



# ORTHOLOPHA

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

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Issue 20-11-12 November/December 2020



**Hi Everyone,**

A little late to get this bumper issue out to you, but the last month and a half have been a bit hectic and chaotic to put it mildly. Who would have thought almost a year ago when we entered the first Covid-19 lockdown, ostensibly for only two weeks, that here in January 2021, a year that we thought could only be better, we would be entering an even more stringent one! The effects of the virus are all around us, many with loved ones laid low, some under extreme stress and I am sure that by now all of you know one or more people who have died. Zimbabwe, we thought, had escaped the worst of the pandemic, for no logical reasons, but the second wave has come to bite, and hard. In our own personal life we are now living in our third principal residence in less than 10 months! They say that personal tragedies like the loss of a loved one and moving house rank right up there with the most stressful things that can happen to you! But Pandemics are worse. Our stresses were ameliorated somewhat by the Christmas Party of ACSSZ held at the lovely home out at Lake Chivero of Norman Conlon and Partner Lizzie Small. Our arrival coincided with that of the rain so unfortunately I was unable to give his garden due recognition of its photographic potential. Next time! Thank you Norman and Lizzie!!!!

### Your Committee

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The Festive Season is finally behind us with the taking down of the Christmas decorations on the 6th January. Our generation of 60 to 70 somethings handed over the responsibility of organising the big family and friends lunch for the first time. What a relief as the 20 to 30's took on the reins with gusto.



Of interest to the Society is the approach these youngsters have taken to gardening around their newly built huts and cottages in the peri-urban area near Arcturus. Walls can be non-existent, even in the most private of areas, repurposing of old furnishings and fittings, like the coal fireplace above are used to display prickly cacti.

The bathroom, right, takes this new age thinking to higher levels, off with the roof, leave a planting area on top of the natural stone wall for some choice succulents, let the shower water drain into a pebble bed. And the bath? Well the possibilities are endless, but at all times the view down the Enterprise Valley will be special, if a little challenging in the yet to be experienced winter months.



Great to see this application of home decorating taken down to its bare essentials. We really look forward to the Society being able to visit these places in years to come and to find that the chickens can live in mansions where the humans are happy in nest boxes. And some of the doors are round, that is a new one for me. Watch this space.

### **Pandemic fever**

**These are very trying times and I am sure the Society will not be meeting soon. It will be increasingly difficult for the editorial team to visit your homes and gardens so an idea we would like to explore is for you, the members to submit photos and stories about your gardens and projects to share with wider audiences.**

**If you are putting in a new bed or have an outrageous idea to decorate an old banger with succulents or cacti, please feel free to share it with all of us. Some of you have been doing this anyway on our WhatsApp groups but if you e-mail stories and pictures to me, Mafungi at [bo.hoom52@yahoo.com](mailto:bo.hoom52@yahoo.com) I'll be more than happy to try and include in future issues of Ortholopha.**

**Or you might be an expert on particular plants, pests or disease control, Please share!**



## Interesting Plant: December

### 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:** Not actually in flower, but dying and a special prize to the member who can advise Ed Hook how to save this plant and what species it is. **Extra Clue:** It is not suitable for firewood.

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

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



Although not one of the plants that ACSSZ claims as its own, this staghorn antler fern left was so magnificent that we just had to include it for your enjoyment. They are undoubtedly very special plants and can make a shady corner look really lush and jungle-like. Strangely they can tolerate a bit of neglect and thrive if banana peels are thrown onto the top of their fronds to slowly decay and release their life-giving potassium and other nutrients. Birds, especially the White-browed robin chat often nest snugly between the leaves. There is no finer bird to have in your garden and if they grace your premises with their own nests, well then you know that you have finally arrived in the gardening world.

Robins Rule.

**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 Seniors US\$5. Children US\$2 per year.

Foreign membership US\$40 per year. Make payment to a committee member, or

**CABS Platinum: Aloe, Cactus and Succulent Society Acc #: 1002616336**

**Reference:** kindly include your Surname as the deposit reference or through

**EcoCash: 0772 241 286 (Mike Caulfield) Note this number is in his name. Save it on your phones.**





Norman's garden never fails to impress and his stunning landscaping and plant choices typify the attention to detail that he applies to everything he does. No doubt the team he employs in the nursery for plant propagation and working in the garden itself have been well-trained. For our Society there are many treats to observe in the form, structure and plant composition of the garden. Paths, roads and walkways blend in beautifully, largely using local banded ironstone rock. The plants we call our own in ACSSZ, aloes, cacti, succulents, palms and cycads are here in abundance.

Water features tastefully executed with flowing water ensuring clear pools and crisp, spray-laden waterfalls. In the background you can see the man-made rock features that have made Norman's garden famous across the length and breadth of Zimbabwe. Judicious use of oxides in the cement mixes lead our eyes to believe that the rocks in the background above, are real. Well adapted plant groups then are positioned on ledges and behind rocky points to flower at their leisure at the appropriate times of the year. In front of the house as you drive in, he has constructed an imitation dry water course, complete with river sand, pebbles and driftwood logs, laboriously hauled home from foraging trips deep into the Zimbabwean hinterland. His house too has many special features, from wagon wheels built into the railings to fixtures and furnishings that remind one of a more gracious time in the past when travel by rail or coach was the preferred method of getting to destinations and there was time to chat and engage socially. The house is partially run as a BnB destination and visitors can relax with rewarding views out to Lake Chivero after awakening to a dawn chorus of every type of bird imaginable. And the backbone of the garden is the amazing indigenous trees left to compliment the broad vistas of an Africa that once was.

By far one of the most gracious of our indigenous trees is *Brachystegia tamarindoides*, the mountain brachystegia and it stands proud and splendid there on the Hunyani hills.



# Healthy Habits No 15

By Lizzie Small

Hi Everyone. This awful year is nearly at an end, thank goodness, let's hope that 2021 is a vast improvement. (Well so far it is not going too well! Ed.)

Last month we discussed the glycaemic index of carbohydrate foods and this month I'll explain how to eat the low-glycaemic way. Then next month I'll include simple tables to help you see which foods are the most preferable to include in your diet.

The ideal plate incorporates low GI carbohydrate with healthy fats, lean sources of protein, fruits and vegetables.

A nutritious diet is based on variety in foods. Including:

Fresh vegetables, salad and fruit

Wholegrain breads and cereals

Low fat milk and cheese

Fish, lean meat or legumes.

In addition, eat the following foods regularly but not necessarily daily, they are rich in antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. Some eg vinegar, lower the glycaemic index. Others such as nuts, olives and avocado are rich in monosaturated fats and red wine is cardio-protective, in moderation.

Nuts and seeds

Olive oil.

Avocados, olives

Dried fruit

Vinegar (in salad dressing)

Red wine

Fresh herbs and spices

Fish, fatty and white.

## THE SIX DIETARY GUIDELINES OF THE GI WAY OF EATING

### 1. EAT 7 OR MORE SERVINGS OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLES EVERY DAY.

Try to eat 3-4 different vegetables and 2-3 different fruits daily.

Include green vegetables, particularly leafy vegetables.

Eat interesting salads.

Tomatoes are almost the only source of lycopene, a powerful antioxidant. Use in cooking or fresh.

Add extra vegetables to stir fries.

Include salad in sandwich

Drink vegetable juices.

Keep strips of vegetables in the fridge to nibble on.

Don't overcook, leave skins on and avoid soaking in water. Cook in big chunks and never add bicarbonate of soda. Reduce the amount of water, cover the pan and cook quickly.

Fruit tips:

Carry fruit for snacking ie at work.

Try making a smoothie.

Slice fresh fruit over your breakfast cereal.

Serve a fruit platter as dessert.

Try adding fruit to savoury dishes eg apple with pork.

Pictured right is a split pod of the frequently grown *Pachira aquatic* or French nut. It comes from a natural habitat around wetland or swamp edges in Central America and is grown by plant buffs here mainly as a pot plant constrained in pots and developing a large green swollen stem, often with two or more stems intertwined. However there is **no reason every garden shouldn't have these in** their orchard as a food source.





## 2. EAT WHOLEGRAIN BREADS AND CEREALS WITH A LOW GI.

Cereals and whole grains are concentrated sources of carbohydrate. To eat breads and cereals with a low GI use:-

Low GI breakfast cereals - All bran, muesli, porridge.

Choose the coarsest bread you can find.

Use pasta products in place of potatoes occasionally

Use basmati rice.

Not only do whole grains have a lower GI than refined cereals but they are nutritionally superior containing higher levels of fibre, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals.

## 3. EAT MORE PULSES - BEANS, PEAS, LENTILS AND NUTS.

These foods are an important part of a low GI diet. Try to eat them twice each week. Easy ways to include them are in soups, salads, and meat sauces.

Pulses are nutrient dense, providing protein, iron, zinc, calcium, folic acid and soluble fibre. Soya beans are a particularly rich food with complete protein, omega 3 fats and anti-cancer phytochemicals.

Pulses are low cost, low calorie, saturated fat free and filling. They supply carbohydrate, protein, a little fat and are high fibre and vitamins.

Nuts and seeds have very little saturated fat, contain fibre and vitamin E. A small handful of nuts on most days helps lower cholesterol and reduce cardiac risks.

Ways to include nuts:-

Use nuts and seeds in cooking eg toasted in a stir-fry, nuts sprinkled over a salad, toasted almonds over a dessert.

Use peanut butter rather than butter or margarine.

Sprinkle nuts and seeds over cereals, or add to muffins.

Enjoy nuts as a snack, healthier than crisps or chocolate.

## 4. EAT MORE FISH.

Regular fish consumption is associated with reduced cardiac risk. Infact one serving of fish each week reduces our risk of a heart attack by 40%. This includes tinned fish. The protective factor is the omega 3 fats for which we rely on dietary sources.

Fish is quick and easy to cook, a typical fillet or cutlet would take 2-3 minutes per side. You can cook

## 5. EAT LEAN MEATS AND LOW FAT DAIRY PRODUCTS.

Eating these foods is a good step towards a diet that is low in saturated fats. We know that saturated fats contribute to raised cholesterol levels and increased risk of heart disease. Recently they have been implicated in insulin resistance and obesity. Compared to other fats, they are not easily oxidised for energy and therefore more readily stored. Whereas polyunsaturated and monosaturated fats are more likely to be used for energy.

It is recommended that we eat lean meat 2-3 times weekly, accompanied by salad and vegetables. Trim off visible fats and remove fat and skin from chicken. Game meats are leaner and are good sources of omega 3 fatty acids. Beware of meats from take-aways they can be fatty and is not cooked in a good oil.

## 6. USE HIGH MONOSATURATED OILS.

Rather than lowering the fats in your diet, change the oil you use.

Olive oil - high in monosaturated fats, rich in antioxidants and chemicals which have anti-inflammatory properties.

Cold pressed oils - may be better for our hearts as they are high in antioxidants. They usually have a stronger flavour and colour and are richer in vitamin E.

Store in a cool, dark place, but do not refrigerate. If you buy a quantity decant smaller volumes into an airtight bottle. As the volume of air increases in the bottle it is more likely to go rancid.

A delicious marinade for meats can be made by combining 1/4 cup of white wine, 1 tablespoon each of lemon juice, olive oil and honey, with finely chopped garlic and herbs.



Another wonderful garden we had occasion to visit as the first lockdown eased just after Christmas and before the second was promulgated was the Borrowdale property of Ed and Sharon Hook. Blessed with a good water supply they have embraced the best of both Worlds having lovely green lawns around the front of the house and have cleverly and judiciously placed hard-wearing ACSSZ type-plants around the front entrance courtyard and parking area. Once established, palms and cycads can more or less look after themselves and the heat reflected off the beautiful face-brick façade allows many hardy succulents to thrive. So the pachypodiums, adeniums, euphorbias, agaves and cacti all thrive where it would take great oceans of water to establish and maintain any other type of garden. A former entrance is cleverly mirrored, providing depth to the area and ensuring that residents and visitors no longer have to pass these spiny customers going in and out of the house. Round the back, raised wagon wheel-design planting beds house the herbs and vegetables consumed on the property.



As one watches the years pass by it is a very clever idea to bring your edible plants up to you in raised beds so the preparation, planting, weeding and harvesting is less strenuous on the back. The use of face brick structures in this example allows the kitchen area to blend in perfectly.



Meanwhile, out Arcturus way, bathing in the miombo woodland is cleverly done with minimal expenditure on floors, doors, walls, the roof and windows. The hot Zimbabwean sun keeps even the tenacious Covid-19 at bay. The succulents almost certainly were lifted surreptitiously from friends' gardens. QED.







An increasingly popular gardening trend worldwide is to leave at least some of your garden as natural bushveld. Zimbabwe is no exception and these oases provide food, nesting sites and transition corridors for birds and other animals to move from one place to the next. Some years ago the Society visited the Monavale garden of Dr Phillipa Marrett and as you can see above the newly established aloe garden in the foreground, accented with Zimbabwean wrought-iron sculptures, is backed by natural grasses and trees. The evening we were there recently a family of White-faced owls entertained us royally with their antics around the verandah.

In our own personal lives we recently moved for the second time this past year and were confronted with a large unkempt garden and because of our experience at Rockyvale in Rolf Valley where we found that the natural transition between grassland and miombo woodland is the ideal habitat for chameleons, birds and other wildlife, we decided to take it slow before developing any sort of garden plan. Thank God we did because the whole front of what should be a large expanse of lawn, is now home to literally hundreds of birds that come to feed on the indigenous grasses and scattered grain that we lace the area with daily. These birds have become our flowering points and never two seconds in a row is it the same! Watch this space.



So Everyone,

A plea, pay your subscriptions, take advantage of the downtime to start writing and photographically recording your own gardening successes and blips. Share these with us so others can enjoy the experience. Be like the coucal, right, warble mellifluously at will, be happy with your accoutrements and above all, keep a beady red eye open for opportunities and dangers.

Be kind, because it is just the right thing to do.

Cheers Mafungi

