



ORTHOLOPHA

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

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Hi Everyone,

It is such a treasure being able to travel the length and breadth of our wonderful country Zimbabwe and being able to report back to you on some of these special places that we have. Unfortunately the rather trying economic times that we are going through may mean our activities are somewhat curtailed and belt-tightening is almost certain. So this is a special issue covering two wonderful environments that many of you will have visited over the years. Let's hope they bring special memories to you if you are from a kinder, gentler time and spur an inquisitive streak if you are young and have not yet had a chance to visit them. To identify some of the plants I have used the amazing

Facebook site Flora of Tropical Africa and true to the exhortations we have given many other plant-lovers showing an interest in our wildflowers, grasses and trees, an answer takes a maximum of twenty minutes from the first alert to the final determination. Such is the magic of the information age we live in! Well done Bart Wursten and Mark Hyde, and others, who have answered many queries over the years from the comfort of this amazing site. We look forward to seeing you on Sunday!

Cheers,
Mafungi.

Your Committee

Chairman - Rob Jarvis
0783 383214

Vice-chairman – Hans Wolbert
0772 653110

Committee members:

Doreen Richards - 0772 255784
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Ros Houghton - 0772 115364
Caryl Stutchbury - 0772 611756
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Mike Caulfield - 0772 241286
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Lillian Pswarayi - 0772 516 441

Monthly Meeting : Sunday 28th October 2018

This month's **Meeting** is at Malcolm Pringle Wood home in Avondale – **44 Aberdeen Road, Avondale**. Malcolm has a beautiful landscaped garden, another one not to be missed.

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: Get onto Aberdeen Rd., (Churchill Ave changes to Aberdeen Rd., on crossing 2nd Street). Follow Aberdeen across King George intersection and No 44 is on the right after passing Casa Mia Restaurant.

If you need directions call Ros on 0772 115364

Flowering Plant: August

What is this, 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 in September was Gaudencia Kujeke who has already received her prize.



You can win a box of chocolates!!!

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

The flower above and plant below are from the October entry.

What is it?

Photograph taken by Mafungi

Project for Junior Members

One of the most beautiful trees in the Zimbabwean veld at this time of year is the Violet tree, *Securidaca longipendiculata*. It occurs almost everywhere except the very dry south-east and south-west of the country. The fruit forms as a single-winged heavily-veined, almost round seed. Straw-coloured when ripe, they are notoriously difficult to propagate.



So here is the challenge: Find a way to propagate the seed successfully and raise the young trees to a reasonable transplant size and I guarantee a lifetime source of income to the clever entrepreneur!

Every garden in Zimbabwe would definitely want one of these trees. They are a haven for insects and birds and when they flower during our long hot spring months they are a joy to behold. Coates-Palgrave says that the seed does not germinate easily and seedlings are difficult to transplant. However we need answers!

Annual Membership: Are due in January each year, the end of the year is just about here, members that haven't paid there their 2018 membership, this will be the last newsletter you will receive. For paid up members please start making payment of your 2019 membership.

We have 4 unidentified membership Payments in CABS: 19 Jan.18, 10 May.18, 21 May.18 and 23 Jul.18. If you made a deposit around these dates and haven't received a receipt No, please e-mail aloesocietyzim@gmail.com.

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 members name.**



Succulent gardens near Heaven

Sometimes you chance upon succulent plants in the least likely environments. In the past three years we have spent two nights on Mt Nyangani taking part in the annual Game count. This mountain has a habit of throwing some extreme weather at people who dare to tread its grassy and rocky slopes uninvited. National Parks allows camping only on this one occasion each year and two years ago we spotted 70 mammals on top. Mainly Dassies, baboons and klipspringers, but we also saw a few reedbuck, kudu and on the way down bushbuck and duiker. This time we only saw dassies, baboons and klipspringers. The year in-between, which I missed, our crew was rained and hailed upon and recorded a single frog trapped in their sodden bedding and tents.

This time the weather was more or less tricky from the moment we set off. Hiking was difficult and definitely not recommended so when we had a brief break we headed north from the summit ridge and chanced upon these beautiful succulent gardens. There were many other spring flowering

plants and whilst writing they were identified by the taxonomic Hero, Bart Warsten, I'll share a few photos with you to try and tempt you to stretch your legs and go and see what is high up in our mountains.



On the left was a colony of absolutely stunning flowers coming straight out of the ground. No sign yet, of leaves. Identified as *Drimia elata* (Satin squill) by the Heroes on the Flora of Tropical Africa site. And below right, this little gem which looks suspiciously like the roadside invasive that has spread almost over the whole of Africa, usually seen in disturbed ground. However it is *Asclepias*

fimbriata from our Eastern and Mozambique's Western Districts and Gorongosa Mountain there. Most of these plants are pretty much ground-hugging mainly because the environment at 2 500 metres or so a.m.s.l. does not lend itself to "sticking your head-up behaviour". When the south-easterly blows as it did on our second night, on the mountain, it reaches its greatest intensity on the ridge where we camped. I cannot begin to describe to



you the ferocity with which this mountain treats interlopers who tread her much-revered slopes. I had to venture out into hurricane-force wind and driving rain to reinforce some tent pegs holding the fly-sheet in place and the wind tore my poncho over my head and shredded it before I regained the safety of the interior. We were only allowed to camp up there because we were part of the annual game count. A very privileged band of warriors because when you have survived one of Mt Nyangani's angry nights, you know that you have been to the very edge of extinction. And of course inside the safety of the tent some moisture ingress is tolerable but once exposed, wind-chill comes into play and finger numbness, teeth-chattering and general malaise could terminate the fools who do this sort of

thing for fun. When the mountain has its icy claws around your neck, you know that a false move may be forever. So choose your day to climb this mountain carefully and preferably go with someone who has some experience. Always



take something warm, something waterproof and some food and drink in case you have to sit out a fierce storm in the lee of a rock. Rocks shelter right, these quaint little *Crassula sarco-*



caulis! And they look as though they have been around forever. And include in your will that you want some everlasting flowers left, as a posy on your casket!

Extinction after all is forever!!!!

The Health Column

Once again we are happy to report that our membership remains strong and healthy. There is no doubt in my mind that the current economic malaise is actually good for your health. Very little cooking oil, so make do without it! Highly processed refined maize meal and the like, cut down consumption to a minimum. Plant green vegetables in box or tyre gardens around your houses and kitchens. Graze and browse at will. Beer is in short supply and expensive, drink water. Fizzy drinks have zero occupancy on supermarket shelves, use the opportunity to kill off any addiction. Fuel is super-short so walk or cycle everywhere. Very good for your pulmonary systems and in the unlikely event that you are struck down by an unlikely car on the road, at least there will be minimal lingering.

Go on holiday, even if it means camping at the bottom of your own or a neighbour's garden. Chat to people, make friends again. If the trains are running, go to another city. Visit the Railway Museum in Bulawayo, the Military Museum in Gweru or see the Boulton Weapon Collection down in Mutare. If you celebrate a Birthday, age gracefully!



Wedza Mountain

I have mentioned before about how rock substrate influences plant life found on and around it. The picture above is of the absolutely stunning banded ironstones found on Wedza Mountain just 2 hours away from Harare. On three of the peaks of this massif, which is about 70 kilometres there are actually roads that will take you comfortably close to the peaks. Whilst the general environment is one of stunted miombo woodland, there is much else of interest. *Aloe excelsa* is common. There are *Aloe chabaudii* here and there. In the trees we saw haunting hangings of what we thought were *Ripsalis*, the only cactus found outside the middle Americas, but it turned out they were huge drooping growths of the parasite commonly known as mistletoe.



The *Brachystegias* were stunted twisted and deformed, much like what one finds in Nyanga and in exposed slopes in the Bvumba Mountains. They are adorned with beautiful little orchids, some of which were flowering famously.

Orchids fall somewhat outside our ambit as the Aloe Cactus and Succulent Society of Zimbabwe, but what the heck, they are lovely!

Enjoy your week and we look forward to seeing you at the monthly meeting this Sunday!

Cheers Mafungi!

