



ALBA Laboratories

Where quality begins

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Newsletter

It is nice to get so many positive reactions on the first two editions of our newsletter! At least it does encourage me to write another one!

Time does fly and we found it hard to believe that we started ALBA laboratories 10 years ago! This made us decide that it was time to get a fresh new image. Slowly but surely we are getting the garden around the laboratory back into shape; it is amazing the damage that can be done by mole rats. Having most of the garden ruined by these rodents spoilt our interest in getting out there and keeping things looking good. But this year we started with watering regularly and getting the place looking neat again. See the results of our hard work on the new pictures on the website.

We also decided that the logo of ALBA laboratories needed to be upgraded. The first logo was a quick action to get something on paper in 2000 and over the course of the years we never did take time to look at it again. But after the recent visit of Hans Latour of Holiday Media, it was decided that we needed a fresh new design to reflect the true image of the company. Hans, and his team, who have been responsible for creating and maintaining the website for ALBA laboratories came up with this new design and some of the latest technology for web-design. (For your internet requirements and queries, do not hesitate to contact Hans on hans@holiday.nl). Please do not hesitate to click on the link, www.alba-atlantis.com, to see what they have done with the ALBA laboratories website! We are very proud of it and it finally does show more of our building too!

At the moment we are making a much better use of the space in the hall that is not occupied by the laboratory itself. Currently we are preparing more and more space for archives! Nowadays it is common practise for firms to have all their invoices scanned and filed on CD. However the originals do need to be kept for a number of years too! These boxes with documents will just stand and collect dust; at least that is what they told us! On top of the normal alarm installation we have an additional system that monitors the movement in the storage area. It is wireless so it was easy to install and it will also give me a notification on my cell if there is anybody in the area. Even during office hours I can monitor the back of the building (more information on this system call Tony of TELESEKURE on 074 1044 375).

In the September newsletter we mentioned Benguela restaurant in Gansbaai. They now have a fresh website running, which besides information on the restaurant itself, has a lot of information about events in the Gansbaai area; like shark-cage diving! Definitely worthwhile to check it out if you are going to be in that area for the holidays! (www.benquela.com)

Introducing our new products



Eucomis selections

Every so often do we get a product delivered for tissue culture propagating that is exciting and new. From one of our customers we were supplied with various Eucomis selections straight from a dedicated breeder. Most of us are familiar with the plants that become a bit floppy at the end of their flowering season. We either have to suffer the flowers lying on the ground or have sticks placed next to them. With these new PBR protected selections we did not have that problem, but even more exciting were miniature Eucomis plants. This material flowered for almost two months on our outside table and all our visitors were enthusiastic about this new product. Just watch your local nursery to see if the material has already arrived there as well.

**Third issue,
December
2009**

**Newsletter
Spotlight**

Eucomis
selections

Plants in tissue
culture

Tissue culture
propagation of
Aloe species

Hardening off of
plant material

One of the exciting miniature *Eucomis* selections in flower.

Providing some general back-ground information:

Plants in tissue culture

Rumour has it that plants from tissue culture have all the same size. We wished that was true, it would make our life soooo much easier! Unfortunately plants in tissue culture, that is, growing in jars show the same size difference as when they would be growing outside. Some plants are big and some are small, some are straight and some grow under a funny angle. Every time we do cut the plant material, we are selecting for what we believe is the 'perfect' type. But all that selection still does not result in one uniform batch of plants! At the end of the day we have to settle for a minimum size and only deliver the plants that are that size or bigger. When the plant material gets taken out of the jars the ladies are sorting all the material on size. This will make the product easier to plant at the nursery. If only they all would be the same size...

The one thing that we did notice is that all the plant material in the laboratory reverts back to its seedling leave stage. The fig leaves as we find them on the plant material that has been brought into the laboratory, does change to a small pointy leaf. Not distinctive at all! When delivered to the nursery the plants will start to show the adult leaves as soon as they start to grow out.



Selecting *Disa* plant material to size at rinsing in the laboratory

Recently we noticed renewed interest in the giant bamboo projects. At this stage everybody is still waiting for results and data, however with hardly any trials being done at a grand scale, it will remain doubtful if there is going to be significant progress soon. I found on the internet that large scale trials are being done in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga, however the information on that site dates from June 2008...

For all interested parties we did put our information on giant bamboo on the website under the heading NEWSLETTERS. Who knows somebody might actually start something!

Giving information on commonly used techniques:



A new selection of *Aloe*

Tissue culture propagation of *Aloe* species

About two years ago we were supplied with our first *Aloe* species, which did grow without giving me too many grey hairs. Later we received more and more species from more and more sources. One of the most remarkable things of this plant material is the variation that exists in nature. Some of the species are growing in a rosette, some will just become a bit bushy and some grow tall and single. And we noticed that the growth points of the plant material are also not always in the usual position either! It has been a learning experience for our clean room team to start to notice the differences of all the selections in tissue culture. They are definitely not all similar there either. Luckily we do learn from our mistakes and slowly we are starting to see various types and cutting methods in tissue culture as well. With so much variation in nature, it was hard to believe that we would have only one single medium on which all these selections would perform well... Having now over 60 different selections we are trying to categorise the material in a few groups. Currently we are at the stage where we have the ones that enjoy being in tissue culture, the ones that are working in tissue culture and the ones that are staying alive in tissue culture. This time Murphy's Law is not applicable as only a few selections belong to the last category, however, they still need to be propagated and it will take some more effort to get them to perform as well as some as the other selections.

Supplying some back-ground on general misconceptions:

Hardening off of plant material

Being a plant tissue culture laboratory, we are delivering the plant material bare-rooted. In the early days of the laboratory we did attempt to harden off plant material ourselves, which in most cases did work very well. Unfortunately as the plants were growing, we shifted our attention back to more pressing things and at that stage we usually managed to kill off most of the material. We concluded that one needs a dedicated person to harden off the plant material adequately. And again, experience has shown us that you actually need a team of dedicated people to get a product out! Luckily we have been co-operating with Marius Langenhoven and his team at Propagating Plants over the last few years. They have gained a lot of experience in hardening off tissue culture plant material and time after time they come up with improvements on the existing system. In stead of delivering the plant material to our customers, we deliver them to Propagating Plants and when the plants have grown to the right size, they will be delivered to the customer. This system works wonderfully for nurseries where they do not have a permanent employee looking after the early stages of the cultivation. (You can contact Marius at 021 88 44 513)



A tray of hardened off bamboo at Propagating Plants



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Questions or comments? E-mail us at info@alba-atlantis.com or call 021 577 1275