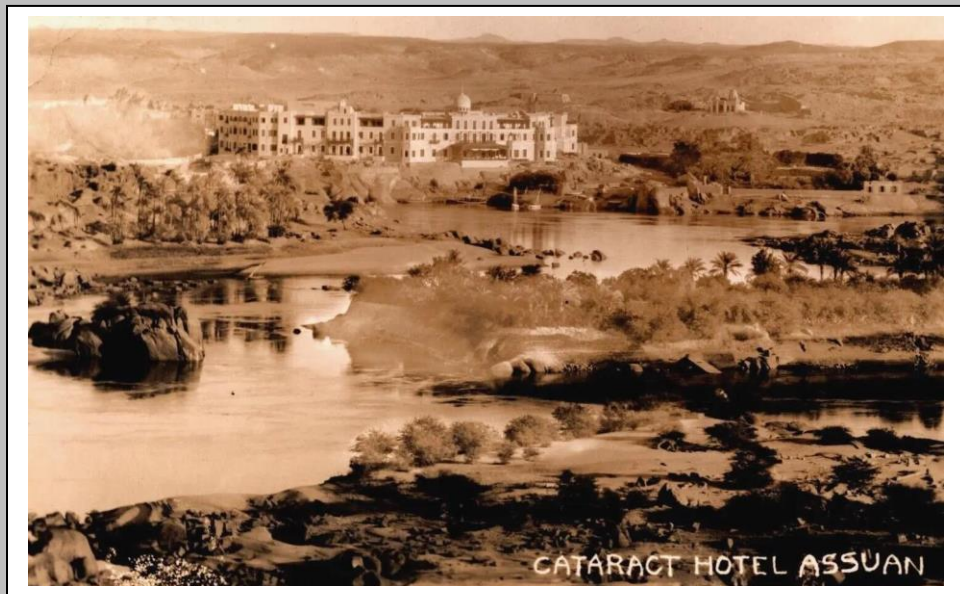
Incidentally, the hotel’s American Bar entertained American, British and French military officers who, on any given night, could be seen dancing in uniform with their female companions adorned in evening gowns. The bar was the birthplace of the “Suffering Bastard” hangover cocktail.

The Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group announced a management agreement to rebrand the current hotel, which was built in 1957 a half mile from the original Shepherd’s Hotel. The Mandarin Oriental Shepherd Cairo Hotel, to be opened in 2024, is located on the eastern shore of the River Nile, and Mandarin Oriental has commissioned Parisian interior designer Sybille de Margerie to “preserve the building’s heritage design while enhancing the facilities and services” (2022). Unfortunately, the modern Shepherd’s Hotel lacks the lovely gardens for which the original hotel was once known.



Old Cataract Hotel, Aswan

Located along the River Nile, the Old Cataract Hotel in Assuan (modern-day Aswan), Egypt, appeared in Agatha Christie’s famed novel, *Death on the Nile* (London: Collins Crime Club, 1937). serving as a base from which her beloved fictional character, Hercule Poirot, and an eclectic cast of



characters would embark on a river cruise.

The hotel opened in 1899, and has entertained kings, queens, prime ministers, presidents and other notables, including Tsar Nicholas II (1868-1918), Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher (1925-2013), Princess Diana (1961-1997) and, of course, Christie herself. Still operating today, the property, now known as the Sofitel Legend Old Cataract Aswan Hotel, includes a modern-day tower and has undergone a complete renovation. Amidst the palm trees and other native flora growing on the hotel's beautiful grounds, one can dine at one of the hotel's fine restaurants, one of which is aptly named Terrace. Of interest to contemporary plant-loving travelers, the Aswan Botanical Garden is located in close proximity to the hotel on the oval-shaped Kitchener's Island, named after Lord Horatio Kitchener (1850-1916), Sirdar, or Commander-in-Chief, of the Egyptian Army.

Draper, Walter. *Gardening in Egypt: A Handbook of Gardening for Lower Egypt*. London: L. Upcott Gill, 1895.

Gilbard, Lieutenant Colonel George James. *A Popular History of Gibraltar, Its Institutions, and Its Neighbourhood on Both Sides of the Straits, and A Guide Book to Their Principal Places and Objects of Interest*. Gibraltar: Garrison Library Printing Establishment, 1888.

Hamilton, Richard. *Tangier: From the Romans to the Rolling Stones*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019.

Hyman, Joseph C. *The Illustrated Guide to Algeria: A Practical Handbook for Travellers*. Paris: The Anglo-French Press Association, 1908.

"Mandarin Oriental Shepherd Cairo Hotel Announced for 2024." *HNR Hotel News*. 22 March 2022. <https://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article120077.html> Accessed 31 December 2023.

Reynolds-Bell, Eustace Alfred. *Mediterranean Winter Resorts: A Complete and Practical Handbook to the Principal Health and Pleasure Resorts on the Shores of the Mediterranean, with Special Articles on the Principal Invalid Stations by Resident English Physicians*. London: Hazell, Watson & Viney, 1908.

Greg Freeman Appears on *Green and Growing* with Ashley Frasca

Greg Freeman appeared on Atlanta's WSB Radio's gardening show, *Green and Growing* with Ashley Frasca. The show aired on 30 September 2023. Freeman and Frasca discussed fall-daffodil planting, the Georgia Daffodil Society's fall bulb sale and the upcoming daffodil show in the spring.



From the Sahara Desert to the Carolina Foothills One Painting's Journey

On 19 August 2023, I drove to Tryon, North Carolina, to visit one of the childhood homes of legendary singer and civil rights activist Nina Simone (1933-2003), where I took multiple photographs and shot some video footage for a future article and forthcoming video production to be released by another site in the Greg Freeman Media portfolio of digital publications. From Tryon, I made my way to the freeway where I drove to nearby Hendersonville in search of lunch and any other distractions to enjoy on my daytrip. Not one to resist a large, cavernous antiques mall, I visited Needful Things Antiques, just off the interstate.

As is often the case, I scan booths and display cases at antiques malls in search of objects that interest me as a collector, including small European oil paintings, Nippon porcelain, Georgia folk pottery, one-of-a-kind or strictly limited edition sculptures of the human form, vintage post cards, hand-carved wooden boxes, virtually anything Art-Deco and various ephemera. Items related to Atlanta, New Orleans, Greenville, Asheville, Nashville, Chattanooga, Memphis, Knoxville, Miami's South Beach Art Deco district, France's Côte d'Azur, Istanbul, Italy, Switzerland, Morocco, Egypt and pretty much anything Mediterranean are of particular interest. Frequently, I comb over thousands of square feet at larger establishments and encounter only one or two items that I wish to buy. Also with frequency, these items are generally priced at more than I wish to spend. Part of the thrill of the hunt is the discovery of a great deal. From time to time, a wonderful deal is found. Such was the case during my visit to Needful Things Antiques.



Madeleine Laurent Hermann (b. 1935), *Kasbah pres d'Erfoud*, 1995, watercolour on paper

Discovering *Kasbah pres d'Erfoud* (*Kasbah near Erfoud*)

Sitting atop a forgettable piece of furniture – a bookcase or chest, perhaps – in a back room of the two-story monstrosity, was a watercolour painting that particularly caught my glance. Noting its depiction of veiled Muslim women in a desert scene, I – initially disinterested – looked away at other items before returning my gaze to the small painting. Upon closer examination, I took note of the lovely work and its frame. The supporting provenance on the reverse made the painting even more special. What I considered an affordable price tag also prompted me to do a double-take. As I headed back to South Carolina with my painting in tow, I felt confident that I had done well and didn't break the bank.

I am delighted to be the owner of *Kasbah pres d'Erfoud* (1995), by Madeleine Laurent Hermann (b. 5 October 1935), which now hangs alongside an assortment of framed antique Mediterranean post cards in The Nook, the small studio space in my residence. Born in Geneva, Switzerland, Madeleine Laurent had attended art school from 1951 to 1954, and enjoyed several exhibitions of her work in Switzerland between 1975 and 1983. In late 1985, the artist relocated to Erfoud, Morocco. Known as the “Gateway to the Sahara,” Erfoud is an oasis town situated in the Sahara Desert within the valley of the Ziz River, which has its beginnings miles away in the High Atlas Mountains. The area has figured prominently in multiple films, including *Spectre* (2015), the twenty-fourth installment in the James Bond series, starring Daniel Craig (b. 1968).

On the reverse of the painting is affixed a card, indicating that the work had been exhibited and sold at Hôtel Salam in Erfoud. A sticker stating “Custom framed by the Queenstown Gallery, Pennington, New Jersey” suggests that the picture had been purchased by an American tourist and framed or reframed in the USA. Given that Asheville, North Carolina and its surrounding suburbs, including Hendersonville, are noted resort and retirement areas, it is entirely possible that the former owner of this painting had lived in New Jersey prior to relocating to North Carolina. This individual could have passed away, downsized or grown tired of the work, either of which could have explained its presence in an antiques mall. Of course, any number of other scenarios could provide explanations as well, including purchase by the dealer online or at auction.

Appearing in various biographical reference materials, including *Biografisches Lexikon der Schweizer Kunst: unter Einschluss des Fürstentums Liechtenstein 1998* (*Biographical Lexicon of Swiss Art, including the Principality of Liechtenstein 1998*) and *Répertoire des artistes suisses, 1980-1990: La Principauté du Liechtenstein inclus* (*Directory of Artists in Switzerland, 1980-1990: including the Principality of Liechtenstein*), Laurent has been described as a specialist in “artistic decoration of buildings, drawing, wall painting, watercolour.” Exhibitions of her work have been held from time to time at Hôtel Salam since 1986, and the painting is apparently one among many sold to tourists exploring Erfoud, as well as nearby tourist attractions Merzouga and Erg Chebbi. Hôtel Salam's restaurant boasts of several mural paintings, completed by Laurent between 1992 and 1994. Additionally, she exhibited her work in Casablanca between 1987 and 1991.

The Desert Oasis Garden

While one might expect palm trees and cacti in a desert oasis, as depicted in *Kasbah pres d'Erfoud*, one might be surprised to discover that desert oasis gardens contain many of the same plants enjoyed by gardeners outside the desert setting. Flowers and other ornamentals, as well as edibles, including tomatoes, peppers, melons, grapes, olives and various legumes, as well as many

kitchen herbs, are common in oasis gardens. Some of these plants are tolerable of the arid conditions with only slightly special care, and still others thrive only because irrigation is available. The oasis garden is a unique ecosystem all to itself, further proving the adaptability of plants and the role gardeners can play in being great stewards of the resources with which they have been given.

Biografisches Lexikon der Schweizer Kunst unter Einschluss des Fürstentums Liechtenstein 1998. Zürich and Lausanne: Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft, 1998.

Out of Africa

Okra and Its International Devotees

Originating in East Africa, *Abelmoschus esculentus* (also known by its synonym *Hibiscus esculentus*), or okra, is associated with the cuisine of the American South by most Americans. After all, fried okra is ubiquitous in restaurants offering soul food and other forms of southern cooking, and okra is still home-canned or even pickled by many southern households. In America's Deep South, particularly along the Gulf Coast where Creole and Cajun influences abound, okra is a staple in cooking, as it is found in a wide range of stews and soups, including gumbo (see Julian Brunt's *Southern Edition* article and recipe, "[Jumbo Gumbo](#).") While it is accepted that okra made its journey across the Atlantic due to the slave trade, many Americans might erroneously assume that okra is confined to Africa and the gardens and kitchens of the southeastern United States. In addition to the United States in North America and a bevy of African nations, okra has found its way into many other nations on at least two additional continents where it is grown and infused into a variety of cuisines.

Commonly served in nations spanning geographically from Europe's Eastern Mediterranean and the Middle East to the Caucasus and as far east as Afghanistan and as far south as Kenya and Tanzania, bamia is a hearty stew comprised of lamb, okra and tomatoes. Many variations of the recipe exist, and the Egyptians, in particular, prepare a "sweet and sour" version, incorporating lemon juice and honey, minus the tomatoes, to serve with grilled meats. In India, where 1.417 billion people now reside, surpassing China in population, farmers lead the world in okra production. Indians know okra as bhindi, and various recipes abound for everything from bhindi masala to bhindi pulao, a stir fry dish incorporating rice, okra and walnuts.

Whether one opts to prepare okra in the manner of those living in the American South or one ventures to employ a method more exotic and spicy, okra can provide variety and nutrition in delicious ways. Best of all, it is not difficult to grow. Gardeners in the West often grow one of three commonly available varieties. An exceptionally lengthy selection, "Texas Longhorn," a

name likening the pods to the length and shape of the horns found on the Texas longhorn breed of cattle, is popular. “Burgundy” is often offered by seed catalogues. Its name is a bit self-explanatory, reflecting the color of the pods. “Clemson Spineless,” a 1939 introduction from Clemson University, is a marked improvement in okra breeding, given that the pods lack the spines often found on older varieties. Other okras exist, including the heirloom variety, “Choppee,” which has been preserved in the heirloom seed collection of Dr. David Bradshaw, a Clemson University professor emeritus of horticulture. Grown by the Jacobs family of Georgetown, South Carolina, USA, since the mid-1800s, this variety is offered commercially by HeavenlySeed.net.

If okra is not part of your vegetable garden or cottage garden landscape, consider planting some seeds. The handsome plants bear lovely hibiscus-like flowers, and the fruits are a great addition to your basket of ingredients when summer comes. Okra is relatively easy to grow in full sun. It is tolerant of relatively harsh conditions, including heat and humidity. Daily harvesting is essential to a long growing season.

Heirloom Tazettas

From Daffodil Authority Sara Van Beck, author of *Daffodils in American Gardens, 1733-1940*
and co-author of *Daffodils in Florida: A Field Guide to the Coastal South*



Recaptured Garden Legacies
From Southern American Gardens of the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

www.HeirloomTazettas.com

Follow or subscribe to Greg Freeman at any of the social accounts below:



You are cordially invited to the
2024 American Daffodil Society Southeast Regional Show

A National Garden Clubs Small Standard Flower Show with Horticulture, Design and Education

The Georgia Daffodil Society will also host a daffodil photography show, as well as informative talks.

**Friday, March 8, 12:30 - 4:00 p.m. -
Saturday, March 9, 9:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.**

Johns Creek Baptist Church
Family Life Center
6910 McGinnis Ferry Road,
Alpharetta, Georgia 30005



Greg Freeman, Show Chairman
Tel: (864) 979-4318, ALBdarned@hotmail.com

www.GeorgiaDaffodilSociety.com

Photograph: *Autumn Dragon*



Greg Freeman (b. 1974), *Autumn Dragon*, 2022, digital photograph

The subject of a *Southern Edition* [article](#) that I wrote years ago, *Poncirus trifoliata* ‘Flying Dragon’ offers year-round interest. Its trifoliolate foliage is beautifully verdant in spring and summer. The golf ball-sized citrus fruits turn yellow-orange by summer’s end. And the golden fall leaves prove just as stunning. My tree, pictured above, came with a daffodil order from the late Steve Vinisky of Cherry Creek Daffodils fame in 2010. It remains one of the most attention-getting occupants of my garden. At the time of purchase, it was about twelve inches in height. It is now over six feet in height, and has survived many brutal winters, including the Arctic blast of Christmas Day 2022.

© Greg Freeman Media
All rights reserved.

In addition to being an avid gardener and daffodil hybridist, judge and exhibitor, Greg Freeman is an author, editor, recording artist, songwriter, amateur visual artist and life-long horse lover. Freeman's nonfiction writing on a number of subjects has appeared in magazines, encyclopedias and books of academic and scholarly interest, as well as his various websites, including [Southern Edition](#), his digital publication devoted to the American South. Published academic/encyclopedic contributions by Freeman include a chapter in Nadine Farghaly's edited volume, *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes: Essays on Film and Television Adaptations Since 2009* (2015), as well as multiple entries in: *Race in American Film: Voices and Visions That Shaped a Nation* (2017), edited by Dr. Daniel Bernardi and Michael Green; *The British Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia* (2018), edited by Dr. Mark Doyle; and *Music around the World: A Global Encyclopedia* (2020), edited by Drs. Andrew R. Martin and Matthew Mihalka. In 2015, Freeman released a country music radio single, "Sunlight and Shadows," garnering international airplay, and his gospel music has received national exposure through television broadcasts, radio airplay and commercial recordings, including the Collingsworth Family's GMA Dove Award-nominated album, *Just Sing!* (2021), on which his song, "I Owe You Everything," appears. His gospel EP, *Blessing and Blessing* (2018), features guest vocalists Babbie Mason, a Grammy-nominated artist, and Gospel Music Hall of Famer Calvin Newton. An owner of Belgian draft horses since 1987, Freeman's horse interests expanded into the world of Thoroughbred racing and breeding with the purchase of shares in Authentic in 2020. Authentic soon after won the Haskell Stakes, the Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic before retiring to stud at Spendthrift Farm, Lexington, Kentucky, USA. Additionally, in 2023, Freeman acquired the proven Belgian draft sire and show champion, Remlap DVP, a son of Remlap Constance Edie Johnne, a broodmare extraordinaire and undefeated show winner. Remlap DVP was bred by noted breeder Beth Palmer, Tottenham, Ontario, Canada, and named to honor her late father, the illustrious horseman, Douglas Victor Palmer.

Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle is hosted online by [GregFreeman.garden](#), an online resource with additional content not found in the *Garden Chronicle*. Feel free to share links to this publication via electronic mail, social media or other websites. No content may be reproduced without prior written consent from the publisher, except as permitted for Fair Use by copyright laws. To contact the publisher, send communications to [Greg Freeman Media](#), 509 Old Wagon Road, Walhalla, South Carolina 29691 USA or gardenchronicle@outlook.com.



GREG FREEMAN
M u s i c

