



ORTHOLOPHA

The Newsletter of the Aloe, Cactus and
Succulent Society of Zimbabwe

PO Box CY300, Causeway

aloesocietyzim@gmail.com

www.aloesocietyzim.com & www.facebook.com/ACSSZ

Issue 18-04 April 2018

Hi Everyone,

The rains are tailing off and the long hard dry winter months beckon. Time to take those drastic steps to get our gardens and collections into either a saleable or presentable shape. We, hopefully have to finish our retirement house in the next couple of months and decide what driftwood, rocks, plants and other bric-a-brac follows us into the new abode. Ruthlessness will be the order of the day. Hopefully the experience of the past sixty-plus years means that we will only treasure things that balance, are pleasing on the eye and that we have the courage to find new homes for the unnecessary flotsam and jetsam that swirls around our current existence. For sure Family and Friends will be treasured. Pets purr, wag and bark for themselves. The pool table will have pride of place in our lounge where it rightfully belongs. We will float on the edge of a forest of contentment, the way life should be. We hope that you all have brought your own homes to such a space on this fragile Planet. We just hope that we have the courage to do exactly this and don't weaken by bringing never to be re-opened cardboard boxes into the living space ever again!!!!

Cheers,
Mafungi.

Your Committee

Chairman - Rob Jarvis
0783 383214

Vice-chairman – Hans Wolbert
0772 653110

Committee members:

Doreen Richards - 0772 255784
Malcolm Thackray - 0772 516644
Ros Houghton - 0772 115364
Caryl Stutchbury - 0772 611756
Debra Wolbert - 0772 515436
Gaudencia Kujeke - 0775 376600
Anne-Katrin Maseko - 0772 440131
Mike Caulfield - 0772 241286
Annah Pasipanodya - 0772 572044
Lillian Pswarayi - 0772 516 441

Monthly Meeting: Sunday 29th April 2018

This month's **Meeting** is at Ann Hamilton King home and B & B in Alexandra Park – **12 Fleetwood Rd., Alex Park**. This is a special garden, having been created by Ann a renowned landscaper and interior designer.

PLEASE remember to bring a delicious plate of eats to share. Don't forget to bring your chairs and hats, as well as a labelled plant or other contribution for the raffle.

The time: 10.00am for 10:30am

Directions: From Churchill Road, turn onto Fleetwood Road, (It's about halfway between Second Street and Borrowdale Road). Follow Fleetwood past Alexandra Park Primary School and No 12 is on the right as you get to the large circle.

If you need directions call Ann on 0772 133 016

Flowering Plant: April

What is this Aloe, on the right?

Send your knowledgeable and considered opinions to bo.hoom52@yahoo.com.

The respected judge's decision is final and the winner will get a box of choice Belgian chocolates, provided they are shared.

The lucky winner(s) in March were: Several you have to attend the April meeting to find out who is who!!!! You can claim your prize at the next Meeting on Sunday 29th Apr 2018



You can win a box of chocolates!!!

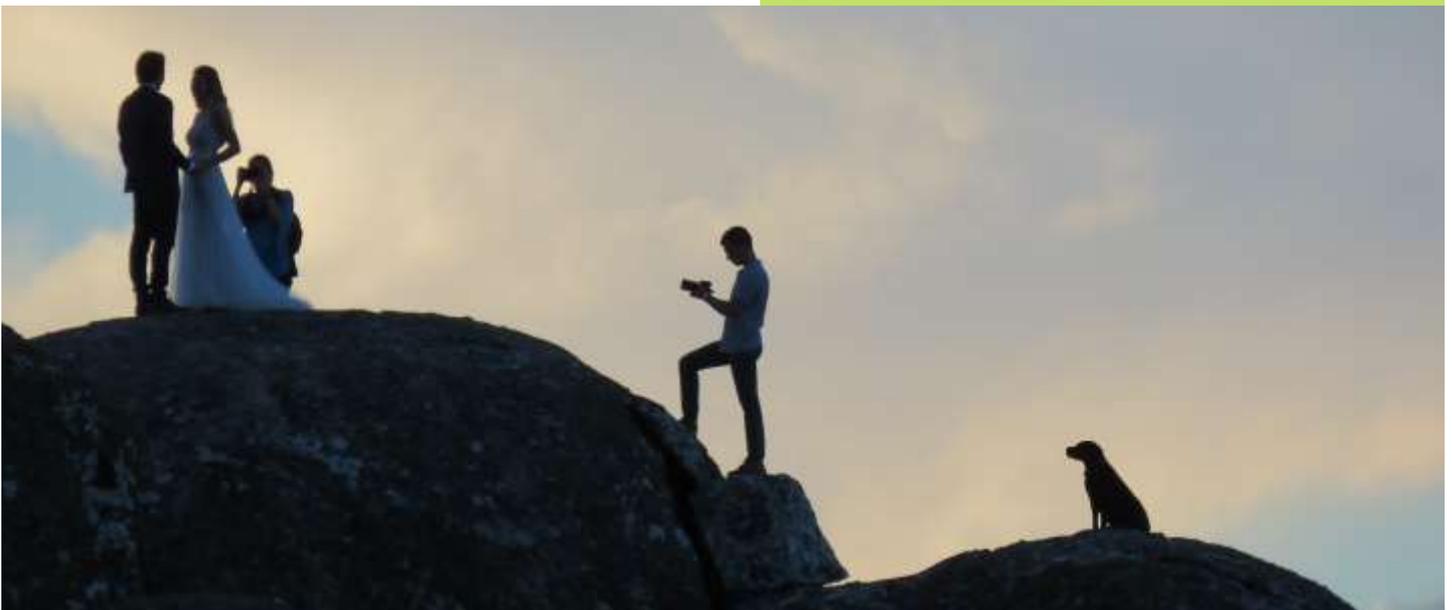
Send your entries to Mafungi at bo.hoom52@yahoo.com

The plant above is the April entry.

What is it?

A clue it is pictured in situ on a famous Nyanga Mountain.

Photograph taken by Mafungi

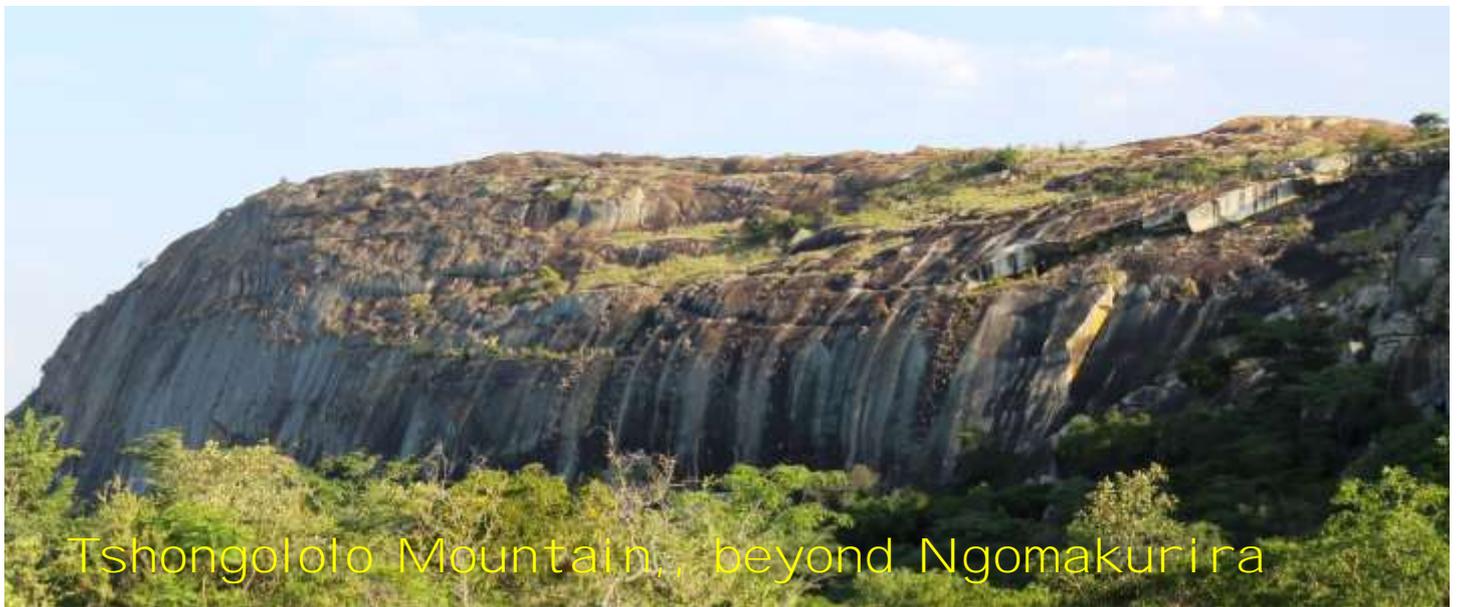


Apologies to members from the Chairman for missing the AGM, but we had a Family wedding to attend and one to prepare for of one of our own daughters. Working on the premise that it is better to beg for-giveness afterwards, many thanks to Vice Chairman Hans Wolbert and the Committee for ensuring the AGM took place!!!! At very short notice, I am afraid. The picture has absolutely nothing to do with this, but that is the point of it!!!!!! You have to seize opportunities when they arise.

Annual Membership: 2018 memberships are now due, thanks to members that have already paid. Membership is \$20 per person/couple per year. Children \$5 per year. Foreign membership \$40 per year. Make payment to a committee member, the CABS account, or through EcoCash:

CABS Platinum: Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society Acc #: 1002616336 Reference: kindly include your Surname as the deposit reference.

Alternatively send \$21-00 through EcoCash to 0783 911314 : If the payment is not from your own EcoCash Account, please follow the payment with an SMS with member's name.



Tshongololo Mountain, beyond Ngomakurira

Not very far from Harare, in fact just 45 minutes away, you can find this long granite mountain that stretches out towards the Nyauri river. The road through Domboshava has just about been finished now and what used to be a nightmare for travel is now a wide, smooth fully tarmacadamised highway. Of course the Kombi cowboys and the goats, cattle, chickens and carefree rural people need to be watched otherwise there is a grave risk of something going splat under the wheels of your car.

The Mountain Club of Zimbabwe calls this mountain Tshongololo after the long multi-legged millipede so common during the rainy season. You park near its base and a relatively easy scramble along a well-used pathway will take you up onto the crest and then it is a leisurely stroll until you reach the end at the far left of the photograph above. Do not go to far, otherwise you may end up splattered on the banks of the river far below. An unhealthy option indeed.

Of interest to our members is the *Aloe cameroni* colony that occurs along the length of the mountain. A larger number of plants on the southern edge, which is the opposite side to that seen above. However there are also symbiotic groups of plants that are endeared to us xerophytic types, including *Euphorbia* spp, the Flame Bush, *Hymenodictyon floribundum*, and the wonderful wispy sedges so reminiscent of an American President's peroxide-enhanced hairdo. The everlasting bush grows in profusion and at this time of year it is one of the first to wither and dry, awaiting the first rains of next season to spring into full green glory. Nature is magnificent for the precision and colours that



particular plants exhibit and *Aloe cameronii* is one of those that never fails to astound. There is no doubt this year, that come June we are in for a real treat if the flowering buds seen on every plant are a measure. The plant left clearly has three racemes springing out of its red-green heart. What strikes you about the leaves is just how precisely the prickles on each edge are spaced apart. Even the buds of the inflorescences (a big word for flowers) are very neatly spaced and patterned, vertically, horizontally and spirally. There is no evidence of any flaws and no damage from pests nor diseases. Complete balance in Nature, without any need for intervention from chemical weapons, snake-oil agronomy nor even planting arrangements.

The trick for our members is to find out if you can do this at home in your own gardens?



Of course balance in our gardens does not only come from the plants that we claim as our own. We can take leads from nature and in this tiny patch of soil on bare granite on Tshongololo, some disturbance in the past season, probably just fire, has allowed this pioneer grass species, *Melinis repens subsp. grandiflora* or Natal red-top to get established and make a stunning little meadow. Surely angels would pause in their flights to look at this wonder as well?

And on the right we see the irresistible pull that a perfect plant can have on a person when everything is just right. Complimentary colours, time of year, position and the warm autumn sun ensured the subjects of true balance.



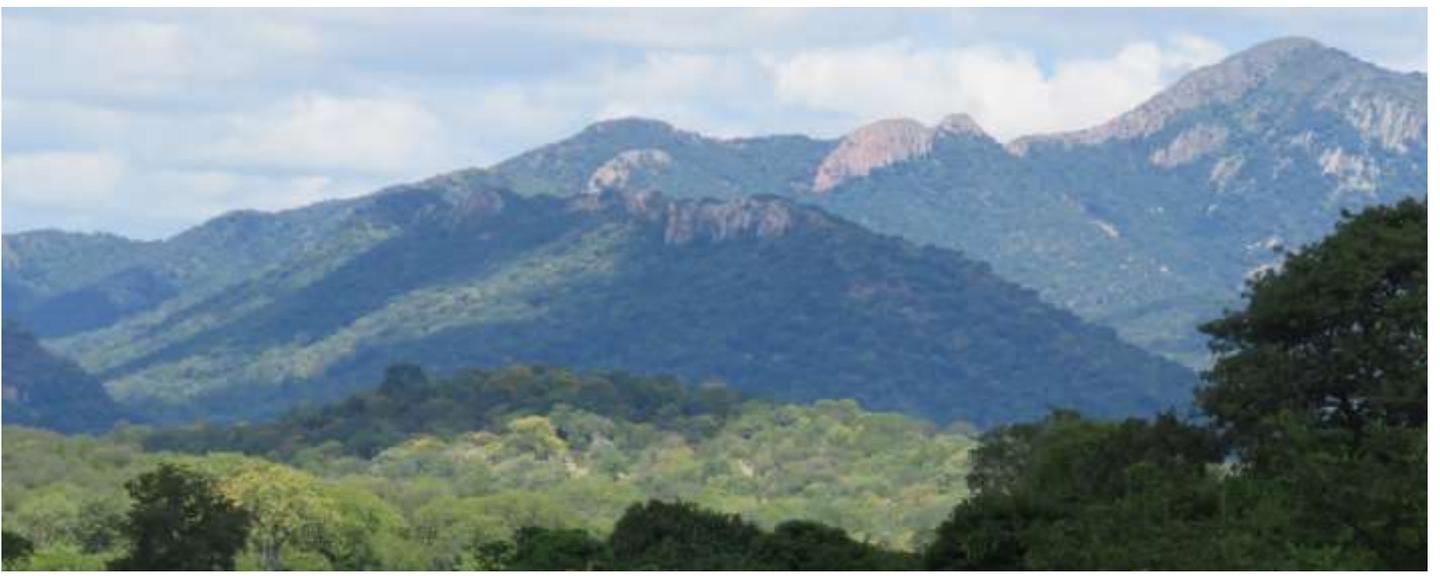
A quick instruction to “*Stick your head in that bush!*”, was obeyed to the letter, and a moment in the season captured forever. There is no reason why you cannot emulate this in your own gardens with astute plant selection, training of your own Family, Friends Workforce and even dogs and cats and let the forces of Nature work with you and not against you!



And here on the left you can see the perfect balance that Nature has achieved on a small patch on the granite face of the mountain, where organic matter and degraded rock in the form of sand has accumulated and provided purchase for a very happy looking group of sedges, plectranthus, and a pair of trees that blend in what would otherwise be a very inhospitable environment. How much easier should this be in our own gardens? There we can control everything, how and what we plant, how good the soil is and how often and how much we supplement the rainfall with watering.

On the right we see a group of *Xerophyta* plants that were so excited to see humans in their domain that they burst into spontaneous flowering. Their very precious, delicately-tinted mauve flowers usually appear at the very beginning of Spring with the first hint of the rainy season and the flowers are on the plant for only a day or two, so this is a real treasure to see such beauty at the end of the strangest rainy season we have experienced for some time. What amazes me is just how fit and healthy all the plants look considering the dry mid-season we experienced.





In ACSSZ we take you to fascinating places around this wonderful country Zimbabwe that we call home. The view above is into the mountains that constrain the final exit of the Gairesi River before it takes the gap into Mozambique in its quest to fill the Indian Ocean with fresh water. Over Millenia these east-flowing rivers have failed to affect the salinity of the Indian Ocean one iota and are not likely to do so going forward either. However if you google Rift in Kenya you will see a report that Mother Earth may well be splitting off a huge chunk of Africa and that this may escalate. So we had all better visit these wild places and secure plant seeds and specimens in case the Great Rift Valley of Africa stretches down further than we think and some of our mountains end up on another Island Continent like Madagascar. Who knows where the final fault-lines will tear the Continent apart?

Exciting times indeed.

The Health Corner:

Happily we still are not reporting on any sudden departures from the Society and although a few are a little crook, well that is to be expected when you have lived for fifty or more years in a country where uncertainty and official policy flip-flops are the norm.

Reducing stress in our lives should be a priority and there is no better way to do this than by ensuring that the foods and drinks we ingest are the healthiest possible forms. There is a delightful farm stall on the way up to Nyanga that specialises in home-grown fresh produce and home-made pickles and preserves. Like a magnet we are drawn to it every time we venture up there and spend freely, stocking up.

It is named after an amphibious creature well known for forced marches.

We also recently attended a Food and Drink Festival at a well known restaurant, bar and catering establishment on the Enterprise Road, Harare, held once a month. We can personally vouch that a well-concocted drink known as a Bloody Mary definitely helps to sharpen the brain cells and ensure that further purchases are made with singular clarity of purpose. Next time buy one as you walk in and get that floating-on-air feeling as you shop until you drop!!!!

Support home-grown Fairs.



There you go Folks, another Month, another Newsletter and the date of our forthcoming Rare Plant Sale draws inexorably closer. You don't want to miss out on the fun in the sun!!!

Cheers, Mafungi