



# ORTHOLOPHA

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

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Issue 21-1 January  
/February 2021



Hi Everyone,

It is not often that you get everything just right with your positioning of trees and other architectural additions to your garden and home. But there is no doubt that this palm was in exactly the right spot to link up with a rainbow earlier this season. How many of you were that clever with plantings done 30 years ago? Even the canopy of the acacia follows the arc of the rainbow. You can do this!

**The Aloe Cactus and Succulent Society will be holding its Annual General Meeting for 2021 at No. 1 Calgary Close in Pomona at 10 for 10.30am on Sunday 28th March 2021.**

The agenda and financial reports will be sent out in separate cover, but above is the required minimum 14 days notice for the meeting from the Chairman Hans Wolbert. New Committee members are needed.

This is the current home of Rob and Sheila Jarvis who are more famously known for the one bringing plants to monthly raffles that the other, extremely errant spouse, then foolishly buys or wins to take home again! The journeys home are usually silent, with one spouse angry and the other smugly happy that they have, yet again, caused some marital trouble. This time whatever plants they supply will not have far to come, nor to go back.

To get there you go along Harare Drive and then turn into Alpes Road at the Trek/Halsteads intersection. Go past Pomona Quarries, Wingate and at the next turning left, go left, past Emerald Seedlings and Picabella Nursery and then wend your way up to the boom gate to ART. Proceed through this and wind your way past the pigs, the offices, greenhouses, until you get to the first house on the left. This is where you park and walk around the front. Remember to bring a hat, chair, plant for the raffle and your own drinks and meat etc for a braai afterwards. The Society will provide tea and coffee, but please bring a plate of eats to go with the teas. Be careful along Calgary Close, there are often pedestrians and the tar is broken up. Drive slowly.

## Your Committee

Chairman –  
Hans Wolbert -0772 653 110

### Committee members:

Rob Jarvis - 0783 383 214  
Doreen Richards - 0772 255 784  
Caryl Stutchbury +27 76 703 4563  
Debra Wolbert - 0772 515 436  
Gaudencia Kujeke - 0775 376 600  
Anne-Katrin Maseko - 0772 440 131  
Mike Caulfield - 0772 241 286  
Rodwika Muzhuzha - 0712 860 119  
Isabel Bandason - 0774 186 757



The picture above shows a technique we stumbled upon to try and get newly planted fruit trees to grow correctly, healthily and quickly without jeopardising their long term productivity. Many tree plantings are jeopardised in the early stages because we all like to dig a big hole up to 1m cubed into which we pour compost, manure, inorganic fertilisers, dog bones and the like. The tree stands alone in a patch of lawn or bare soil and starts growing. Inevitably it finds itself in all that space and immediately tries to fill it by branching too low, too much and too early. In Nature trees get established in forest or woodland clearings, they scramble upwards to get access to the light and then once they have fought for supremacy, become properly established. If they branch too much and too early they will often fall apart when older and their branches are heavy with leaves, pods, fruit and the like. So we thought why not emulate nature and take it one step further by planting a tall competitive legume on the four corners of the planting hole and force the fruit tree to grow up and straight first, before branching. It seems to be working a treat and the seedlings are befitting from the symbiosis of the legume and looking very healthy. So we used sunhemp (*Crotalaria spp.*) and are now taking it one stage further by planting the same along the edges of the hole and these walls of sunhemp will be used to protect the fruit trees from frost when winter comes. Time will tell. In the meantime the planting area is well mulched and will be watered sparingly, but adequately.

## **The Forest Garden**

This is a concept where we try and emulate in the garden what nature now does as a matter of course, after millions of years of evolution. Nothing operates in isolation, the soil, the rain that falls or we apply, the micro-fauna and –flora associated with the ecosystem, the organic matter bound up in soil particles, the nutrients available and the plants that grow in the under-storey, the shrubs, lianes and trees all are interdependent. Somehow you have to bring the livestock or wildlife effect into the equation. You need hoof tracks to break up the soil surface, manure and urine to refertilise and to aid in composting, seeds have to find a suitable micro-climate to germinate. They have to fight to reach the light. Of course there are ways for us as rational thinking humans to speed up the process, we choose what plants we really want to thrive, we break up the mono-cropping mentalities of the past and we disrupt damaging pests and diseases with healthy plants and biodiversity. More or less, but not rigidly, organically grown. There is ample evidence of the power of well-formed compost on plant growth, far exceeding the simple macro-nutrient balance of NPK and micro-elements. This equally has an effect on our own health, we use inorganic fertilisers and aggressive pesticides at our own peril

The miombo woodlands of this part of Africa have been telling us this for generations. You cannot establish one of their signature trees without making sure that the soil itself has the right balance of micro-fauna and –flora to enable the tree to thrive. Let the leaves fall around the trees that shed them and biodegrade naturally to continue to feed the whole system. So what applies to the Musasa, equally applies to the apple, guava, the pecan nut, the mango, the lemon etc, etc. Learn how they grow in their centres of origin and replicate that as best you can in your garden.

We just have to evolve our own techniques and along the way some ideas will fail, others will be great successes. We will find companion plants that work and drop those that don't work.  
It is going to be fun.

## Interesting Plant: January/February

### What is this, on the right?

Send your knowledgeable and considered opinions to [bo.hoom52@yahoo.com](mailto: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.



Photograph taken by Mafungi

Clue: This is a well known healing aloe from the Old World

**You can win a box of chocolates!!!**

Send your entries to Mafungi at  
[bo.hoom52@yahoo.com](mailto:bo.hoom52@yahoo.com)



Who in their right mind would want to rip this scene up and plant an array of new plants when Nature has given us this vista with virtually no intervention from Man except spreading a few seeds of cosmos? The birds definitely don't want to see changes. Come to the AGM and we shall be discussing various ways you, in your own garden can start converting your space to a more healthy, eco-friendly system. In 5 or so years you can come back and see what has happened to this space.

**Red Alert: US\$ subscription of US\$10 per person/couple.**

**US\$2 for a junior and US\$5 for a senior.**

**Foreign members US\$40 per person**

**We need to replace our US dollar stocks to enable the Society to continue functioning effectively. See below for payment details.**

**Annual Membership:** Are due in January each year. Renewal is long overdue. Remember for your US\$10 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 US\$10 for a single or couple, Seniors over 65, US\$5. Children below 12, US\$2 per year.**

Foreign membership US\$40 per year. Make payment to a committee member, or  
CABS Nostro Michael Caulfield 11 25107839

Reference: kindly include your Surname as the deposit reference.

Otherwise the best place to pay will be at the AGM or at the monthly meetings going forward. Be sure to bring US\$ cash for the correct amount as change is a big problem.

If you are absolutely unable to pay in US Dollars, please discuss with Mike Caulfield to find a way forward.

## Healthy Habits. No 16

Hi everyone and Happy New Year. I hope that this year will bring back good health and happiness. We're going through a pretty bad time at the moment with our new variant and we just have to be more diligent with our personal habits. Since we are all at home more than usual I thought I would start a series of articles about growing and using herbs. First though, a thing that is very topical, to give some information on Zumbani. This herb natural to Zimbabwe has gained a lot of popularity as it is very good for flu and boosting the immune system. Such is its popularity that on roads out of town one see young children selling big bunches of it on the side of the road. Of course the ideal situation is to grow it in your own garden. There is also the option to buy the tea in the supermarket as it is packaged and marketed locally.

### Uses:

**Zumbani tea has antioxidants** which stop damage to your body from free radicals. The more antioxidants you have, the better you can protect yourself from free radicals. The high concentration of antioxidants help to prevent infection, degenerative diseases and inflammation.

**Zumbani tea contains zinc** which the body needs to fight off invading bacteria and viruses. Zumbani tea has analgesic, anti-inflammatory and antipyretic properties. It can be used to treat coughs and colds.

**Flu often causes fever** and Zumbani tea is excellent for helping to bring down fevers naturally. Its pleasant taste makes it easy to drink as when you are unwell your body needs extra hydration to get better.

**Electrolyte imbalance is commonly caused by loss of body fluids** through sweating or high fever. Zumbani tea has potassium and magnesium which are important in our overall electrolyte balance.

So altogether the benefits include:

Caffeine free

High in antioxidants

High in essential electrolytes

Fights colds, flus and fevers

Boosts immune system

### Making the tea:

Add 5-6 leaves per cup of boiling water. Infuse for 5 to 8 minutes. Can be enjoyed as a hot beverage with lemon and honey or and enjoyed as an ice tea with mint and lemon. As much of the goodness is in the volatile steam it is best to either cover the cup (like cups sold specifically for herb tea – they always have a lid) or make the tea in a pot as the steam condenses in the pot and the goes back into the tea.

If you have a stuffy nose, sinus problems or a sore throat then make a bowl of the tea and immediately, with a towel over your head, inhale the steam

Zumbani tea is a well known flu fighter and immune system booster locally. It's pleasant to drink and the health benefits are particularly relevant at this time.

So let's make use of our own local herbs. Try to drink some every day for health.

Next month we'll investigate some more herbs.

Keep healthy and safe in this pandemic season everyone.

Liz

*Editor's note: The moment I heard about Zumbani tea and the huge demand for it I realised that 11 million or more Zimbabweans cannot be wrong. I find it quite tasty and has a sort of aromatic flavour. Don't think it will be made extinct, since many home-based plantsmen and women are selling the plants. There is no better way to preserve a plant species than for everyone to value it. Even reputable companies like Tanganda are now marketing the product. Get your own plants now.*





We have lived through some difficult times in Zimbabwe and sometimes you may wonder does every cloud have a silver lining? Well here is proof positive that even one of the darkest clouds does have a silver lining. This was taken recently at the venue for the AGM and it has been a wonder for us, living there to see the huge range of sunsets and sunrises that we get to experience every day of the year. You just have to get up early and make sure your work is done by around 6pm to enjoy these sorts of views. When we moved in we had plans to build mounds, pepper them with aloes, succulents, euphorbias and the like and start our collecting craze all over again. However we soon realised that we had something special right here in front of our eyes and are now taking a more leisurely approach to the gardening opportunity. No rushing to dig beds and plant neat rows and groups of some of our favourites.

No, we are taking a deep breath and other than planting a few trees around the edge, we are going to make sure that the front, which was designed to be a large expanse of green lawn, will be a more or less a natural meadow. It won't need watering in the dry season, we shall probably bring in cattle and other livestock to graze it down when necessary. Already we have seen the benefits for the bird and insect population as they have exploded with the wild grasses literally crawling with birds in daylight and caterpillars and grasshoppers and katydids, or used as roosting spots by butterflies and moths at night. These are our flowers. Fleeting, noisy but always there, in profusion.

Most importantly we do not need to water, we don't need a lawnmower, we certainly won't be buying any inorganic fertilisers, nor herbicides and the like and we shall let nature take its course over time. And every day is a pleasure, birds to watch, insects and reptiles abound, and the scene in front of us is never the same from one minute to the next. Of course over time we shall introduce some aloes, some Adeniums, baobabs, palms and the like, but they will be perfectly positioned to take advantage of the rainbow or blazing sunset sure to come in 30 years time for the new inhabitants of 1 Calgary Close.

**We might even be buried under one or two of them to give them a boost!**

So there you are everyone, not much in this newsletter about the plants we love, but we are offering you a chance to see a fresh palette-board of a garden, where the hand of man has been limited so far and where we hope that the winds of change of Nature will play the biggest role going forward. We plan also to be self-sufficient in fruits and vegetables and are setting aside a forest garden concept to allow this to happen.

Don't miss the opportunity to see this work in progress.

Cheers Mafungi