



ORTHOLOPHA

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

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Issue 21-8 August 2021



Hi Everyone,

I am afraid it is more aloes than anything else this edition, until we get the bright fiery racemes of this wonderful family of plants well and truly doused. This month we visited three amazing places, the Matobo Hills just south of Bulawayo, the Tuli Circle on the western border between Bulawayo and Beitbridge and Nalatale Ruins which are off the road between Gweru and Bulawayo and *sommer* over the Somabhula Flats. Anywhere, but on the Somabhula Flats, is a pleasant place to be in Zimbabwe. We stayed at Camp Dwala which is on a large property on the Eastern edge of the Matobos and the features there are a treat in themselves. On the other side of the Park there are some well known lodges with both accommodation and camping options, including The Farmhouse, Big Cave, Amalinda and Matobo Hills Lodge. None will disappoint you. There are National Parks options within the estate itself and these are well-positioned and right there amongst the most amazing rock art, granite jumbles and dwalas, and of course the whole area is steeped in history.

You will always have a good time visiting the Matobos, so take your time and enjoy! On the right we see our host at Dwala, Gavin Stephens (left) showing off aloes in the Camp.



Matobo Hills, *Aloe excelsa* wonderland



Aloe excelsa for Zimbabweans is absolutely iconic. They grow very tall, usually these days they are found as isolated specimens or in small groups of one, two or three. We rarely see young ones growing in the wild.

However in the Matobo Hills they proliferate and while there has been some poaching over the years they are more or less secure. Certainly when seen from a distance, highlighted against the evening sky the plants are evocative of an army of menacing warriors standing guard over the natural fortress that is Matobo.

Their flowers are exquisite and although in mid-August we were just outside the prime time to see these aloes at their best, nevertheless there were still some late-flowering plants, including the orange flowered one pictured below. The flowers are often a fiery red and resemble bottle-brushes as they stick up vertically. *Aloe excelsa* is the ultimate architectural plant for the aloe enthusiast's garden.

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PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS TO ACSSZ.

The payment options for subs to ACSSZ are as follows:

Payment in USD cash to me at; 24 Southam Rd, Greystone Park. This is off the Harare Drive, just up West of the large traffic circle. Please phone ahead or e-mail the day and time to ensure that this is convenient.

Payment into the Nostro account in the name of M. Caulfield at

CABS, Nostro: Account number, 1125376759

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The amount is US \$10 for those under 65 or US \$5 if older or a junior. This covers individuals or the family.

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Or Zwl \$600, if you are 65 or older , or a junior.

ZWL payments can be made to

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The Aloe, *Cactus & Succulent Society*.

Or Eco Cash (Mike Caulfield) number 0772 241 286.

Please notify me of ANY payments , Thanks

Mike Caulfield Treasurer / Secretary Phone 0772 241 286.



Interesting Plant: August

What is this tree, 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.

Last month's plant had not a single entry, not even a wild guess, so no prizes!

Our Readership is clueless!

You can win a box of chocolates!!!

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



Photograph taken by Mafungi
Clue. This is definitely the tree you should have planted 20 years ago! Photo taken in Matobo Hills on track to Inanke Cave.

Hi Everyone,

A plea from the Editorial team of *Ingens* 61, we need articles from new authors for the next issue of *Ingens* due to be published towards the end of the year.

Each issue going forward we would like to have at least one topical article about the various plant groups that we cherish as a Society, so one on aloes, one on cycads, palms, euphorbias, sanseverias, stapeliads, cotyledons, adeniums, cacti, pachypodiums etc. To do this we need you! To become authors. Famous authors, known worldwide. Renowned.

So that you can then move on to write books, classics, that will last forever like the Nalatale Ruins below.

Send contributions to bo.hoom52@yahoo.com.



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

Annual Membership:

Are due in January each year. Renewal is long overdue. Remember for your US\$10 per year, you get a monthly Newsletter *Ortholopha*, free issues of *Ingens* as they are published and you get invited to at least 11 choice venues each year. Big-time Bargain Bonanza!

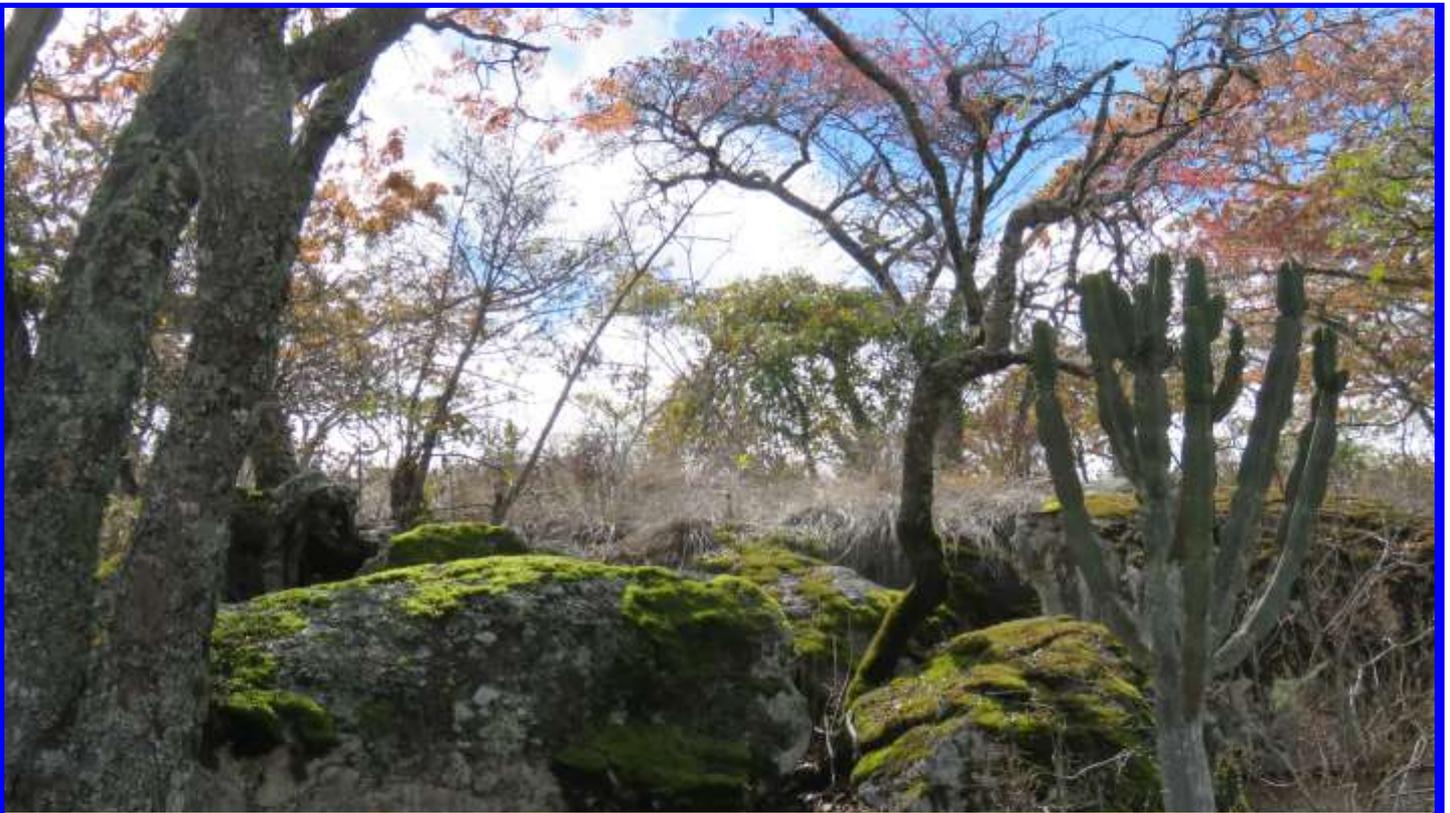
See the previous page to find out what payment options there are for you to keep up to date with your subscriptions.



The sedges and xerophytes that are to be found in broad swathes across the granite monoliths of Zimbabwe are well known to hikers. They green up with the rain and dry off very quickly as the rains die. Some have circular leaves and are very slippery when lying dry on the rock surfaces. Many a tumble has come after mountaineers fail to tread carefully. Of course dry they are very prone to fire and all the dry matter except the core protecting the growing point in the middle will be hard-burnt, leaving virtually nothing behind. The plants are adapted for just such conditions and within a few days of a fire sweeping through, fresh bright green growth will be evident.

Also to be found on these mountains are a scrambler, below left, a species of *Strophanthus* which produces these double-ended pods. As they dry, they split and release parachuted seed into the winds for dispersal. On the right is another strange plant which we still need identified? Any takers? Both from Matobo.





We are giving Liz Small a well-deserved break from all her healthful and helpful articles so this is the relaxation page. Imagine finding a calming scene like the above in the middle of the long hot dry winter months. We saw this mossy nook near Nalatale ruins just south of the Shangani siding between Bulawayo and Gweru. The juxtaposition of a rough tough euphorbia with the soft rock-covered mosses under the pastel shades of the spring leaves of musasas seemed just right.

And then below on the left you can see the track that plods through the very soft looking grasslands and mopane woodlands of the Tuli Circle on our western Border with Botswana. Looks are deceptive and you wouldn't want to travel alone here in a low-slung vehicles because the rocks are aplenty, sharp and merciless. Walking is a nightmare, but there are treasures to be seen along the way. Unfortunately the game is scarce, but the track is alluring and leads us ever on to new horizons. Not too many aloes, but some baobabs and again the area is steeped in the history of Zimbabwe.

On the right we see a lone plant group of *Aloe chabaudii* still flowering in August, months after all its compatriots have shut down their winter displays. Unfortunately National Parks who administers this estate has some grandiose ideas about what tourists should pay to drive on almost totally un-cared for roads through endless wilderness with very little to show. We will not go back.





One of the most interesting of all plants to those of us who like xerophytes is the resurrection bush, seen above growing in harmony with a sedge on the granite dwala that the ancient ruins of Nalatale stand, near Shangani. *Myrothamnus flabellifolia* is its scientific name and there is only one other species to be found in Madagascar in the Genus. I guarantee that a few days earlier, before the August rain came, that this copse looked very dry and inhospitable. But a small amount of rain collecting on the rock surface is enough to trigger this plant into renewed, or resurrected life and boom! Hours after the rain it is green and flourishing.

Of course the health pundits have long since identified this plant as a potential addition to your never-ending quest for a sure-fire way to dodge the worrisome creases and cracks that plague our bodies and make us age well beyond our real years of attrition on Mother Earth. And so a tea made from it is loaded with minerals, is full of anti-oxidants thus helping to put cancer on the back-burner. Your immune systems get a boost, you relax and you can more or less say goodbye to the viral plagues like flu, common colds and the like. However for Covid you had better not trust these home remedies, a more serious approach is required in the event of infection,

To make the tea, just break off a few dried twigs, put in a pot of water and bring to the boil and then steep for 15 minutes. Drink as a tea, but not more than twice a day and not more than 1 litre in total. Inflammation will be eased, headaches gone, backaches and bad breath dealt with in a single breath! The leaves and flowers contain *arbutin* which helps get rid of age spots, scars and hyperpigmentation. Known as *Mupfundichimuka* in Shona and *Umavavuke* in Ndebele. (Extracted information from *The Zola Collective*)

Below we see two pictures of small colonies of stapeliads, the first was seen in the Matobos and the second on the path leading up to Nalatale Ruins at Shangani. *Stapeliads are notoriously difficult to identify without the flowers to hand, so we shall not even try.* These ruins are a fascinating place to visit and as you walk comfortably up the path from the parking area you will be well impressed by the efforts that the National Museums and Monuments, financed by USAID, have made to make the journey interesting.



And it is through this portal on this last page of the Newsletter that we shall finally disappear with the restive winds of August at our backs



So that is it Folks,

No relief yet from the dreaded covid lockdowns, so meetings and plant sales are still on the backburner. However enjoy your Spring and soon after the gusty winds, will come the Rain! And petrichor. Don't miss these signs heralding a new season. Time to plan and plant again.

Cheers, Mafungi