



ORTHOLOPHA

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

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Hi Everyone,

Welcome to the Festive Season! Let's hope it comes with abundant rains and the end to all our woes! In fact your Society guarantees that next Year will Definitely be Better!! Tough, but better.

For the annual party to be held at this month's meeting venue remember that gifts will be exchanged through a Secret Santa arrangement. When your number comes up you choose a gift from the heap available. Those who have already drawn a present may opt to swap with yours as you open it. However each particular present may only be swapped a maximum of two times before it sticks.

Don't forget to bring a plate of tasty foodstuff that can be shared at the party and to bring your own drinks. There will be tea and coffee available but all members should have their own lunch and drinks available. There will be no braai, so don't bring raw meat unless that is what you usually chew upon.

Cheers, Mafungi.

Your Committee

Chairman - Rob Jarvis
0783 383214

Vice-chairman – Hans Wolbert
0772 653110

Committee members:

Doreen Richards - 0772 255784
Malcolm Thackray - 0772 516644
Ros Houghton - 0772 115364
Caryl Stutchbury - 0772 611756
Debra Wolbert - 0772 515436
Gaudencia Kujeke - 0775 376600
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Mike Caulfield - 0772 241286
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Monthly Meeting & Christmas Party: Sunday 25th October 2018.

This month's **Meeting** is combined with the **Christmas Party** (there will be no meeting in December). at **Ed and Shaz Hook's** home at **34 Kingsmead Road West**, in **Borrowdale**. There has been a lot of additions since the Society's last visit.

Please remember to bring your own drinks, and a cold lunch to share. There will also be a Santa event so bring a wrapped present, worth about \$10, to put in the bag and to earn you the chance to get one in return. Don't forget to bring your chairs and hats, as well as a labelled plant or other contribution for the raffle ?

The time: 10.30am for Bring and Share Lunch

Directions: Traveling out of town on the Borrowdale Rd., a few hundred metres after the end of the dual carriageway, turn right onto Kingsmead Road West, (at "The Corner House, previously "The Bistro") follow Kingsmead Road West, around the left hand corner and look for No 34 on the right.

If you need directions call **Shaz's** her mobile number is 0772 240 442

Flowering Plant: November

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 October will be announced at the monthly meeting on the Sunday 25th November 2018



You can win a box of chocolates!!!

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

The plant above is the November entry.

What is it?

A clue, it is not an aloe.



This is the view from near the summit of Eagle's Crag, a prominent feature in the Mvuradonha Mountains. The rock on this ridge is almost exclusively soapstone and occurs in large flat slabs, some of which have even managed to stand up vertically!

Annual Membership: Are due in January each year, the end of the year is just about here, please can your start making payment of your 2019 membership.

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.



A Return to Mvuradonha Mountains

I must apologise for taking you back to this intriguing part of Zimbabwe, but whilst the thoughts racing through my mind are still fresh, I thought it better to commit them to this record. Geologically these mountains are a combination of a clash between the Great Dyke of Zimbabwe and the southern end of the Great Rift Valley of Africa. The base of the mountains, which tower above the Zambezi Valley floor, runs almost due East to West. On the 1:50 000 maps you could not draw a straighter line on the map with a ruler.

They are a fascinating area for the rock collector and plant lovers like ourselves. However my own belief was that the harsh rocky ridges were a protection for plantlife from the fires that tear across the grassy slopes and that various plants like *Aloe ortholopha* and *Euphorbia wildii*, which only occur on the heavy-metal laden ridges of The Great Dyke, were somewhat protected and therefore thrived. It seems however that both can survive a total burn-out of the underburden and as you can see in the photograph above and below, the plants are still standing, almost untouched by flames whereas the grass cover is completely gone.



In the photo left it is almost certain that the fire raged up the slopes from left to right and it was brought to an abrupt stop by a strong and steady prevailing wind coming from the right. An environmental detective could tell you that this fire almost certainly was burning in the heat of the day, because the burn-out on the left was almost total and local knowledge will tell you that the wind is strongest during the day.

Anyway it will be interesting to return to this spot later when the rains have set in and see how the plants recover. Almost at every step in these mountains one is confronted by changing bedrock and therefore soil types and it would be really interesting to visit them with a geologist well-versed in the causes, effects and types of rock. Luckily elephant find these mountains equally intriguing and hiking is made easier by following the footsteps of the pachyderms as they wend their way up and over the mountain passes and down into the fertile and well-watered valleys.



Amorphophallus abyssinicus

This is a fascinating plant that occurs across a broad swathe of Africa from Ethiopia down to southern Africa and right across to West Africa. It likes damp, semi-shaded woodland.

It is actually cultivated in Ethiopia and the tuberous root eaten after prolonged boiling. This is required because the root, green stem and leaves are heavily laden with Calcium oxalate crystals when fresh and boiling will get rid of this problem.. Calcium oxalate is renowned for giving a sharp tingling sensation on the tongue when ingested and is not good for those of us who suffer from gout, arthritis, rheumatism and the like.

We recently had a couple of flowers come up in our own garden and when a picture of one of these was posted on Facebook it generated a lot of interest.

We tend to forget that these plants even exist in our garden until periodically they flower. Flowering is not even an annual event and we went for many years before ours graced the hot spring months with the first flower. I collected my plant from near Raffingora, probably in the early 1980's and they have steadily multiplied until now we have about half a dozen plants.

The flower left, which usually appears before the leaf, was photographed in the garden of Doreen Richards and Mike Caulfield in Greystone Park. You may be interested to know that it is also a cure for delayed birth and any of you carrying your baby well be-

yond the allotted nine months may be tempted to try this cure!

Oh and by the way a colloquial translation of the generic name could loosely be translated from the Latin as Shapeless Willie!!!! Shapeless Willies as we all know, are not the usual cause of babies.

Fear of Fire

When peering down to the Musengedzi river Valley from the top of Eagle's Crag in the Mvuradonha Mountains we were shocked to see the devastation caused by veld fires. There is no doubt that this slope seen in the picture below right, probably did not have a fire for some years prior to the picture being taken. However the undergrowth had been completely burnt out and the slashes of white ash mark the spot where several trees have been totally destroyed by the intensity of this fire. There is no doubt that if the rains start as heavy thunderstorms, then rampant soil erosion will accompany the loss of biodiversity already caused by the fire. Whether such fires are the result of a general increase in global warming or not, there is no doubt that at a local level the effect will be felt for years to come.

Everyone should do all in their power to manage fire risk and in the event that burning is required, to do it in such a way that damage is minimised and wild-life and plant-life benefits, rather than is ruined, by such practices.

Naturally fires can be caused by lightning strikes and sometimes spontaneous combustion of decaying organic matter but these days it usually poachers who unleash the whirlwind.





On the left we see a beautiful specimen of *Adenium obesum* which is flowering for the first time. This was grown from seed imported directly from Trade Winds Seeds some time ago and only a couple of the seeds germinated. Flowering has gone on for more than a month and it seems it will not stop anytime soon. The cultivar name is Big Chubbiness and it may even be a hybrid. Those of you who are well-informed will know that our *Adenium* in Zimbabwe is *A. multiflora* and the *A. obesum* is found further north, in Tanzania, Kenya, Sudan and Ethiopia in particular. It has a brighter flower than ours and the plants can get very big, resembling small baobabs. One day I would like to return to Lake Baringo in the Great Rift Valley in Kenya, because this lake has small islands which are covered with grass and large specimens of *A. obesum*!!! When the Flamingos are in residence and the *Adeniums* in flower, it will be quite a sight!

The Health Corner:

One thing I know that is very unhealthy for us is this wait for the rains to start. A small shower we had in October we thought was the end of the long hard dry season, but it was not to be. Cold weather came back, not only in October but also in November and a few drops today, Sunday 18th turned out to be a non-event.

So today we resolved that next year we are not going to sit out these tedious weeks where the garden goes from dry to near-dead. We'll set off on holiday, leave the gardener with a few sketchy instructions about which plants to look after and come back when the rains have well and truly set in. And live with the consequences! If plants cannot survive our long hard dry seasons, then we shouldn't have them. As we age we probably won't even remember them anyway!

And if we cannot survive the tediousness of what our wonderful country throws at us, then so be it! There's dust, and then it's us!

Lets see a good turn-out this coming weekend at the home of Ed and Sharon Hook! Remember it is the Christmas Party as well so enjoy yourselves!

Cheers, Mafungi