



ORTHOLOPHA

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

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Issue 21-5 May 2021



Hi Everyone,

Welcome to the May issue of Ortholopha! We have two treats for you in store for the forthcoming weekends at the end of May and beginning of June 2021.

Firstly on Sunday 30 May we shall have our regular monthly meeting at the home of Ella Plant at 5 Albany Road, Alex Park, Harare. Albany comes off Sandringham Drive, almost opposite the entrance to National Parks Headquarters. Time is 10am for 10.30 start. Bring plate of eats to share, your own chairs and hats. Teas and coffees will be supplied by the Society.

The second meeting is at the country estate of Kim McDonald out at Ruwa. Members who attended the meeting out there a few years ago will remember the amazing Zimbabwe Ruin replica walls and forts built around the natural granite boulders, high waterfalls and the whole garden fronting onto a lake. This second visit will be at 2pm on Saturday 5th June and the McDonalds have been very busy developing a huge aloe garden around their features. We will have an expert talk on Aloe Pests and Diseases at this meeting, given by our Chairman, Hans Wolbert. Cheers, Mafungi



Well June and July are the months to go and see the various indigenous aloes in habitat around Zimbabwe. It is difficult for the Society to organise a combined expedition catering for all tastes, but in late June we are making a repeat visit to two special places in Zimbabwe that have quite amazing asloe colonies.

These are the Buchwa massif about 50kms south of Zvivashavane where a very isolated but happy population of *Aloe arborescens* still survive on the remaining peaks of the range that once supplied over 200 million tonnes of iron ore to the Zisco complex at Redcliff near Kwe Kwe. We were amazed to find that *A. arborescens* was actually not only named as a tree aloe, but on Buchwa it can also be a **tree-dwelling aloe** with small clumps found on the upper surfaces of the giant Musasas on the mountain.

To the east, about 30 kilometres away is a mountain called Mushoganebuli which is the best known home, out of three dwalas, of the endemic *Aloe tauri*. At this time of year, the former, *A. arborescens* will be past its prime, but *A. tauri* will be at its very best. We look forward to seeing it in all its glory. The last time I went there I forgot to take my camera up the mountain, but this time we hope to rectify that problem.

For those of you who are less adventurous, you should definitely go out to Ewanrigg and see the aloes, cycads and palms and a myriad of other plant species that have been collected and nurtured at Ewanrigg Botanic Gardens about 24 kilometres out on the Mutoko or Shamva roads. The top picture above was taken at Ewanrigg in June a few years ago.

Another hot favourite for aloe lovers should be to go to Nyanga, or Juliasdale rather and see the exquisite populations of *Aloe cameronii* var. *bondani* that occur on some special rock slabs just off the road to Bonda Mission. Hidden Rocks, a camp with some chalet accommodation is very close and is a great place to stay. Try and visit the aloes in the early morning.

Next month we shall also cover the wonderful sites along the Great Dyke that are home to our Society's signature Aloe ortholopha. These sites are as close as about 80 kilometres on fairly good tar most of the way and everyone should make this a bucket-list visit in these uncertain times.



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Window on Buchwa

PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS TO ACSSZ.

The payment options for subs to ACSSZ are as follows:

Payment in USD cash to me at; 24 Southam Rd, Greystone Park. This is off the Harare Drive, just up West of the large traffic circle. Please phone ahead or e-mail the day and time to ensure that this is convenient.

Payment into the Nostro account in the name of M. Caulfield at

CABS, Nostro: Account number, 1125376759

Please use ACSSZ as the recipient. Also notify me that a payment has taken place.

The amount is US \$10 for those under 65 or US \$5 if older or a junior. This covers individuals or the family.

BOND or ZWL

Payments can now be made in ZWL (Bond) , the amount is ZWL\$1 200

Or Zwl \$600, if you are 65 or older , or a junior.

ZWL payments can be made to

CABS account 1002616336

The Aloe, *Cactus & Succulent Society*.

Or Eco Cash (Mike Caulfield) number 0772 241 286.

Please notify me of ANY payments , Thanks

Mike Caulfield Treasurer / Secretary Phone 0772 241 286.



*Some of the remaining peaks on the
Buchwa Massif, south of Zvivashavane*

Interesting Plant: January/February

What are these, 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.

So far there was no winner for April so that remains open.



Photograph taken by Mafungi

Clue There are two plants we are interested in here, one an aloe and the second a Euphorbia, can you get the species names?

You can win a box of chocolates!!!

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



Hi Everyone,

A plea from the Editorial team of Ingens 61, we need articles from new authors for the next issue of Ingens due to be published towards the end of the year.

Each issue going forward we would like to have at least one topical article about the various plant groups that we cherish as a Society, so one on aloes, one on cycads, cacti, palms, euphorbias, sanseverias, stapeliads, cotyledons, adeniums, pachypodiums etc. To do this we need you! To become authors. Famous authors, known worldwide. Renowned.
Send contributions to bo.hoom52@yahoo.com.

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 previous page 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 Ortholopha, free issues of Ingens as they are published and you get invited to at least 11 choice venues each year. Big-time Bargain Bonanza!

See the previous page to find out what payment options there are for you to keep up to date with your subscriptions.



It is a favourite hobby-horse of mine, but I am certain that as gardeners and collectors of plants we should take our lead from Nature, not try and force our plants to fit into our lives with masses of man-made additives, soil mixes, pesticides, fungicides and the like to manage the health and growth of our plants. The above picture shows some ***Aloe cryptopoda*** growing on a solid rock ledge high above the Nyauri valley in Musana communal lands just northeast of Harare. You will note that it is growing on granite and soils derived from this bedrock are notoriously deficient in most major nutrients. They are essentially sands. However allow Nature to accumulate a little plant detritus, animals and birds come past periodically and drop dung and urine. Rain, especially after lightning storms, brings some nitrogen from the atmosphere. If pests come, then Nature usually has some predator that will feed on a pest population and make it manageable. The plants show signs of normal development, older leaves showing some signs of ageing, contributing ultimately to the thin layer of soil available to these plants as they shed and decay. Those leaves were made of the exact nutrients required to make the plant healthy. However if you took these very same plants and grew them at home in a over-rich soil, brimming with man-made chemical fertilisers they would probably grow very well for a year or so, but then they would deteriorate, probably get black rot and die.

So the first question you should ask yourselves when buying any sort of plant for the home and garden is ***Where does it grow naturally and How?*** How then can we get as close to that in our own home environments and keep it that way for ever?

We are certainly following this route at home and recently harvested our first two strawberries from a crop that has been grown entirely on compost made from weeds and plant cuttings and waste from the garden.

They were huge strawberries, each one a mouthful on its own and despite being a little white at the blunt end, they were absolutely delicious! Not one man-made chemical or fertiliser contributed to their production and we cannot wait for the main crop to start coming, and indeed we are looking forward to the granadillas, papaya, mangoes, litchis, citrus, mulberries, gooseberries, peas, beans, figs, grapes, Carissa, and all the root and leaf vegetables growing in and around the fruit planting areas. **A luta continua!**

Harvesting and preserving herbs by Liz small

When harvesting herbs it is important that the plants are healthy so that you get maximum flavor. That is when the active ingredients and volatile oils will be most plentiful and hence they will be most flavourful. Of course picking them tends to encourage new growth and stimulates their healthy development.

The following part is a short guide to harvesting the different parts of the plant.

Leaves and stems should be the young and fresh before they become tough and woody.

Seeds, seed heads and pods should not be overripe then stored in a warm, dry place.

Flowers should be cut just below the flower head.

Berries and fruits are best collected when ripe but not overripe and before the birds get to them.

When harvesting roots or tubers wait until the above ground stems and leaves have died and the plant becomes dormant.

Many plants have bark or wood that can be used but never ring bark them and make sure to seal the cut end.

For culinary use the tender aromatic plant tips are classified as herbs whereas the dried bark, flowers buds, fruits, seeds and roots are known as spices. Just for clarification the term 'condiments' refers to spices which are added after cooking. We will not be going into their medicinal uses as I am not qualified to give out such information but of course It is freely available on the internet. In this case home uses refers to pot pourri and drying flowers such as lavender.

Drying herbs is the most natural way of preserving them and can look very attractive hung upside down in bunches in your kitchen or scullery. Although there is no comparison between the freshly picked sprig and the preserved, dried herbs will keep their flavour for up to nine months or a year. After that the flavor dramatically diminishes. The best time to collect them is just before the buds open to maximise flavor as that is when there is the highest concentration of oils and essential agents. The most successful herbs to dry are thyme, tarragon, bay leaves and rosemary. Once picked, hang in bundles with the seed heads hanging down over a sheet of paper, so that if the seeds drop they can be collected. The ideal place is warm and airy, until they are dry enough to crumble and store. Alternatively they can be air dried, spread out on a clean dry surface eg on wire rack in a dry environment. This method is more successful when drying leaves like basil, mint and sage.

Once dry they should be stored in individual bottles, clearly labelled, dated and airtight in a dark place. Clear bottles can lead to the herbs becoming bleached and plastic can encourage moisture which will lead to mould so the best containers are ceramic or dark glass pots with airtight lids.

Making potpourri can introduce a very pleasant scent into your bed room, bathroom or wherever you choose. The advantage of making your own is that you then choose the scent. The components usually are flowers, leaves, spices and a fixative, usually an essential oil. An example of a spicy potpourri could include rose petals, lavender flowers and stems, rosemary, with a little ground cloves. For the oil you could use any of the above flavours or sandal wood oil. The choice is yours personally I like rose wood or rose essence.

Editor's note: This article should have preceded the one on culinary uses of herbs published in April. Our apologies.

Even the dogs love herbaceous, healthy plants, if only to lift a leg!





Well there you go folks, another month along the road to normality. If you haven't done so already you need to plan your breakaways to see the wonderful plant life we have in Zimbabwe, whether on specialised endemic sites like these normal ***A. cameronii*** growing in a man-made hole on The Great Dyke above or the absolutely riveting ***Aloe cameronii var bondani***, mentioned in the articles above which brought one of the World's most famous Aloe Hunters, Tom McCoy, (below) out to Zimbabwe some years ago for our Xerophyta Congress and later, the around Zimbabwe Plant tour.

One thing we have found in Zimbabwe and around the World is that aloe-lovers are special people and that there is much to be still discovered about these plants. Many have health-giving properties, promising eternal youth, smooth baby-fine skin, healing properties on burns and bites, and of course here at home they really warm the heart and soul with their bright fiery colours during the cold winter months. We are of course blessed with almost guaranteed sunshine throughout June and July so seeing the aloes at their best can be done as soon as the bones have warmed-up in the morning. Be sure to be back home and in front of a fire by the time the sun has set in the evening however otherwise your joints will become very rickety as you age.

A few aloe species are deadly poisonous so handle them with care and ***A. globuligemma*** comes to mind in this regard. Of course if a plant thrives where goats eat everything else it is likely that that plant type is not edible at all. Be guided by Nature at all times and it may be pragmatic, but is not fair to use a spouse or partner as a taster.



So that is it Folks,

We look forward to seeing you at the two scheduled meetings next Sunday and the Saturday after and attached also is a Notice about the next Rare Plant Sale to be held at Mukuvisi Woodlands at the beginning of July, the 3rd to be exact. These are grand social occasions that you would be foolhardy to miss! Please share the notice.

Cheers, Mafungi