



ORTHOLOPHA

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

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Hi Everyone,

Spring is in the air and with it comes our second Rare Plant Sale of the year. Unfortunately it has to be held on the 7th October because there is a big clash with the St. John's Fair.

If you haven't started already please do one of two things, either book your stand and prepare your plants for a humdinger of a sale. Or preferably loot your bank, pillow, friends and family of any loose cash, load your bank card, Telone or Ecocash accounts and come and spend big-time. Your Society needs you!!!!!!

There is no happier feeling than retreating from the National Botanic Gardens with a bootload of new plants for the wonderful rainy season that fast approaches. And of course if it is not a good rainy season, then you need the plants that our members sell, even more than ever. Don't be caught wanting and pencil in Sunday 7 October right now.

You can do this Folks!!!!!!

Cheers,
Mafungi.

Your Committee

Chairman - Rob Jarvis
0783 383214

Vice-chairman – Hans Wolbert
0772 653110

Committee members:

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Malcolm Thackray - 0772 516644
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Mike Caulfield - 0772 241286
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Lillian Pswarayi - 0772 516 441

Monthly Meeting : Sunday 26th August 2018

This month's **Meeting** is at Tawney Stidolph's home – **113 Greendale Ave., Greendale**. Tawney is a both a great gardener and a Horticultural Judge, so prepare for special visit.

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 Greendale Ave., this is the road that Fruit and Veg City – Honeydew is located. If you are travelling from Samora Machel end No 113 is on the left after crossing Cunningham Rd.

If you need directions call Tawney on 0772 630115

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 July will be announced at the Monthly meeting.

If you think you are the winner, claim your prize at the next Meeting on Sunday 26th Aug 2018



You can win a box of chocolates!!!

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

**The plant above is the August entry.
What is it?**

Photograph taken by Mafungi



Oh deary me! When we went to visit the Nalatale Ruins recently, we found that the amiable custodian of the precious site had taken it upon himself to set fire to these beautiful sedge gardens on the granite dwala leading up to the site. His reasoning, that the dry season sees an increasing risk of fire which threaten the site if unprotected. So an army of black porcupines greeted us and stood threateningly looking down onto the stunning pastel-coloured miombo woodlands on the lower slopes. He repented and agreed that this was not the way to protect ruins that have stood since the 1600's and that he would follow the lead of his predecessor and camp on the slopes until the threat of fire is over!

Annual Membership: 2018 memberships were due in January 2018, 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.

Past Glories



We recently had a chance to visit a well-known ranch just west of Gweru, near Shangani. The ranch itself, politically protected by BIPPA, is beautifully laid out and resourced and is doing excellent work in both cattle range management and integration with wildlife. Plains game abounds and every year as the dry season progresses herds of elephant trek in from Hwange National Park, some three hundred or so kilometres further west. They come for food and water as the abundance of game, elephant in particular, is now so huge that the Park cannot sustain the herds year-round. This has been happening since 1994, though undoubtedly it also happened in the long distant past when there were no ranch, park or provincial boundaries limiting game movement. The last time they did a count, in 2017, there were 244 elephant on the ranch. Only 7-10 bulls are actually resident 12 months of the year. The rest plod in as the pressure on resources mount in Hwange. The amazing thing is that every single one of

these annually migrant elephant is a non-breeding bull! Every single one. So how does one explain that? There must be good grounds for believing that somehow the elephant communicate between each other and agree that the cows and calves and the big boss breeding tuskers stay behind in the safety of the Park and that the members of the population that are most expendable, leave to relieve pressure on the limited water and food available around the pans and waterholes of Hwange. Of course along the way there will be peril. Poachers, aggrieved farmers who find their grain crops plundered and trophy hunters, will all take their toll.

The picture above shows an *Aloe excelsa* growing in the garden of an abandoned farmhouse just outside the ranch. This is probably the place where the elephant first arrive in their long trek from Hwange. Here there is relative safety, permanent water and good grazing and browse amongst the unbelievable beauty of a small area of jumbled kopjes, known locally as the Mambo Block. The picture to the right shows just one of such kopjes which we called the Cruiseship Kopje. Unfortunately we had no time to clamber up it, assuming one can, but there is no doubt that we will have to return, and soon, and find what secrets lurk in these three-dimensional jigsaw puzzles. Even the Matobo Hills south of Bulawayo have simpler but perhaps less-balanced structures.





Seen above is a section of the Nalatale ruins which sit proudly on top of a granite dwala to the southeast of Shangani town. This has to be one of the most scenic spots in the whole of Zimbabwe, with breathtaking views in every direction. USAID has put money into helping restore the ruins to their former glory and apparently the new Embassy near Westgate has included in its design, features from these ruins. You can clearly see the different decorative layers adorning the walls and there are even two or three rows of banded ironstone showing up as darker rock, one in the middle and two higher up the wall. The feature where this rock was

mined is visible a couple of kilometres due east and we will certainly have to return at some stage to investigate it. As the late Darrel Plowes used to say, if you want to find unusual plants look for different geological features because what grows on the sandy granite soils may be totally different from those of the ironstone- or dolerite-derived soils.



On the track up to the ruins we paused to look at these two perfectly circular depressions from man's activities in grinding either grain or rock. Most likely it was formed by the crude crushing of gold-bearing quartz rock because grain grinding usually results in long elongated depressions. The Popiels used to have some large rocks in their garden that they had dug out of the ground and moved to Sentosa. These had large

circular depressions too and it would have been interesting to know exactly where they had been found, because in general, perfect circles are not common.

Taking into account the inquisitive minds and advice from these two former doyens of our Society, we just had to investigate a portion of Shangani Ranch called Whitekoppies. Sure enough the rock was a type of quartz I would guess and lurking amongst the blindingly white rocks were aloes and sanseverias. The sanseveria was unusual, having a rosette of narrow thin leaves. We brought some specimens back to investigate further. The aloes were undoubtedly the ubiquitous *A. chabaudii*, but not currently flowering, so we will have to go back next year when they are, to see what range of flowers they exhibit.



In the two pictures you can see the aloes on the left, and the sanseveria on the right growing happily between the aptly named Whitekoppies rocks.

One day soon we shall find a new species!!!!



The Health Corner:

At the recent monthly meeting held at the home of Len and Irene Smit in Bluff Hill I think we all learned something from what we saw in their garden. First of all some *Aloe excelsa* that Len had found looking dehydrated and virtually dying in the bush of the Great Dyke after being disturbed by rampant mining operations, he relocated them and they recovered and were flowering vigorously in their garden. Nutrition is key, whether you are a plant, an animal or a mere human, your nutrition is absolutely key to your



health and happiness. Don't fudge on what you eat and drink, and everything in moderation! This applies equally to your exercise regime, there are only so many beats in your heart and so many jerks in your knee movements so don't waste them on a mindless treadmill. When in doubt take a nap.

Then there is quirkiness. The stresses and strains that the modern World throws at us daily needs to be met head-on with a cock-a-hoop attitude and the guinea fowl in the Smit's garden had just the right spirit. Unhelmeted, they were crested with just the-



right amount of curly feathers to make us realise that these were true characters in their own right.

Of course if all else fails you should just dig a hole and plant a tree. As this magnificent paper-bark commiphora on the right, the right time to plant this tree was probably 100 years ago. Don't miss your opportunity.



And so the sun sets on yet another month! Many are commenting that the sun seems to take forever to sink below the horizon these days, the air is so clogged up with dust and smoke. Take time to watch it set every day, because one day it might be swallowed-up and not return. Be Brave!!!! Cheers, Mafungi