



# ORTHOLOPHA

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

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Hi Everyone,

August is the month to go to The Great Dyke to see the aloe after which our Society and this Newsletter take their logo and name respectively. In our excitement when we saw our first plants we dashed out of the car and forgot to close and lock the doors. In Harare we would have been walking home for sure, but in rural Zimbabwe such indiscretions are largely forgiven. September and October are big months for our Society, the second Rare Plant Sale first and then a resuscitation of a Rare Plant Show in October. Full details later in this Newsletter. *Aloe ortholopha rules!*

Cheers, Mafungi.

### Your Committee

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## Monthly Meeting Sunday August 25th 2019

This month's meeting is at the home of Liz and Dennis Lapham 6 Loxley Close, Greystone Park. Directions, take Leamington off Harare Drive, left into Guy's Cliff, then first left into Stratford Drive and first left into Loxley Close. Please could only the older folk or those with disabilities park inside and rest of us, park outside. Liz will be talking about her experience with palms. Meeting is at 10.00 for a 10.30am start. Bring a plate of snacks to share, a hat for bald pates, your chair and a prize for the raffle.

## Interesting Plant: July

### 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.

Last month's flowering plant was correctly identified as *Aloe cryptopoda* by John Taylor. Well done John!



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

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

The plant above is the August entry.

What is it? A clue the rock held by the leaves is irrelevant.

Photograph taken by Mafungi



Further on in this newsletter you will see descriptions of a flying visit we made to The Great Dyke. Really reassuring to see is that *Aloe ortholopha*, which only occurs in this Dyke is under no threat of extinction because it is the No. 1 Pioneer species to take root in disturbed rock and crushed dust from the mining activities.



**Annual Membership:** Are due in January each year. Those of you who haven't paid yet, it is time to reform and be good!!!! Remember for your \$20 per year, you get a monthly Newsletter, free issues of *Ingens* as they are printed and you get invited to at least 11 choice venues each year. Big-time Bargain Bonanza! This year there will also be the Grand Rare Plant Exhibition in October.

Membership is \$20 per person/couple per year. Children \$5 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.





## Ortholopha City on a Dyke near you!

Quite stunning! The only descriptor for seeing *Aloe ortholopha* in habitat when in flower. It is a robust aloe species, usually looks very healthy with large grey, fleshy leaves, can tolerate some fire damage and only occurs on the serpentine soils of The Great Dyke of Zimbabwe. July and August are the months to see this aloe in flower! We decided on a whim to go and see the aloes and set off on a Friday morning and within an hour we were gambolling around the grassy hillsides just up the road from Barwick School looking at the aloes in all their magnificence. Of course there is a lot of damage from the mining taking place on the Dyke and rock scavengers are looting the beautifully naturally crafted rocks to use in landscaping and fake waterfalls, but there seems to be no imminent danger to *A. ortholopha* and the plants are common, they are multiplying and as indicated in the little note on the previous page, they are often the first plants to establish on disturbed rocks and mine tailings.



However a conundrum for plant evolutionists would be to explain to us why the common date palm, *Phoenix reclinata* (seen left) occurs prolifically here in the river valleys and without any apparent genetic or adaptive modification and can tolerate the serpentine soils and heavily-metalled waters whereas many of the other plants like *A. ortholopha* and *Euphorbia wildii* are specifically adapted to this Dyke.

Very strange!





## Spear of the Ancient Nations *Aloe excelsa*!

On our way home after a long and circuitous route our keenly attuned eyes spotted a small dolerite kopje about 400 metres from the road which was pierced by giant specimens of *Aloe excelsa*. Like great spears hurled by ancient Superheroes they peppered the summit of this little hill. Our excitement reached fever pitch when we saw that many of the aloes were flowering and because of the position of some, we were actually able to gaze down upon them from on high! In most cases when viewing this grand aloe one gets a crick in the neck looking up at the flowers. It pays to take a page out of Nature's handiwork when including aloes and indigenous trees into the garden superstructure and if I knew thirty years ago what I know now, I certainly would have interplanted some *Aloe excelsa* amongst architecturally striking trees like *Sterculia quinqueloba*, the baobab, *Adansonia digitata* and the *Albizia tanganyicensis*.

On the right we see the aloe being framed perfectly by a *Sterculia* on the kopje. Of local interest Simon Seager has recently found a specimen just near the Airport which he estimates to be 6 to 7 metres tall. I think we should launch a quest to find the tallest *Aloe excelsa* in Zimbabwe and keep a watch upon it over the years ahead. When posting his picture in our new Whatsapp Group, Simon asked "Just how old would such a tree be?" Some years ago the Society sent an expedition to near Birchenough Bridge to find 10 metre plants. Watch this space!







Bright Ideas!!~!!~!!

Two month's ago our meeting you may recall was at Brian and Barbara Terry's Greystone Park house. At the time many of their aloes had not yet come into flower and a week or so ago I visited them and noticed a bright splash of colour at the bottom end of their property as I was driving up the hill. Sure enough it was a vast swathe of *Aloe chabaudii* flowering with bright orange racemes. Just off the boil, but magnificent nevertheless! According to Brian this orange version is from a sub-species of the aloe which comes from Mt Mulanje in Malawi. *A. chabaudii* I am sure you are all aware is one of the earliest flowering aloes in Zimbabwe and often their season can be over in April or May, so to see these in August is something special. The flowers were plagued by squadrons of brightly coloured sunbirds.

Last week we spent a few very pleasant days whiling away the hours hiking and sight-seeing on the lower slopes of the Pungwe/Nyazengu river systems complex in the Honde Valley. The Nyanga Renewable Energy Company has left their contractor accommodation facilities intact at one of the power-generating plants and you can camp in absolute luxury with hot and cold water on tap and power 24/7!! Deep in absolutely amazing cathedral forests along the Pungwe river at these lower altitudes there were plants of the epiphyte, *Ripsalis*, (see bottom right) the only cactus in the world to occur outside Meso-America. As we have pointed out before, this genus occurs in Africa and Asia as well. A lonely, wandering cactus. On the left below we see a lilac flower of *dissothis* on the slopes of the eastern ridge that guides the Nyazengu down to its union with the Pungwe. This is special country, little touched by man, although locals do push their livestock into the National Park area to graze in winter. Mt. Nyangani looms ominously in the background.





### Healthy Habits 3. by Liz Small

Hi. Winter is coming to a close and the weather should warm up. We have had some very cold nights with frost. So onwards to summer.

Last month I wrote about macronutrients in our food and this month it is micronutrients. As the name indicates these elements are required by our bodies in small quantities but they are not to be overlooked, as a deficiency can lead to a weakened immune system, some definite disorders and general ill health.

There are two main categories; vitamins and minerals. Let's discuss the common vitamins first and in order to do the subject justice, the minerals next month.

Vitamins all have scientific names but are commonly known by a letter or a number and letter. They can be divided into two categories; water soluble and fat soluble. The main water soluble vitamins are the B vitamins and vitamin C, while the fat soluble vitamins are A, D, E and K. Each one has a vital role in our health, broadly outlined here.

Water soluble vitamins have to be eaten daily as we cannot store them, whereas the fat soluble vitamins can be stored in our fatty tissue and liver. Excessive intake of vitamins is not advised as they all have side effects, especially the fat soluble ones which can reach toxic levels in the liver.

The B vitamins are mostly numbered and the commonest are 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 12 and folic acid. They have numerous functions in our bodies from healthy nerves, skin, eyes, hair, mouth and liver as well as proper brain functioning. (that would be nice!) Adequate intakes are important in older people as they are not well absorbed as we age and often the elderly do not eat well, as it can become a chore. It is ideal to take the B vitamins together as they are a team and hence are often prescribed as the B complex. Fortunately they are widespread in food and deficiencies are usually found when the variety of food in the diet is limited. There are specific deficiency disorders attributed to each one but are relatively rare in the average population. As a special mention vitamin B12 and folic acid are important for healthy blood cells and folic acid is usually prescribed in pregnancy to ensure that the child does not develop *spina bifida*, a disorder of the spine.

Vitamin C is probably the best known and is mainly found in fruit and vegetables. It is essential for a strong immune system to fight infection and against the harmful effects of pollution. Deficiencies are rare and eating fresh fruit and vegetables daily ensures that we have enough. It is worth noting that both alcohol and smoking can deplete our bodies of Vitamin C.

The first of the fat solubles is Vitamin A. It prevents problems with the eyes and skin, enhances the immune system and protects against the harmful effects of pollution. It is found in liver, oily fish and green and yellow fruit and vegetables.

Vitamin D helps our bodies absorb calcium for strong bones and teeth and therefore helps to prevent osteoporosis (porous, weak bones) later. It is found in oily fish, egg yolks and dairy products and is manufactured in our skin by sunlight.

Vitamin E, found in cold pressed vegetable oils, dark green leafy vegetables, pulses, nuts, seeds and whole grains, helps protect against pollutants, cancer and heart disease. It is used in many cosmetic preparations to promote healthy skin and hair.

The last is Vitamin K. This is necessary for blood clotting and bone health. Foods that have significant amounts of Vitamin K are green vegetables, egg yolks and whole grains. We also can synthesize vitamin K in the 'good' bacteria found in our intestines.

From reading the information above it can be easily seen that the best way to get our vitamins is by having a varied diet. It is a fact that our bodies absorb all nutrients better from food than synthetic forms eg pills. So have plenty of fruit and vegetables every day, as fresh as possible and assuming that you all have gardens, plant some vegetables and then they can be truly fresh.

Good digging!!

**So there you are folks, enjoy this issue of Ortholopha and we look forward to seeing you at the Monthly meeting. Please remember that next month is the second Rare Plant Sale and the month after, October, we will be doing the first, in the modern era, Great Rare Plant Exhibition!!! Be sure to mark the last Sundays of these two months in your calendars so you do not miss these huge events. I leave you with the photo right of a fallen tree across the lower Pungwe River. Or is it a bridge to greater happiness? You be the judge in these trying times.**

**Cheers Mafungi**



Aloe pegerae in Brian Terry's garden a picture of good health!

