



ORTHOLOPHA

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

PO Box CY300, Causeway

aloesocietyzim@gmail.com

www.aloesocietyzim.com & www.facebook.com/ACSSZ

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Hi Everyone,

The Big News is that we are reciprocating Newsletters of our own society with those of the Johannesburg Succulent Society. Going forward we expect great things from this collaboration. Welcome Johannesburg to Zimbabwe! Wow how exciting! See the attached notice.

The undoubted Cinderella of the plants that ACSSZ Members hold dear to their hearts are the Euphorbias. Prickly, with usually toxic milky sap, they seem to thrive in hard-scrabble environments and when burgeoning populations are busy chopping down every tree in sight, they usually leave the Euphorbias because they can even be lethal if used as firewood. However they can look very attractive, especially the larger species if grown with background sunsets or sunrises in mind. They provide a very safe haven for many species of wildlife. Bees and other insects relish the nectar that they copiously produce when flowering. However beware of eating honey derived solely from Euphorbia forests as the toxins in the sap are also present in the honey to some extent and a sweet taste is replaced by a burning sensation in the mouth and throat. The plants pictured above are from Christon Bank and are growing with water-loving sedges on solid granite.



This collage of pictures was sent to us by our team in South Africa, ably led by the enthusiasm of Caryl Stutchbury and whose meanderings around that country unerringly lead her to habitats populated by Aloes. She is also developing equal fervour for the Cotyledons after the fascinating article by Jacquie Kousidis in the Ingens 60 produced by the Society last year.

Anyway the pictures depict *Aloe ferox* or *marlothii* above (without flowers there is some doubt as to species), followed by *Aloe striata*, then *Cotyledon campanulata* all three pictures taken at various sites in the Karoo and finally bottom left *Aloe pluridens* at Kenton on Sea.

The Editor and his team would be very happy to receive similar collages from individual members going forward to include in the Newsletter each month and it does make his job easier and the Newsletter that much more interesting if we see and hear from other peoples' collections and experiences.



Your Committee

Chairman –
Hans Wolbert -0772 653 110

Committee members:

Rob Jarvis	- 0783 383 214
Doreen Richards	- 0772 255 784
Caryl Stutchbury	+27 76 703 4563
Debra Wolbert	- 0772 515 436
Gaudencia Kujeke	- 0775 376 600
Anne-Katrin Maseko	- 0772 440 131
Mike Caulfield	- 0772 241 286
Rodwika Muzhuzha	- 0712 860 119
Isabel Bandason	- 0774 186 757



Aloe Cactus and Succulent Society of Zimbabwe: Annual General Meeting

When: Sunday 28 March 2021

Time 10.00 for 10.30 start

Where: No. 1 Calgary Close, Pomona, Harare

Directions: Get onto Harare Drive and wend your way to the intersection where Halsteads/Trek service station dominate the Roadside. Turn up Alpes Road, away from town and go past the Pomona Brickworks, the Army Barracks (beware humps), past the municipal dump and Wingate Golf Club on your right and soon after turn left onto Calgary Road and follow it around until you come to the gate into ART. Stop there, get checked and then proceed, go right around the offices and follow Calgary Close up the hill, past the sheds and offices and then you will see the first house just after the vegetable block. Park inside or outside.

Bring camp chair, eats for tea, a braai pack and you own drinks if you are staying for lunch. Everyone must come with an open mind because none of you are gardening the way we are, ...yet! But you will.

So there you are everyone we are finally back on track with our meetings and hopefully with my chore of getting this newsletter out to you on a monthly basis going forward.

We look forward to seeing you this coming Sunday!



Interesting Plant: January/February

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.

Last month's aloe was the famous *Aloe vera*, of Old World origin and many a garden is graced by these aloes. The winner was Laraine King of Esigodini, near Bulawayo.



You can win a box of chocolates!!!

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

Photograph taken by Mafungi

Clue: There may be more than one aloe species involved.



National Association of Garden Clubs President Tawny Stidolph was recently caught red-handed with mealie cobs grown in her Greendale Garden. For some time I have been encouraging gardeners to grow these heirloom-style maize mixed open-pollinated varieties. According to nutritional studies the coloured maize is often much better for you because of high levels of anti-oxidants and in any case I have been inter-crossing them with more traditional maize hybrids derived from a local seed company and from CYM-MIT, the International Centre for Maize and Cereal Improvement. If you do grow your own maize for munching as green mealies, dripping with butter, salt, pepper and perhaps some additives then why not consider growing open pollinated populations like this. The original seed came from the Americas, where maize has its centre of origin.. We have successfully grown maize for decades as organic crops using manure and tobacco dust for pest control applied in the funnel. It is great fun at harvest time opening up each husk to see what colour cobs you do have.

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.



This issue of *Ortholopha* is definitely the Cinderella Issue. One common type of plant we find in our aimless wanderings through the veld are the *Ledebourias*, pictured above. Top-notch botanists, even Kew-trained, will tell you that they are notoriously difficult to identify down to species level, even if you have all the plant parts to hand. So above is an example I recently spotted in an Harare garden. They belong to the plant enthusiasts in our Society because they have a fairly large swollen bulb underground and the plants are deciduous, leaving virtually no visible sign of their existence through most of the dry season. Often they start growing well in advance of the rains, drawing from the reserves stored in their bulbs. So they are definitely xerophytes.

Like some aloe species they have beautifully patterned leaves with often maculate markings on the upper surface and clear green underneath. The flowers are attractive and often tinged with pink, mauve or even purple. They thrive in both deep shade and more open habitat and are easy plants to propagate by splitting the small bulbs off the mother plant.

Flame Bush

On the right we see a tree that is not often cultivated in gardens but it really should be encouraged. Again it belongs with our family of much-loved plants because they really are hardy and often found clinging to a cliff-face or somehow established in the smallest toe-hold on open expanses of granite. They have swollen roots, again storing moisture and nutrients and the trees have two exceptional times of year. The first is when their leaves turn bright red and are seen as splashes of blood-red on the kopjes and mountains of Zimbabwe. It is a fleeting encounter and they soon drop the leaves and remain deciduous until just before the rains when new growth, usually a bronze-green colour explodes across all the growing points on the plants. Given good conditions they can become quite substantial trees and the specimen right, pictured at the top of a rocky outcrop in Christon Bank is definitely one of the largest I have seen. This particular tree has a companion junior plant that has old leaves bursting with life-draining colour at lower right. The main tree has yet to turn colour and its roots are undoubtedly firmly embedded in rich, moist soil in between the granite boulders. *Hymenodictyon floribundum*, remember the name, no garden should be without one.



Healthy Habits No 17.

Hi all. This article is really an introduction to herbs as this month we start on our journey into the world of herbs. They all have some healthy properties but we are concentrating on the culinary aspect as I am not a qualified herbalist. So remember you will not only be giving flavor to your cooking but also doing a whole lot of good. But let's start with some background history.

The history of herbs stretches back to the fourth century BC when Hippocrates wrote a book containing information on herbs. Aristotle also wrote a volume called The History of Plants and the Egyptians immortalized them in their tomb paintings. As time went by monks started to grow and use them medicinally in the healing of wounds and illnesses. The medicinal use of herbs has recently become of more general interest, with people recognizing their healing powers and complimentary medicine is very topical.

Meanwhile many are flavourful so in these articles will be concentrating on their uses in the kitchen. In this first article we will investigate the initial stages of growing your own.

Which to choose:

The most popular culinary herbs are always worth considering but grow only the ones you intend to use on a regular basis. Be adventurous and you will be able to add new flavours to your cooking. Below is a short list of the most popular culinary herbs that you will find in recipes: basil, chives, coriander, fennel, garlic, ginger, marjoram, parsley, mint, rosemary, sage and thyme.

Growing:

The planning of your herb garden is most important, in the Victorian era herb gardens were often very artistically laid out in geometric patterns. As an example it is worth visiting Ewanrigg and seeing their herbarium. First you must decide the purpose of your herb garden, do you want them for cooking or medicinally. This of course influences what you choose to plant and where they are sited. Herbs are quite easy to grow either outside or inside. Outside choosing the right spot is important, some liking sun and others preferring more shade. To grow herbs in a large garden takes quite a lot of planning ie. a herb border may turn out to be the best way for a kitchen garden. Obviously the herb garden needs to be near the kitchen for easy access or gathering them becomes too much of a task, but as fresh is much better tasting than dried it is all worth the effort. Growing in pots and containers is also very popular but they need to be near sunshine and regularly watered. Of course growing in pots is ideal if space is limited. Again they can be very attractive for example decorated pots, in window boxes or hanging baskets. There are some herbs better suited to containers including basil, chives, lemon balm, oregano, parsley, peppermint, sage and thyme while the ones which may grow into large bushes are best in the garden or can be pruned if necessary to restrict their growth.

Regarding the soil, for example a sticky, muddy soil may need a little sand added to help drainage ie a sandy texture rather than a clay one. A slightly acid soil is generally preferable, so it is worth checking. In addition they should be planted about 5cm deep, one of the biggest mistakes people make is planting too deeply.

Although fresh is best, next month we will discuss harvesting herbs and preserving them. Subsequently we will cover, in more detail, individual herbs regarding flavor, how to use them and suitable dishes to use them in.

Meanwhile stay fit and healthy.

Liz.

Editor's note:

Companion plantings of vegetables, berry crops and herbs are going to be all the rage of the future, like this bed (right) at ART, Pomona where strawberries share space with basil and other herbs. This same bed has been added to even more and at the ACSSZ AGM on Sunday you will be able to see what it looks like now. Pests and diseases are disrupted by biodiversity and having neat rows of monocrops is very old-school.

Organically grown they will taste better.





I must admit in our ramblings around the wild places of Zimbabwe we do see some strange things. As a younger man my job at one time required me to fly a light aircraft around the four corners of Zimbabwe. Almost without fail the owners of farms where we needed to land would assure us that their strips were in excellent condition and it would be no problem putting the Cessna 182 down and just as importantly, taking off again. Many is the time that we had to veer to avoid cattle, irrigation pipes, farm trucks and tractors using the strips as roads and the like.

However rarely did we ever find a perfectly tarmacadamised strip like this one seen at Thetford in Christon Bank. But a fairly large tree at the beginning of the strip and a really large geological feature at the other end when the pilot will undoubtedly be looking for maximum brakes to stop before or full-power lift to clear the obstacle on take-off really makes for interesting flying. No doubt many will be the first time flying visitors to this field that do more than a cursory fly-around to check the strip before committing to the final run-in to land. The dam also helps in a real emergency, you could drop into it for good measure if you misread the wind, the runway length or any of the other common mistakes under “pilot error”.

So life can be interesting and the Christon Bank area is very scenic, unfortunately a little marred at the moment by artisanal gold miners, but I guess once they have scratched the surface for the dribblings of gold, the area will probably revert back to the beauty that the Blue Hills of the headwaters of the Mazowe river are well known. A little known fact is that virtually all the trees in this area were decimated by the early inhabitants of Salisbury, now Harare, in their quest to fuel a growing city. So probably 90% of the trees in the view were not there 120 years ago. Africa is truly amazing how it can recover from the most devastating effects of man’s insatiable need for resources.

As an attachment to this Newsletter we are happy to include a notice about reciprocity between our Society and the Succulent Society of Johannesburg in South Africa. We hope that this inter-action will lead to great possibilities going forward and when normalcy has returned to our Post-Covid lives we may well see a scheduling of holidays and business trips to coincide with monthly meetings and plant sales and other activities by our respective clubs.

Welcome Johannesburg to our little succulent corners of Zimbabwe! Cheers, Mafungi