



ORTHOLOPHA

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

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Issue 20-2 February 2020

Hi Everyone,

From the perspective of the plants that our Society cherishes, I am afraid that this edition is a little bleak. We went to an area near Mtepatapa between Bindura and Mt Darwin that I was not very familiar. Given that the previous month we were at Umfurudzi which is a little bit eastward and a little lower in altitude, but there was much of interest. We did not see a single aloe at Mtepatapa other than in the garden and the only plants which we can claim as belonging to the ambit of our Society were *Sanseverias* and *Euphorbias*! Not a single aloe. We camped on a lovely green lawn, anathema to those of us who believe that brown lawns, in winter especially, are the way to go. But there, in a broken farming area where there is much dereliction, the tidy green lawn seemed just right. Perhaps it is a sign of the times, our lives are changing rapidly right now and we just do not know what tomorrow holds for us, never mind months or years ahead.

We have had to postpone our AGM because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Let's hope some normality returns soon and we can get back to ordinary lives again soon. Rest assured however that our Society is in good hands, we have funds in the bank and a wide variety of planned activities in the months to come in 2020, we just wish we had the forward vision to predict exactly what trials we will face. No doubt it will be interesting. Keep planting!

Cheers, Mafungi.

Your Committee

Chairman – Hans Wolbert
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Committee members:

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Monthly Meeting

There will be no monthly meetings for the foreseeable future until this health crisis is under control. Take the time to use the social media platforms we have to share any ideas, plants, pest and disease problems you may have with the full membership of the Society

Interesting Plant: February

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.



You can win a box of chocolates!!!

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

Photograph taken by Mafungi

Clue: No idea, I am clueless too, but aloe was purchased at one of the Rare Plant Sales.



The two photos on the left just show how clever Nature is when disturbed. At some stage there was clearly a large root of one of the rock-hugging figs coming down this rock wall. Someone in his wisdom then decided to cut a metre chunk out of the root and you can see that the end of the downward pointing part of the root has sent down fibrous hair roots to try and meet the soil and moisture beckoning from the ground. At the other end of the gap the upward-point root stem has now sent up leafy branches to search for light. Both points of activity have sent

up or down many more growing points than the plant would ultimately need, but the first to break through will undoubtedly take over and become the mainstem or root of the surviving two plants.

One thing is in no doubt whatsoever, they will survive.

Red Alert: Treasurer Mike Caulfield reports that we have had a subscription payment from someone called Patricia Ann, through the CABS Account but no surname! Please could the owner of these forenames get in touch with Mike to let him know your full name.

Annual Membership: Are due in January each year. Now is the time to renew. Remember for your \$100 per year, you get a monthly Newsletter, free issues of Ingens as they are published and you get invited to at least 11 choice venues each year. Big-time Bargain Bonanza!

Membership is ZWL\$100 per person/couple per year. Children ZWL\$20 per year. Foreign membership US\$40 per year. Make payment to a committee member,

CABS Platinum: Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society Acc #: 1002616336

Reference: kindly include your Surname as the deposit reference

or through

EcoCash: 0774 257 791 (Doreen Richards) Note this is a new number.



Rock Pools at Mtepatapa

It happened a couple of weeks before Zimbabwe, like the rest of the World, suddenly started to wake up to the fact that the Covid-19 was a real threat to everything we do. Escalating infection rates and increasing death tolls in countries that had been a little slack in recognising the threat posed by this very contagious viral infection caught us all up in Zimbabwe. Luckily a couple of weeks before I had met a farmer's wife at one of our Chameleon Safaris and she told us about a little known private farm resort called Rock Pools at Mtepatapa, about 30 kilometres north of Bindura on the road to Mt Darwin and invited the Mountain Club to visit.

Well the camping weekend just reinforced a message that I have been trying to get across to members of our auspicious Society over the years. Your gardening efforts will be that much more rewarding if you keep reminding yourself that simplest is best! And highlight the strengths of your particular piece of paradise. At Rock Pools they had obviously excavated the soil from around some largely buried granite slabs, put concrete in to line the cavities thus exposed and built-in some underwater seats and tables. And then in the surrounding miombo woodland they placed a cock-eyed chalet on stilts, a large central gazebo housing ablutions and an upstairs dormitory and lounge and a pool-side clubhouse. Luckily for them water is not a problem as they are right next to a perennial wetland and pool and so there are vast expanses of lush green lawns under the woodland trees. Here and there very delicately placed beds of aloes, succulents, odd cycad and other interesting plants. But not many. And the result was absolutely amazing, calming, relaxing, plenty of space to play field games like cricket and croquet and the pool had hot and cold inlets depending upon how exposed the water surface was and how deep the water.

Not the cluttered beds and collections of all sorts of different plants that we like to accumulate. No dog's graveyard with plants plonked in the middle of patches of lawn, but natural groupings of trees and lawn and wherever the local rock was present, it was left in situ giving the whole place an atmosphere of contentment.

Right next to the resort was a small dam with reed-beds and waterlilies, happy frogs warbling through the day and night (unhappy frogs croak) and the air at all times filled with the mellifluous booming of coucals during the day and hooting of owls at night. Pure Paradise!



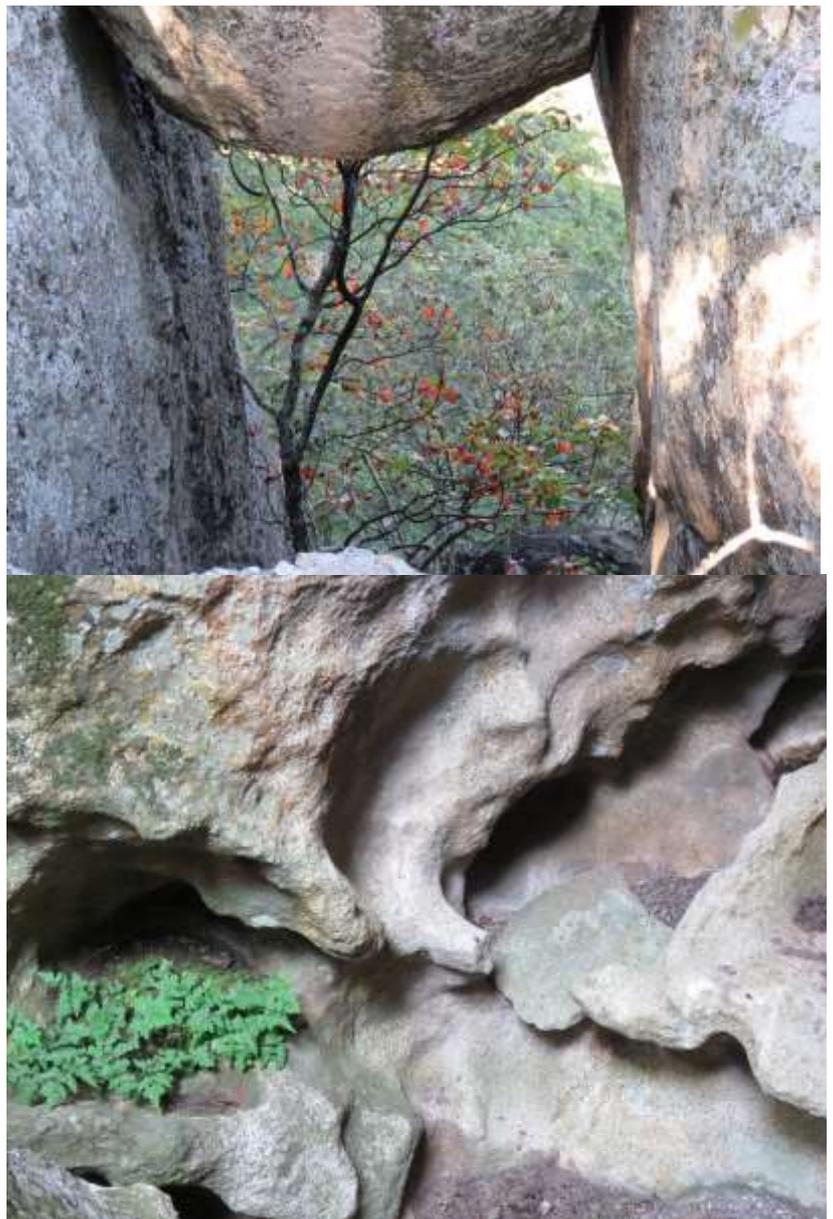


Broad views, portals and windows. That's the message nature gives us all the time and if you are fortunate enough to have natural rock formations in and around your property then your work is half done already. If not, you can either make the rocks or ensure that you look through various types of portals onto neighbours" or even natural mountains and hills in the distance. Or alternatively on to trees that emulate such views.

On the right we see two such views, one through a massive granite arch with a flame bush, *Hymenodictyon floribundum* just coming into its bright red fall colours. And then below whilst scrambling through a rock-jumbled cave on the way to one of the summits I spotted this little garden of ferns and summer opportunist plants enjoying the rich soil full of bat guano and dassie dung.

The second photo made me realise that in our new house we have a wooden-walled area outside our bathroom that I have been loathe to start a secret garden in because I felt it was too dark and we needed some translucent sheets in the roof above to give the plants any chance of taking root and thriving. Well this little garden right, must get real sunshine for maybe an hour a day and very broken filtered light at best, for the rest of the time. And because of the transition of the sun through the sky from South to North from summer to winter, there must be times when virtually no direct light reaches the inner-sanctum of the cave. But there the plants are, growing very happily. So the lesson is look carefully at what succeeds in nature in and around your environment and use the same types of plants to achieve whatever effect you are looking for at home.

So whilst you are at home during this enforced shutdown, stayaway or whatever else we may be forced to do in the weeks and months ahead, look, learn and listen!



Healthy Habits No 9 by Lizzie Small

Packed Lunches

Hello again. Well moving on through our typical day our next repast is lunch. I aim in this article to target lunches for our children and those who are taking a packed lunch to work as opposed to those lucky enough to be at home and have the whole pantry at their disposal. In reality there is little difference in these two so basically the same advice applies to both.

Let's look first at our school children. Zimbabweans have a lengthy morning. We rise early in the morning, sometimes have a long walk to school or to catch a bus and in consequence we have a very long morning. In most schools this is often followed by an afternoon of sport, so the food sent to school is important. It is vital that children have a balanced breakfast, as discussed last time

Nutritionally there is a sound reason why schoolchildren have a mid-morning break. Having eaten breakfast, their levels of blood sugar will rise and concentration will improve. As said before it has been proved that when blood sugar levels are low, people do not have the same speed of thought or ability to concentrate. So starting the day well is essential.

However by mid morning children, especially little ones, will start to wilt and need a 'top-up' from the lunch box to get them through the remaining morning. The blood sugar comes from carbohydrate and so it is essential in the snack. Some carbohydrates are quickly digested giving a rapid rise in blood sugar but others are more sustaining. In a typical lunchbox, bread is included usually as the main food and the form of sandwiches but bread itself is quickly digested so the sandwich filling is important in helping to slow down digestion. Hence best fillings are the more savoury type and if possible protein eg peanut butter, meats and cheese. If you want to include some salad vegetables do not put them in the sandwich as they go soggy but rather pop them into a plastic bag. The child can add them to the roll themselves. It's important to give things they like to ensure they actually eat it and with little ones tell them that mum made this specially for them, so not to swap with a friend.

One category of foods which are very slowly digested are yoghurt and milk dairy products that are good additions. Try freezing the yoghurt the night before and then put it into the lunchbox solid and cold. This prevents it spilling onto the other foods and by break-time or lunchtime it will be mostly defrosted and cold – warm yoghurt is not nice.

Fruit is always a good addition but try to avoid fruits which make your hands sticky eg. a banana will usually be eaten but an unpeeled orange will not. Remember time is short and everyone wants to play, so the food has to be easy to eat. Regarding drinks steer clear of coloured syrups particularly red and orange or very sweet drinks like carbonated sodas etc as many children have an adverse reaction to them and a bit of a 'high' which will not please the teacher and negatively affect their concentration and behaviour. Water is the best option or fresh unsweetened juice with a little water added, 1/3 water 2/3 juice. Sweets should be avoided, again especially if they are brightly coloured and remember potato crisps, nikkacks etc also have colouring and artificial additives.

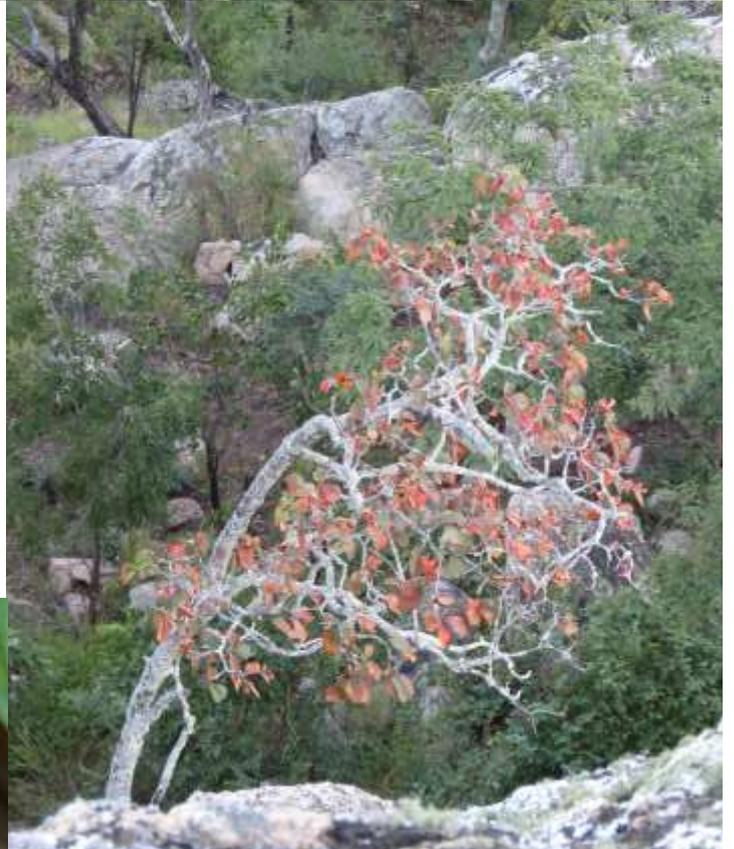
When your child stays for sports practice then the lunchbox becomes even more important. Energy is needed for the event itself and so extra carbohydrates are essential. Remember if they were at home they would probably be having a full lunch. So you should put an equivalent amount of food as a substitute. Include muffins, oats /wholewheat biscuits or home made energy bars for sustained energy. Extra drinks are also required as they will sweat during the sport. This is particularly important when doing water sports as you don't appreciate that you are sweating.

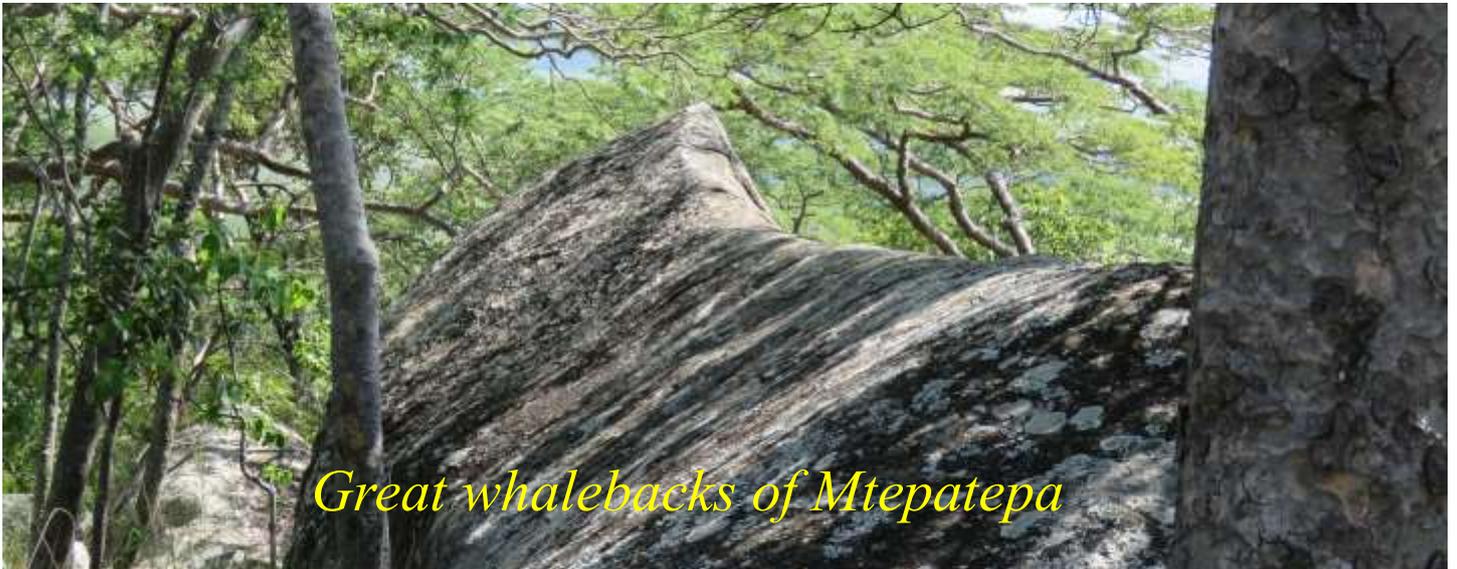
Adolescent children need a lot of food as they are growing very quickly. Boys in forms 3 and 4 tend to have growth spurts and girls in forms 2 and 3. This time in their lives coincides with when they are doing important exams so need to be concentrating efficiently and the sports activity in Zimbabwe can be intense if they are talented. Added to this is that the length of time given for them to eat, particularly at lunchtime, it can be very short. Food should be convenient and easy to eat, not heavy or fatty. Be aware, especially with teenage girls -growing children should not be dieting unless it is under the supervision of a qualified dietitian – one needs to eat a balanced diet to reach full potential both physically and intellectually.

Finally when you pick up the child after sport always have a snack and drink in the car. Their blood sugar may be low making them irritable and they may have a headache from dehydration. If they eat and drink you will all have a much pleasanter ride home.



**A kaleidoscope of colours and ideas!
Clockwise from above, Natural rock
streaked with the ochres of time, wind-
swept, exposed *Hymenodictyon* clinging to
a cliff, some remnant of ancient kopje-top
hut that the builder had imprinted the
veins of a fresh muzhanje-leaf in the clay at
the time of building and the beautiful blue
flower of an indigenous plant that could
easily be in the most immaculate land-
scaped garden in Harare. All taken in the
bush of Mtepatapa.**





Our neighbor, rather obligingly we thought, laid on this grand pyrotechnic display below of burning rubbish just outside our bedroom window! If we still lived in our old house, about 100 metres away, we would never have known that such colourful activities take place in suburban Harare!!!! They however clearly need to be educated on what it is safe and neighbourly to do in an urban environment in this day and age.



AGM

As reported above the AGM has been postponed for now until we see the dust settle from the Covid-19 crisis. Worldwide the consensus seems to be that at the early stages of the virus taking hold in a country it is vital that everybody pulls together to limit exposure and avoid the contagion that befell China and Italy. We know for sure that our own preparedness and ability to manage such a disease in Zimbabwe is very limited so do what you personally can to stay alive!

So Everyone,

Spend this down-time in your own gardens at home and make the effort to sit in different places at various times of the day and even night, and see where you can open up views, eliminate clutter and generally make your patch easier to manage, more relaxing and easier on the eye. Don't be shy to look across fences, valleys and up the hills of your neighbours to see if there are views that can be highlighted, windows opened or in rare cases, doors shut, so you don't have to see the rubbish tips and other unsightly scenes. Take a deep breath, we will get through these times! Cheers Mafungi

