



# ORTHOLOPHA

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

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Hi Everyone,

July is the Ortholopha Edition of our monthly Newsletter. It is that time of the year that the main component of our badge, *Aloe ortholopha* is usually in flower on The Great Dyke, where it is endemic. Found nowhere else on Planet Earth. And in fact its distribution is so specific that the slightest change in the mineral composition of the soils it grows in and the plant can be totally absent. There is a ridge we frequently visit in the Mvuradonha Mountains, basically the shepherd's crook to be found at the end of The Dyke, where the plant only occurs on a very narrow ridge about 20 metres wide and about 100 metres long. The next nearest place you will find this aloe is some 60 kilometres away on The Great Dyke proper. The photos here were taken there. Veld fires had ravaged some parts of The Dyke but our aloe was thriving and everywhere the depredations of Man searching for minerals had creating screes of mine waste also, thankfully populated by this amazing aloe. When we reached the Mavuradonha knife-edge ridge, the aloes had long since flowered and set their plump, ripe pods. A good reason to go back next year, but in June, not July.

So sorry, no meetings, no Plant Sales! Just Enjoy!







The Dyke has other endemics which only occur on the chrome-rich soils of this amazing geological formation. One of the most intriguing is the strangely organized and yet somehow contorted shapes and colours of *Euphorbia wildii*. Its branches are covered in strangely pink, “rhomboid tubercles” according to Flora of Zimbabwe database. In another website, the African Plant Database, its ecology is described as being confined to “strictly serpentinicolous (hydrous magnesium silicate) grasslands.”

Our own observations indicate that it and *Aloe ortholopha* will occur in much the same habitat and obviously both can survive the rampaging wildfires experienced almost every year on these slopes. However the aloe does appear to grow in much tighter colonies whereas odd plants of this euphorbia can often be seen quite far removed from the typical habitat.

Also to be seen in this grassland habitat are the dry bulbs of *Boophane disticha*, the ox-killer. At this time of year they are very inconspicuous, but with the dried leaves strewn around the bulbs clearly indicating their presence. In spring they will send up a flowering head that forms an incredible firework-like round ball of pinkish-red flowers. Once pollinated these dry and the whole head will separate from the stem as it dries and the flower head tumbles across the savannah dropping seeds all along the way. *Boophane* is a very cosmopolitan species, occurring from the Sudan all the way down to South Africa and across the continent from East to West. In Namibia there is a sister species *B. haemanthoides* which after rain make the most spectacular flowering shows. Many a traveller going from Harare to Bulawayo will have seen these flowering heads trapped against the fences in that most inhospitable part of Africa known as the Somabula Flats, between Gweru and Bulawayo. And in fact you are not a Zimbabwean unless you have picked up these dry flowering heads and hung them as spiralling mobile ornaments usually from fine fishing line tied to the rafters of the back verandah of your house.



However our interest in these plants is just how they can grow on the flat, dusty Somabula Flats just as easily as they can on sharp ridges in the Mvuradonha Mountains where the soil is extremely toxic to all but the most adapted of plants.



### Your Committee

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## 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.



## Interesting Plant: June

### 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 plant had not a single entry, not even a wild guess, so no prizes!

**Our Readership is clueless!**



Photograph taken by Mafungi  
Clue: We have no idea what this plant is either so we welcome any considered input from you. From Mavuradonha.

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

Send your entries to Mafungi at  
[bo.hoom52@yahoo.com](mailto: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. So that you can then move on to write books, classics, about plant colonies, like the one on the right.  
Send contributions to [bo.hoom52@yahoo.com](mailto: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.





On our way back from The Dyke we always pop off the main road to admire an isolated colony of *Aloe excelsa* growing amongst dolerite boulders in a countryside dominated by granite thereabouts. There are giant specimens growing in the *Brachystegia*, *Kirkia* and *Sterculia* woodland and they were just coming into flower mid-July. We were relieved to see some young plants emerging from the rich organic matter on the kopje-floor, because there were noticeably more of these plants that have matured, sighed and fallen like a stack of cards on the ground, lying like ball-gowns across the rocks.

*Excelsa* is of course the name of a scientific journal that our Society produced for many years when we had a heady membership of avid plant collectors and scientists. Many a new species or variety was named and launched into the public arena through the offices of the ACSSZ's *Excelsa* publications.

Of great concern to us all in these expeditions into the countryside are the very visible scars of mature indigenous tree extraction taking place primarily to provide the fuel to cure tobacco, but also probably firewood to burgeoning urban populations. In the case of the former, tobacco companies and farmers are supposed to be working together in planting fuelwood plantations to match the avaricious needs of the tobacco curing process. However the evidence on the ground is very bleak as to the sustainability of the production of the golden leaf. We wonder just what the bespoke Government department EMA just does



with its time, because it clearly is not preserving the environment as we would expect. On the right a probable natural hybrid aloe is the foreground to totally rampant rape of the hillsides and there is no evidence of any attempt to repair mining damage.

Bright flowers, bleak message.  
Cheers, Mafungi



## Vegetarianism

Actually most of the world's population is vegetarian. There are many reasons why but often it is not a choice but because of economic or social or cultural circumstances. For example in many places there is no refrigerator and so legumes, grains, nuts, seeds fruits and vegetables keep better than meats or fish. When it is a choice it is usually for health reasons.

There are several categories of vegetarians. In general vegetarians do not eat meat, poultry or fish with those that eat eggs and dairy products being called lacto-ovo vegetarians, pescatarians eat fish but not animal flesh while vegans eat only foods of plant origin.

A good vegetarian diet can often outdo a typical western diet in terms of health benefits, but the emphasis is on a nutritionally sound vegetarian diet. Simply cutting out the meat part of the meal is not true vegetarianism, one has to make balanced vegetarian meals in which the animal component is replaced by vegetables, which provide the missing nutrients. This is a common mistake made by teenagers and the usual motivation is to lose weight – not a sound reason to change.

So let's look at some of the health benefits, which can be derived from eating the vegetarian way.

Studies have shown that vegetarians suffer less heart disease, stroke, diabetes, gall bladder problems and a lower incidence of many types of cancer, including breast and bowel cancer. This is probably because their diets have more vitamins, less fats and more fibre. Really the lower incidence of cancer in vegetarians is due to the increase of plant foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables, cereals, pulses and nuts-rather than the absence of meat. As cholesterol is an animal fat and hence only found in animal products a person not eating meats will automatically reduce cholesterol and help to lower cardiac risks.

The increased fibre content of a vegetarian diet can protect against several bowel disorders and helps the food to pass through the system more efficiently, making them less likely to have constipation. Vegetarians also have less risk of developing gall stones and diverticular disease.

It is generally true that vegetarians lead a healthier life style and are more health conscious ie more likely to drink less alcohol, be non-smokers and exercise more.

Many people worry about the protein in a vegetarian diet. It is possible to have plenty of protein without eating animal products. However if eggs, cheese and dairy products are included they supply high quality protein and are good substitutes for meat. Whereas if the person chooses to be a vegan then the protein comes from the pulses, cereals and nuts in their diets.

Other nutrients which may be at risk in a vegetarian diet include **iron, calcium, zinc and vitamin B12**.

**Iron** can be found in beans, lentils, oats, dried fruits, green vegetables, nuts, egg yolks and some herbs.

**Calcium** is found in dairy products, nuts, dark green leafy vegetables and seeds.

**Zinc** is important as it takes part in many of the chemical reactions in the body and is found in eggs, cheese and milk, lentils, nuts, rolled oats, beans.

**Vitamin B12** is found in milk and dairy products, yeast extracts eg marmite, mushrooms and we make some in our bodies as well.

So you can see that with the right balance of nutrients a vegetarian diet does not necessarily become deficient in any nutrient.

In practice it is easier to be a lacto-ovo vegetarian but a vegan diet which has a wide variety of foods and some vegetable proteins at every meal can be adequate and interesting too. Infact veganism has been very popular of late so now there are vegan restaurants and vegan dishes on many menus.

Pregnancy, children and vegetarianism. It is perfectly safe for a pregnant woman to be vegetarian as long as she includes a good supply of the nutrients outlined above. All pregnant mothers are prescribed vitamin and mineral supplements especially iron, calcium and folic acid and it is no different for a vegetarian mother.

Unless the mother is iron deficient during her pregnancy the baby is born with enough iron in their bodies for their first 6 months of life. Good sources are lentils, green vegetables and beans.

So overall if you choose, for whatever reason, to change to vegetarianism do it properly and it will do you no harm.

So that is it Folks,

My apologies for leaving the above off the original sending of the Newsletter. Hopefully you can read it with a plateful of lettuce and nuts to hand! Dried mango I always think is a much better substitute for biltong than biltong itself. And mangoes are designed to be eaten, whereas cattle and game prefer the running away option.  
Cheers, Mafungi