



Chairmans Notes

In this edition of the of the Shamba Times you are receiving these notes from past and present Chairpersons of the North Coast District; from myself, John Golds, as the outgoing Chairman and from Lady Marion Langham, as our new Chairman.

I felt that, after twelve years of thoroughly enjoying myself, this District deserved a rather more active Chairman - not one rather infirm and in his 90th. year! Therefore I am delighted to report that at our last AGM I stood down and Marion was elected in my place. I know she will make a most wonderful replacement as so many of our better ideas have originated from her - Gardeners Courses, the Festival of Flowers, and a much more newsy and informative District Newsletter, The Shamba Times, to name just three of our creations that were suggested and developed under her guidance! Furthermore she is a much more knowledgeable gardener than I!

However Marion has asked that I stay on the Committee as Deputy Chairman, just for this year to ensure continuity and responsibility for certain sections of the Chairman's portfolio, eg. KHS Council representation, certain of our planned outings etc. I will certainly do my best as long as Marion feels I can be of assistance. This was approved at our AGM on the 16th. March.

Before I hand over this opening Chairman's notes, I must of course announce I was also delighted to represent Vishy Talwar, Chairman of the KHS Council, at our AGM to present Marion and Chris Betts each with the KHS Council honour of a gold pin and Honorary life membership of the Kenya Horticultural Society for all their hard and creative work in furthering the good name and policies of the KHS. It was indeed an honour to act for Vishy at this presentation!

Now over to Marion.

John Golds



Dear Fellow Members

Let me start by thanking you all for electing me as your Chairman. As you are all aware, John Golds is a very difficult act to follow and I am most grateful that he has agreed to stay and hold my hand from the role of Vice Chairman.

I think my first job in my new post is to thank all the people who made the AGM such a success - Vanessa's administration of the meeting was efficiency itself; Rupert's preparation of the accounts was detailed and pleasantly reassuring; and Holly's organisation at the Drifwood was, as usual, terrific. Robert and Patsy Floyd are very lucky to be living where they do and we were grateful to Annie for arranging for them to show us their home and garden. Lastly I need to thank everyone else who helped make the Meeting a success - the committee members who manned the different stalls and tables; Carisa and Peter Nightingale for the magnificent turkey, and all the members who came to the event.

As far as the future is concerned, I think your Committee and I wish to build upon what has gone before. We aim to continue expanding our membership, particularly that of garden members. We will attempt to maintain the high quality of our events and, given their popularity, try and find some way of avoiding overcrowding. We will continue to develop the Gardeners Courses, both inducting new gardeners and extending the skills of more experienced ones. Finally we have not lost sight of the proposed Safari up country, though recent political events and security may govern our arrangements.

I look forward to the year ahead and thank you in advance for the support I know I can depend upon

Marion Langham

Great Chalfield Manor - the AGM address.



Waiting for the start of the AGM

This year's keynote speakers at the 48th AGM of the North Coast District, KHS, were Robert and Patsy Floyd. 63 people gathered on 16th March 2017 at the Driftwood Club, Malindi, to hear them talk about their home, Great Chalfield Manor in Wiltshire.

Built in the late 15th c., the house has been the centre of a working manor ever since. Much of the original Tudor building survives though bits were added

at various times and other parts fell into significant disrepair, putting it at risk of demolition. However major restoration works and rebuilds were carried out in the early 1900's and the house was saved. Acquired by the National Trust in 1943 and attracting some 20,000 visitors a year, it is now looked after by the Floyds. He is the grandson of Robert Fuller, the man who had the ambition to restore Great Chalfield Manor House to its former glory and, as Managing Director of the Avon Rubber Company, the means to do so.



The Paved Court

An major attraction at Chalfield are the garden and grounds about the house. Dating from the same period as the house restoration, a paved courtyard, lawn terrace, orchard meadow, and lots of water give the visitor a changing spectacle throughout the year. Over the last twenty years, Patsy Floyd, with the



Looking towards the Paved Court

help of one gardener, has revived and renewed the beds and paths, making it a fragrant refuge at any season. It is small wonder that the house and garden have been chosen as locations for such productions as *Poldark*, *The Other Boleyn Girl*, and *Wolf Hall*.

After the presentation, some 50 people stayed on to enjoy a very good Driftwood lunch under the Flamboyants outside. All in all, a rather good AGM!



Lunch under the Flamboyants



Great Chalfield Manor, N elevation

My Favourite Plant - Belle Nanton

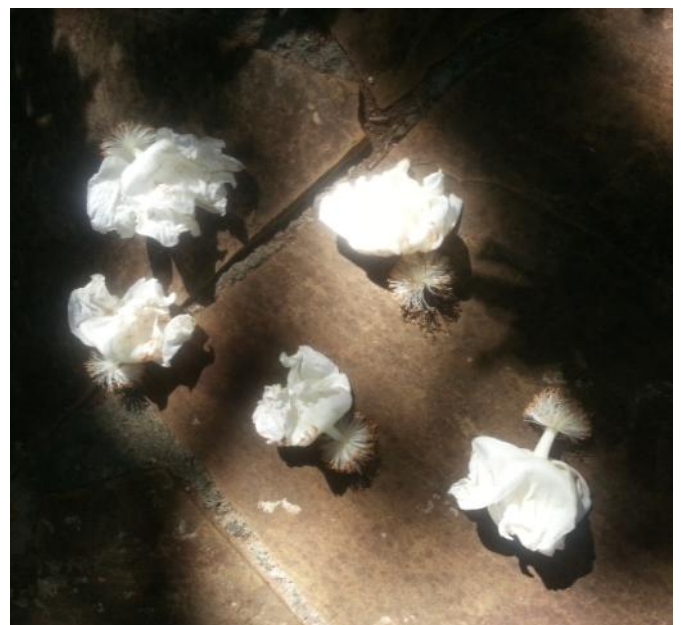
I love the night-blooming flowers of a species of water plant which flourishes in one of Marion's ponds at Sabini na Tisa on Bofa Beach. It is *Nymphoides Indica*, the tiny white water lily like plant with hairy petals and a yellow centre. It blooms enchantingly at night out of each leaf, producing one or two stems which last till mid morning and then die.

Nymphoides is a genus of some 50 species of aquatic floating plant, similar to a water lily, which can be found right across the tropical and sub-tropical world. In some places it is considered an invasive weed.



Aaaaaah-Tissssue!

WENDY TAYLOR'S BAOBAB FLOWER COMPOSITION
TICKLES THE SENSES.



The Specialist - John Golds talks about his latest pond

Having already constructed nine ponds, I felt enough is enough! However I am always being tempted to build just one more pond. They create lovely patches of colour and interest even in the driest garden, plus they entice ever more birds, monitor lizards and Suni to ones garden. In addition, according to Pravin Bowry, they generate a mono-climate of their own, which he noticed on a recent visit with plants flourishing that are not normally seen at the coast!



One day, I was sitting in my office, which overlooked a small pond, house entrance pathway and thence across a bed of ever growing hibiscus over my swimming pool and beyond to other ponds and succulents out to sea. A lovely view to have from one's desk one would think. However the hibiscus, with minds of their own and encouraged by my gardener, were beginning to block the view! The answer came to me, without a guilty thought - convert the hibiscus bed into an interesting pond reserved for just water lilies, oxygenator plants and a mixture of, white mollies, koi and goldfish. Perfect! The view would be protected, a real centre of interest created, and the sound of water from a simple waterfall and fountain would calm my business nerves! Never a thought you will notice of my absolute resolve, only six months old, that, with nine ponds, I should never build another. This was overcome by convincing myself that, by converting one of my less seen ponds into a bog garden and filling it with cannas, I would not actually be creating an extra pool and so my pond numbers would remain as nine.

I had to make peace with my gardener, Katana, and counter the threat to his hibiscus and some fine palms growing near the pond site by giving him a second sunny site for the plants and

permitting him to design the pond's shape to ensure none of "his" palms were disturbed, - hence the rather informal pond shape we created!

The result of our efforts was a pond 3 feet deep, roughly 156 sq. ft. in surface area and containing 3000 gals. of water. According to USA sources, such a pond will comfortably take an impressive 900" of fish. However after due consideration and bearing in mind ones fish do grow at a much faster rate if provided with plenty of room, I decided to follow one of the more conservative advisories and aim at an occupancy of not more than 300" of fish, say 15 mature 12" koi and 30 mature 4" goldfish, (all measurements excluding tails). In addition I would have an ever growing population of white mollies and guppies. These I find are essential to any pond to ensure there are no mosquitoes and, most importantly, to provide a popular fast food source for the multitude of kingfishers who seem to agree that koi and goldfish are not on the menu providing there is a plentiful supply of free molly meals. During the construction of this new fast food outlet progress was eagerly watched by five or six Pied Kingfishers perched over the site, clearly urging on the mason to ever greater efforts!



As always with any pond construction, it started with an argument with my mason, Renison, who has worked on and off for me for many years, about the right specification for the pond, Renison's stand being 'I only build ponds with a minimum life of at least 50 years'. He always wins hence a high specification of reinforced blocks and three layers of plaster.

The main construction was 4" machine cut coral blocks, with chicken wire as the framework for three layers of plaster, the final layer having a generous addition of water proof cement. The base consisted

of 6" rubble, weld mesh, and again three layers of plaster.

Before filling the pond we washed the surfaces several times to rid the walls, base, etc. of any loose cement and alkalinity. We then filled it with 3000gals of rainwater and then added small doses of vinegar to obtain a slightly acid ph - this took a week and we used a one pint bottle of vinegar. This was followed by the planting of five water lilies (three day flowering, two night flowering and five



differing colours) in large plastic washing bowls, some water cabbages and generous amounts of floating oxygenator plants. The pond water reached clarity and balance within a week (mainly because 25% of the water used to fill the pond came from established ponds which greatly speeds up the process) and our aimed surface coverage of 70% floating plants and water lily leafs was achieved in a very fast two weeks.

The pond has been stocked with 15 small koi and 30 goldfish. The cost of the small koi (who in their first month seem to have almost doubled in size) and 30 near mature goldfish was a very reasonable 2,250/- for the koi and a rather expensive 12,000/- for the goldfish plus a myriad of free white mollies. In addition I have added two local mud fish who help to keep the pond in balance.

A rather more expensive pond than my previous efforts but built to a high standard and already giving me much enjoyment. If I can be of any help to any other pond builder member please email your queries to me jmgolds@icloud.com
JMG

For a full analysis of John's costs to construct his pond please visit: <http://yellowgardening.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/JG-Pond-Costs.pdf>.

Gararagua, originally Ngararagua, a Masai name - Marion Langham

I was brought up on a farm on the Western slopes of Kilimanjaro. My parents bought the farm in 1947 from a German woman called Mrs Toblar, after they sold their hotel, The New Arusha Hotel. Living in an hotel was great fun, especially in Arusha, but going to the farm was even better. Gararagua consisted of 5,000 acres of virgin land with a river, fed from the melting snows of Kilimanjaro, running through it.



The house

In the beginning the land was given over to flowers that were planted for seed. What a sight - acres of Marigolds of different varieties (*Tagetes*), *Larkspur*, *Cosmos*, and *Barberson Daisy* now called *Gerbra*. In the evening the perfume from these flowers was quite overwhelming - 65 years on I can still recall it.



Sorting seeds

Whilst the seeds were giving a cash crop, we needed to diversify into other things. A herd of 30 Masai cows was purchased and then an Ayrshire bull acquired from Nakuru. The idea was to build up a herd of Ayrshire cross breeds which would have an inbuilt resistance to African diseases. To begin with we had terrible problems when trying to milk the cows as they were not domesticated and would try to resist any handling but we found that playing music helped calm them and they soon became used to it. The cattle turned out to be a great investment and provided a regular monthly income.

Of course, lots of problems occurred along the way. Watching that the milk

was not watered down was a great challenge and, with the lack of any veterinary assistance, we had to become skilled in homemade treatments - Tusker for a cow suffering from bloat; milk of magnesia for wounds; and the one that we believed saved the herd from ever coming down with Foot and Mouth was Kerol mixed into the salt. We used to grow fodder for the dairy herd, especially in the dry season, so throughout the year our yield was constant, producing an average of 200 gallons of milk a day.

The milk was collected and sold in Moshi by a Mr Babu, a very rotund Indian who had his fingers in many pies, but getting money out of him was often very difficult and we would sit in his shop in Moshi for hours, waiting and waiting for him to come and give us something, so we could pay our bills.

Once the cattle were sort of settled, we started to clear the land to plant wheat. Even as young children we were expected to help on the land and carry away the clumps of grass, etc. Some huge rocks that lay in the fields had to be blasted away. Eventually we had proper fields where the wheat grew beautifully - only for the elephants to come out of the forest and cause devastation, pulling up trunk loads of our precious hard earned crop.

After the elephants came the birds, in their millions. They would blacken the sky and eat the wheat. These were migratory birds that would roost in nearby trees so, to try and lessen the damage, we used to blow them up at night, sometimes killing over a thousand, but next day it seemed that there were even more. As well as the birds, one year we were invaded by army worm. They not only devoured our wheat but all the cattle grazing as well. If none of these disasters appeared, it seemed that nature thought we needed something to complain about so the wheat got rust.

To start with we had a small combine harvester that was pulled by a tractor. If it broke down, spares were a two day trip away in Nakuru. As the acreage of wheat increased so it became more and more difficult to get the harvest in before the rain so we invested in a self propelled combine, the very first to come to West Kilimanjaro. The excitement this caused amongst friends

and neighbours who came to see this new magic machine was wonderful.

We also planted coffee. To start with, it was only 20 acres on a flat part of the farm. We took water from the river so that we could irrigate and planted *Grevillea robusta* to give the coffee shade. These eventually grew into huge trees. Along the furrow that watered the coffee, we grew bananas - so many that everyone on the farm were able to feast on this delicious fruit.



Mum's cows

In order to plant more coffee, a large furrow was dug, that ran from the river valley to the next valley and then on to a third and in each valley we built huge dams so that, once the coffee was planted, it could be irrigated. The first of these dams was the most successful and was so large we even water skied on it.



The first combine in West Kilimanjaro

My mother continued to run the farm, even after Dad died in 1967, but it was eventually annexed by the Tanzanian Government in 1972. At that time the dairy herd was one of the most successful in the country, The authorities tried to keep it going but, when I visited it with my sister in 2010, the place was run down and struggling. A sad end to an inspired piece of colonial enterprise.

North Coast Moringa Day, 26th January 2017 - by Belle Nanton



Moringa flower



Vanessa in full flood

About 60 North Coast Horticultural Society members and their guests drove along the brilliantly sign-posted road into the heart of Matsangoni, just south of Mida Creek to learn all about *Moringa oleifera*. There Sonja Anderson of Kilifi Moringa Estates greeted us to give us an over view of this project.

Working with 312 outgrowers, Mohamed Ngala, Field Services Manager and Pwani University, graduate firstly explained how the farmers are given seedlings from the nursery and after one year this hardy, drought-resistant plant starts fruiting. Brought to Kenya by Indian workers on the railway, moringa plants are pruned to keep them short with each farmer paid per surviving tree, as an incentive to keep them going. "Chiefs at barazas tell the good news of these motivating fees," says Ngala.

Moringa Estates buy the seeds for oil pressing, paying KShs 250/= per kilo to outgrowers. Seeds are harvested from September to May. After inspecting the seedlings in the nursery, we then

watched women decorticating the seeds. From there we went to see the seeds being pressed for their oil which is used in cosmetics: four kilos of seeds yielding one kilo of oil. The machine extrudes a mixture used for animal feed. Moringa seeds are also used for flocculating water. The oil sits in various containers, waiting for the sediments to sink, the client then refining the final produce for the cosmetic industry.

MORINGA OLEIFERA
THE TREE OF LIFE

At 11.20, after the tour, we gathered in the meeting room where Moringa "fundi" Vanessa Aniere shared her enthusiastic expertise about this great plant, offering small containers of cold soup made from green moringa pods and delicious pesto treats, made from the

her colleague Otfried Zimmermann are currently translating his book from German into English).

Ann Robertson who grows oleifera in her garden, shared with Belle that a rare specimen has recently been found near Voi. When Ann lived in the Seychelles she said oleifera was known as the "Horseradish tree" for its spicy roots and its leaves, used to make soup. Ann added that since oleifera leaves are full of protein, it is added to famine relief supplies for refugee camps.

After the talk, we all unravelled our picnics, sidled up to the bar to get libations and settled down in a glow of happiness having learned about this wonderful plant which boosts food security, fosters rural development and supports sustainable land care, in addition to being a super food plant with great benefits. For those who missed out on this special day, Vanessa does sell *Moringa oleifera* products at the Malindi Farmers' market.



Moringa pods

nutritious leaves which also have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Vanessa also introduced us to KHS member and author Amin Ramadhan Karisa who learned his trade from his grandfather, a qualified herbalist, who died aged 119. Ramadhan graciously thanked us for "giving me your ears," adding that "moringa here is my life." (Belle Nanton and



Decorticating the seeds

Au revoir Winter - Belle Nanton talked to Elfried Hoogeweegen about the Keukenhof Gardens

Every year in the Autumn 40 Dutch gardeners get out their trowels and start 'lasagne planting' bulbs (three layers - tulips below grape hyacinth below daffodils) for the new season at the Keukenhof Gardens in Holland, thereby arranging for the various bulbs to come up in sequence over an eight-week period. In all, over three months, the gardeners plant seven million bulbs at the park which bills itself as "the most beautiful spring garden in the world": with good reason.



Grape hyacinth avenue snakes through the trees



Swathes of tulips border the river



More tulips as far as the eye can see

During the Season from mid-March to Mid-May, over two million visitors will come by to savour its tapestry of colour, taking barges along the castle moat, dropping into the special pavilions to see clusters of orchids, calla lilies and bromeliads and everywhere appreciating four centuries of Dutch expertise at teasing colour out of the soil in a kaleidoscope which heralds the end of a Northern Winter.

Only an hour's drive North of Martin and Elfried's home in Holland, Keukenhof is a place Elfried recommends visitors plan to allow at least a whole day to explore the full panorama of this gardening feat. New grass is sown before each opening season to ensure a fresh green backdrop, while all the bulbs are dug up at the end of the season, destroyed, and then after summer, the cycle starts again. One hundred of Holland's top bulb producers provide the bulbs to showcase their bulbs for gardens modest and grand.



Miscellaneous group tulip, var. unknown



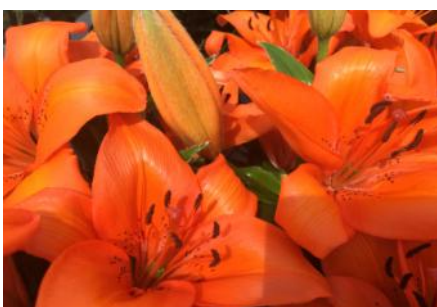
A fringed tulip, var. unknown



Single early tulip, var. unknown

The Dutch tulip tradition goes back 400 years, its genesis attributed to the great Flemish horticulturalist Clusius, celebrated at Keukenhof in the Historical Garden. This blooming is a tribute to his discovery of the tulip virus that caused flamed and feathered varieties, which led to the tulip mania of the mid-seventeenth century. Today, however, Elfried says there is a movement towards breeding back some of the ancient classic tulip shapes, before the frills. For her, when cut tulips are on sale in the shops, she says a bowl of classic yellow tulips in her home, does indeed say au revoir to winter.

Every year, some of the garden beds are theme planted. In 2016 the theme was the Dutch Golden age with beds designed to bloom in the shape of ancient gabled Dutch houses. The theme for 2017 is Dutch Design, which will once again combine swathes of tulips into veritable flower bulb mosaics. Stately trees trim some of the lawns with tasteful sculptures ubiquitous. There is something aesthetically so satisfying about the shape of a tulip flower: to see them en masse at Keukenhof is a huge visual treat.



Asiatic Lily, var. unknown



Single early tulip, var. unknown



Tiger lily, var. unknown

Che Shale Crab Farm - The hard and soft option

Che shale is, by its own definition, castaway-chic. It is a resort designed to attract the young and sporty for whom the rustic architecture and slightly primitive facilities are as appealing as the endless miles of deserted sandy beach and exhilarating kite surfing activities. It is also the home of Kenya's first crab farm - and that was the reason why 63 members of the North Coast District made their way North of Malindi to Mamburi and braved the sandy trail to this unique and secluded lodge.

Slightly overwhelmed by the numbers, Justin Aniere, the present owner, split the group in two and took each party in turn down to the nearby crab farm. There, he introduced them to his serried ranks of crab tanks, each holding dozens of



Ready fo lunch



Off with the old - on with the new

plastic cages, all housed under large open sided sheds, close to the shoreline. Each cage held a single crab, bought in as a youngster from the local fishermen, each sitting there, putting on weight until it was the right size to eat (bit like veal farming really).

Justin explained that, for a crab to grow, it has to molt, casting its shell and forming a bigger one. This process may happen three or four times a year, depending upon how old the crab is. When a crab molts, for a short time its new shell is soft and



The crab pens

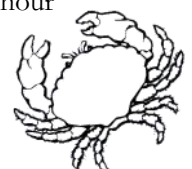


Cock crab ready for market

elastic, allowing it to absorb water and expand. At this time it is vulnerable and unprotected, though within a few hours the new shell starts to harden and in a day or two the crab is safe again. This 'soft shelled' version is considered a delicacy in many parts of the world and Justin is the first in Africa to offer it in his restaurant and for sale to others. Catching the crab as soon as it molts is crucial to the quality of the delicacy so they have to be monitored 24/7. A crab caught and treated within one hour of molting is worth \$9 each, dropping to half that within 2 hours and not worth harvesting after that.

After the farm tour, most people gathered in the lodge to sample the excellent set course barbeque lunch. Some, bearing in mind the farm, chose to go *à la carte* and have crab. Eagerly anticipating my first taste of soft shelled crab, mine, due to a communication error, turned out to be a regular crab in a sort of soup - undeniably tasty but, perhaps in keeping with the setting, somewhat feral in presentation. None the less, a sticky hour and a half later, I was fit to tackle the soft road home, after a most interesting day.

cb



Christmas Day 2016



Last year's traditional Christmas Feast on the Turtle Bay Dhow coincided with a closed training session of the NCSST (North Coast Synchronised Swimming Team), otherwise the 'Mida Marauders', here secretly filmed going through one of their more intricate routines by talent scout, Yelizaveta Nantonovitch, rumoured to be part of the intelligence network of the main opposition, the Swaziland Swingers, in the forthcoming Pan African games.



Head Coach, John Golds, proved to be a stern taskmaster and kept the team hard at it whilst grabbing a well earned snack and discussing tactics with Chief Choreographer, Mike Norton-Griffiths and former star, Pauline Baletto.

Speaking afterwards at the teams luxury headquarters, Coach Golds said

'I am confident our performance will set the sporting world ablaze and gentlemen in England now a-bed shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here with us upon this Christmas day'.

He followed that by saying

'I shall also look forwards to seeing everyone again at the same time, same place, next year. Bookings are already being taken and anyone interested should contact me on 0202 335929 or by email to jmgolds@icloud.com'.

Wakefield wonder!

John Clegg lives in Malindi but was brought up in Wakefield. He recently sent me a cutting about Wakefield



WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT WAKEFIELD?

WHERE IS IT?

WHAT IS IT FAMOUS FOR?

GIVE UP?



Wakefield is part of the Rhubarb Triangle, an area of West Yorkshire that has grown the best quality forced rhubarb for hundreds of years. It's so good Yorkshire Forced Rhubarb has received protected name status alongside other famous delicacies such as Parma Ham and Champagne.

Every February Wakefield holds a rhubarb festival where, in addition to every sort of rhubarb themed drink and dish, one can buy delicate pink, arm length, stalks of freshly pulled rhubarb, grown in candle lit sheds around the county.

They certainly make our tired little sticks available here look a bit sad. As usual Wikipedia has more to say on the subject. Search 'Rhubarb Triangle'.

THE GARDENS OF ALCATRAZ - by Katie Nanton

THE 'ROCK' AN UNEXPECTED FACET OF THE INFAMOUS FORMER US PENITENTIARY IN SAN FRANCISCO BAY



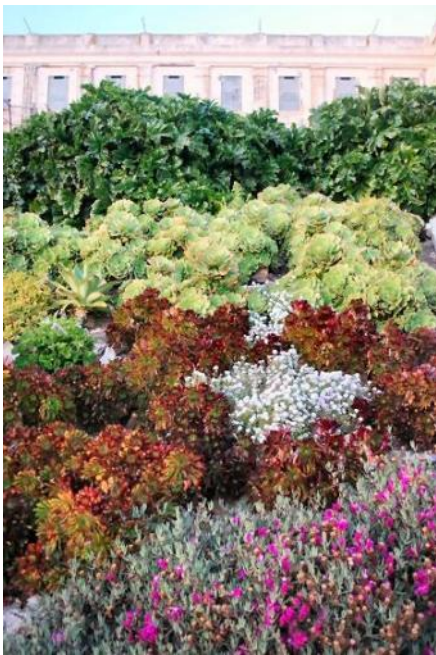
whom logged over 7,000 hours last year alone — as well as permanent gardeners who take care of weeding, planting, composting, mulching, and deadheading beneath the island's famous squawking seagulls. (Alcatraz is named after its sea birds, from the Spanish word *alcatrazes* for pelicans.)

Alcatraz. The very name conjures up visions of famous inmates like Al “Scarface” Capone and recalls well-cited facts such as: “Nobody successfully escaped.” But for all we know about Alcatraz, few people realize that many of its prisoners were also gardeners.

On the main dock, freshly cut blooms were laid out for visiting family members to take home but, when high operating costs shuttered the prison, these verdant grounds were left to become tangled and overgrown.

Thanks to the Garden Conservancy, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, and the National Park Service, the Gardens of Alcatraz no longer languish. “When the garden

These days, visitors can ferry over and explore five main gardens: Main Road, Rose Terrace, Officers’ Row, Cell House Slope, and the Prisoner Gardens on the West side. The California climate continues to allow for an abundance of plant life, from fig trees



Starting in the 1860s and lasting until the San Francisco maximum security prison closed in 1963, inhabitants of Alcatraz — including staff, inmates, and their families — built up gardens of hardy species to soften the harsh environment of “the Rock” and lift residents’ spirits. The warden’s secretary, Fred Reichel, became honorary leader of the cause, researching which seedlings would survive with little water (Mediterranean varieties prospered) and advocating that prisoners be allowed to help with their cultivation. In those days, plots brimmed with poppies, fuchsias, and calla lilies, while a rosy carpet of hardy ice plants grew so thickly over the rocky slopes it was visible from the mainland.

preservation project began in 2003, a plant inventory was done and it was found there were more than 200 species of plants still surviving on their own and coping with the neglect of over 40 years,” explains Shelagh Fritz, Alcatraz Gardens program manager. “Today, we have over 300 species of plants on the island, all of them in keeping with the historic character of the gardens.” This is in large part thanks to a team of volunteers — approximately 700 of



to purple stalks of Pride of Madeira (*Echium candicans*) to succulents like *Aloe arborescens* and *Agave attenuata*, which bloom in the spring. “The *Rosa ‘Bardou Job’* is usually in bloom then as well”, says Fritz, detailing one of the more unique specimens of Alcatraz. The rose counts among the rarest of all the world’s varieties and was thought to be extinct until it was found growing behind the warden’s house. It has now been well-planted rightfully back on Alcatraz and, for many rose-lovers, is worth the trip alone.

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<http://www.nuvomagazine.com>

Plant and Insect Values - Steven Baya

On the 6th December 2016 is when it all took place. Tour Guides and other individuals from different occupations and areas gathered at Suyian Soul camp in Laikipia, ready for the one week study on Plants and Duds of East Africa. A formal introduction was made by each participant and then the light green was on. The study involved a lot of field activities - collecting and identifying species and also determining their value to humanity.



Plants are life. Humans and animals depend on them for food, medicine, tools, building materials, decorations, shelter and so forth. Unfortunately the native vegetation is being changed, destroyed, and diminished as population increases create a need for more shelter and so to more and more housing developments. However, what people must bear in mind is that plants are part of our culture; they are our past and we will be impoverished if we don't have them as part of our future as well. Africa has vast fund of valuable knowledge on the medicinal use of flora and fauna. This ancient information has been handed down by word of mouth over generations, teaching us how valuable plants were in our lives in the past and still are to present and future generations, therefore there's need to record this information for posterity.

Medicinal plants are a very important part of everyday life in Africa, not only for treating people but also for treating livestock. Herbal medicine information is very crucial to communities especially in the rural area, as this can improve the welfare of their livestock and their lives as well. Today, plants are the basis of many modern drugs, usually derived from the barks, roots or leaves of the trees. Whilst at Suyian, we had the opportunity to actually taste tea made from the bark of the acacia tree, and also to learn different ways of using common medicinal trees for treatment.

So plants are very important to us - but insects are too. Insects are one of the most interesting and diverse groups of the creatures on earth. They live almost everywhere in the world, from the hottest pkaces to the coldest. They are important organisms in our ecosystem, having a great impact on human lives and livelihood. Insects recycle nutrients and energy, breaking down biomass, building and aerating soil, disperse seeds and pollinate plants. This activity is hugely important as, without it, there would be no fruit or crop for the farmer to harvest. In some African communities, some insects like the grasshopper and termite are considered a delicacy, thus acting as a food supplement. The problem is that there are pestilential insects as well as beneficial ones. Mosquitoes spread malaria and other diseases. The maize weevil can destroy the equivalent of 4 bags of maize to every ten gathered. This imposes a huge tax on harvests, and so farmers need to come up with sustainable ways of controlling pests without using pesticides which destroy their friends as well as their enemies.

Yamgambo

Tupende Wadudu na Miti yetu. - Steven Baya

Mnamo tarehe sita mwezi wa kumi na mbili mwaka wa elfu mbili na kumi na sita, viongozi wa ziara za wageni pamoja na watu wa kutoka tajriba mbalimbali waliungana pamoja katika makazi ya wageni ya Suyian Soul, huko Laikipia tayari kwa masomo ya kuhusu wadudu na miti ya Afrika Mashariki. Kama ilivyo kawaida, watu walianza kwa kufahamiana kisha safari ya masomo ikaanza. Masomo haya yaligusia mambo mengi sana hasa kwa kutafuta, kuthibitisha na pia kujua manufaa ya wadudu na miti kwa maisha yetu ya kila siku.

Kwanza kabisa, ningependa kusema ya kwamba miti ni maisha; hii ina mana kwamba binadamu na wanyama hutegemea miti kwa kupata chakula, madawa, vifaa vya kujengea, marembo, makazi na kadhalika. Ila haya yote yanakumbwa na athari kubwa kwa maana maandhari ya kawaida ya sehemu za kiasili zimebadilishwa kwa kiasi kikubwa na kwa upesi sana kupitia kwa hulka potovu za binadamu. Kadri ya binadamu wanavyo ongezeko duniani, huleta uhitaji wa makazi zaidi na hatimae njia mabadala za kujitafutia na kujiendeleza. Yote hayo tisa, kumi ni kwamba; binadamu wanapaswa kutambua yakuwa miti ni msingi wa jamii zetu, tokea kale na hata siku za usoni. Hivyo basi tusipo zingatia mahifadhi ya miti yetu kwa karne zijazo, huenda tukajuta. Bara la Afrika lina wadudu na miti mingi sana ya kiasili yenye manufaa kama vile kutengeneza madawa, ujumbe huu wa kale umeeza kuduma kwa kuwasilishwa tokea karni moja hadi nyengine kwa njia ya mdomo, ili kuweza kufahamu jinsi wadudu na miti imekua muhimu kwa maisha ya binadamu tokea kale, iko leo na itakua hata siku zijazo.

Miti yenye uwezo wa kuundiwa dawa, inamanufaa kwa maisha yetu ya kila siku, hususani bara la afrika na si kwa kujitibu sisi binadamu tu, bali hata kwa mifugo yetu. Ujumbe wa dawa za miti ya kiasili ni muhimu sana kwa jamii wanaoishi mashambani kwani utaweza kuwajulisha njia mbali mbali za kuwajali mifugo yao na maisha yao kwa ujumla. Katika karne hii ya ishirini na moja, miti imekuwa ndio tegemeo kubwa kwa kuweza kutengeneza madawa, sehemu kama mizizi, maghamba na majani ndio hutumika sana. Kwa bahati nzuri, tuliweza kuonja chai iliyotengenezwa kutumia maghamba ya Mdawa (*acacia tortilis*) tukiwa Suyian Soul.

Kwa upande mwingine tena, wadudu hawajaachwa nyuma. Wao ni baadhi ya viumbe wanao vutia katika macho ya wengi duniani. Wadudu wanauwezo wakuishi sehemu mbali mbali hapa ulimwenguni tokea kwenye joto la kupita kiwango hadi kwenye baridi ya kugandisha. Viumbe hawa ni muhimu sana kwa maandhari yetu, wana manufaa makuu kwa maisha ya binadamu na uhai wao. Wadudu huweza kusaga virutubisho na nguvu, kupea rotuba mchanga, kutawanyisha mbegu sehemu mbali mbali na pia kusaidia kwa kuivisha matunda. Hili ni la msingi kwa kuwa wakulima huweza kuvuna matunda yao na kuuza ili kuweza kujikimu kimaisha. Vile vile, wadudu huwa lishe kwa jamii kadhaa katika bara la Afrika, kwa mfano parare na nzige. Ijapo kua wadudu huhofiwa kwa kusambaza magonjwa, huweza kuogofwa kwa kuharibu mimea, na pia kula nafaka zilizo hifadhiwa. Hatimae hii huleta hasara kubwa kwa wakulima, sasa kuna uhitaji wa haraka wakukabiliana na jambo hili kuliko kutumia madawa yenye kemikali ili kuwazuia.

Book Review

THE SECRET LIFE OF PLANTS

A Fascinating Account of the Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Relations Between Plants and Man

This book explores the world of plants and its relation to mankind. It is full of interesting stories, historical anecdotes, and scientific data, including remarkable information about plants as lie detectors and as ecological sentinels. It describes their ability to adapt to human wishes, their response to music, their curative powers, and their ability to communicate with man. The book shows how plants and humans inter-relate, with plants exhibiting empathetic and spiritual relationships and showing reactions.

The book has been in print for forty years. My version is dated 1989, and I was delighted to see its still available via amazon.com, and that some of the reviews are as recent as 2017 so it is still being bought right now.

Other sources of information on this fascinating subject:

<http://www.viewzone.com/plants.html>

<http://theweek.com/article/index/239813/do-plants-have-feelings>

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/do-plants-think-daniel-chamovitz/>

Reviewed by Vivien Wallis

Komanza - an inspirational project



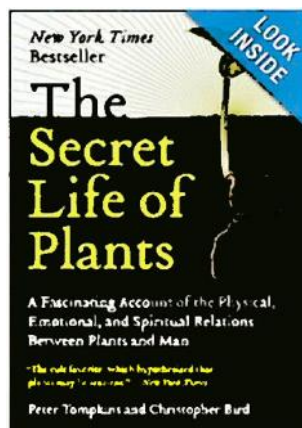
Right on our Kilifi doorstep, in anticipation of the long rains, Komaza plans to plant trees with 3500 farmers throughout most of Kilifi County.

Founded a decade ago by Tevis Howard (of Kemri), Komaza has worked with 7000 farm families who have planted more than two million trees for eventual commercial end use. The NGO's main funders remain the Mulago Foundation and the Draper Richards Foundation out of Southern California.

Jeff Bates, Director of Farmer Relations, says that while some farmers do grow indigenous species, Eucalyptus and Melia are the predominant species planted.

On our trips to and from Mombasa, we can see the Komaza forests which have grown up in our harsh, water challenged coastal environment. Belle Nanton

Visit <http://www.komanza.com>



Isn't nature wonderful?



This photograph shows the fluffy contents of a seed pod of the *Ceiba pentandra* tree. The former is commonly referred to as kapok and hence, the tree as the kapok tree. When I first spotted the opened seed pod lying on the ground crammed full of this cotton-like fluff, my response was: "Isn't nature wonderful?" But beyond its appearance, kapok has been of commercial value in various parts of the world particularly in south-east Asia and notably in Java: the characteristics of the fibre - lightweight, buoyant, bounciness, and resistant to water (though very flammable) - has led to it being used as an alternative to down as filling in mattresses, pillows, zafus (meditation cushions), stuffed toys such as teddy bears, and previously life-jackets, and for insulation. But, over the last 30 years, the market for kapok fibre has declined considerably with the introduction of synthetic materials such as polyester stuffing and foam plastics. There is still though a preference to use kapok for stuffing teddy bears: apparently, it gives them a quite different feel to modern polyester stuffing.

But now there is renewed interest in kapok especially for textile applications. Previously, the fibre has been difficult to spin as the fibres are too smooth, slippery and brittle but developments in technology have made it possible to spin a blend of 3 parts kapok and 2 parts cotton into yarn. Techniques have also been developed to make kapok non-flammable. [1] [2]

Meanwhile, here in Kilifi, there is a small market for kapok as filling for cushions, pillows, bolsters, and futons including ones for dogs. The fruits of the kapok tree are harvested and hulled with the brown-black seeds and fibre removed from the pods by hand. The fibres are then "cleaned" naturally by the sun.

My focus has been on the kapok fibre but just a few words on the kapok tree itself...a majestic rainforest tree that can grow up to 60 metres tall with a trunk up to 3 metres in diameter, hence its need to be stabilised by buttresses. [3]

Wendy Taylor

1 *Ceiba pentandra* From Wikipedia ,29/1/2017

2 <http://www.wildfibres.co.uk/html/kapok.html> 4/2/2017

3 <http://www.wildfibres.co.uk/html/kapok.html> 4/2/2017

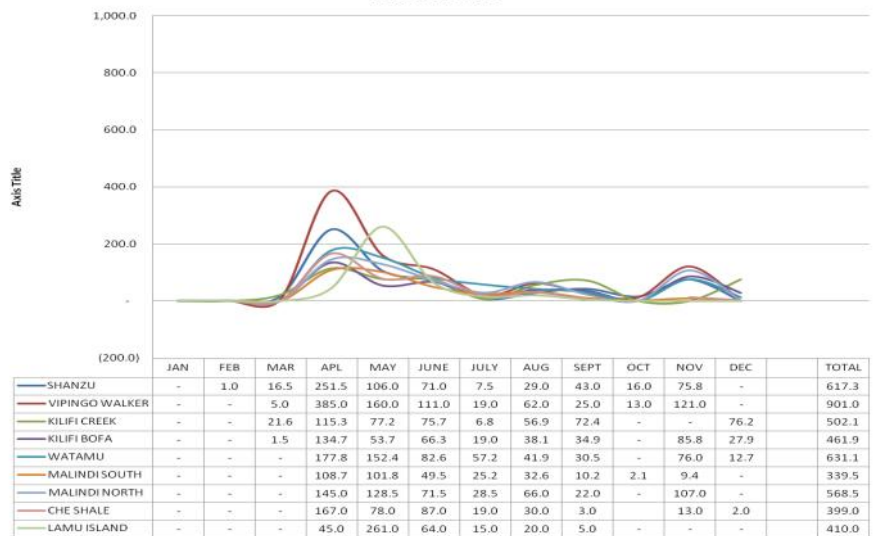
Chlorophyll

We've all heard of Chlorophyll. It is the green coloration in leaves. More precisely it is the molecule that absorbs sunlight and uses its energy to synthesise carbohydrates from CO₂ and water. This process is known as photosynthesis and is the basis for sustaining the life processes of all plants. Since animals and humans obtain their food supply by eating plants, photosynthesis can also be said to be the source of our life.

But do you know who discovered that plants produce oxygen; who lost their head before he could take that discovery further; who 'twigged' that light played a part in the process; and who finally worked out what was happening

Have a look at http://www.chm.bris.ac.uk/motm/chlorophyll/chlorophyll_h.htm. It's fascinating.

North Coast District Rainfall 2016



Natures Geometry - through many links to John Golds

Know your Soil

Soil is the lifeblood of the garden, providing vital moisture and nutrients to plants. Soil is one of earth's most precious resources. It provides the support and nourishment that plants need to grow and produce. Getting to know your soil is easy because there are simple tests which will tell you whether its clay, chalky, silty, sandy or loam, and knowing that will enable you to have a flourishing garden

There are more microorganisms in a handful of soil than the entire population on earth. Also it takes about 500 years to produce just under an inch of topsoil, which is the most productive layer of soil. Soil is a living system with a delicate balance. Learning as much as you can about soil, will help you decide what needs to be done to it to make it healthy and to determine which kind of plants will flourish in it.....

These paragraphs introduce an interesting and informative article published in Mombasa District's first Newsletter of 2017. The author goes on to discuss identifying a soil type, ways of improving soil, and listing a series of simple soil tests, including checking pH.

To read the full article go to <http://yellowgardening.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/Knowing-your-soil.pdf>



Sunflower



Crassula Buddha's Temple Plant



Aloe polyphylla



Gazania



Camelia



Viola sacculus

For your Diary

APRIL

MONDAY, 3RD - VIPINGO AM, KILIFI PM

WEDNESDAY, 5TH - MALINDI AM

MIZIZIPOWER FIELD DEMONSTRATION

MiziziPower is an organic soil improver and fertiliser, made in Kenya. Rolf Davey is General Manager of GRE (Kenya) Ltd and will spend ½ a day at each venue showing gardeners how to use his product.

MAY

THURSDAY, 25TH, AT 10.00 AM

PLANT ROAD SHOW AT MARION'S HOUSE, KILIFI

Inspired by the popular TV show, members are invited to bring a plant of rare or peculiar interest for exhibition and discussion. To be followed by curry lunch at a cost of Ksh 500 per head. Cash bar.

JUNE

DATES TO BE CONFIRMED

BROMELIAD TALK BY NOEL HAYS AT RUPERT'S HOUSE, KILIFI

Noel Hays, the well known Bromeliad specialist, will chat and discuss his subject.

JULY

THURSDAY, 27TH, AT 10.00 AM

TALK ON FRENCH TISANE PRODUCTS AT THE DRIFTWOOD BEACH CLUB, MALINDI.

Hercule Poirot always drank tisane to stimulate 'the little grey cells'. Now you can do the same.

OCTOBER

DATES TO BE CONFIRMED

UP COUNTRY SAFARI

Plans to visit some special gardens around Laikipia and Mount Kenya are still being pursued.

Editorial

A momentous year. After 12 years in the Chair, John Golds is stepping down and handing over control to Marion Langham. During that time, his inspired drive and leadership has seen the North Coast District change its name, break the 300 member barrier, start up The Shamba Times, institute the annual Festival of Flowers, and become one of the most active Districts in the Kenya Horticultural Society. He has been a regular and acerbic attendee at Council and constantly kept them on their toes. The new Chair has proved herself full of ideas and initiatives but will be grateful to have John at her elbow to guide her. We wish them both success in their reversed roles.

One of the things our District has been rather good at is giving a helping hand to people and places in need of a little assistance. In our last September issue we reported on the volunteer work done to clean up the Portugese Chapel Garden. Then, in early March, Marion and Katana spent three days on the South Coast giving a couple of gardeners courses. We very much hope that, as a result, people there will feel motivated to start up their own District. Also, in this issue we report on the one week field trip to Suyian Soul Camp in Laikipia which we sponsored for members Jonathan and Steven Baya. A full report on their activities is featured on page 10 - and to make matters better, it is bi-lingual. Sadly, as most people will be aware, Suyian Soul Camp is one of the places badly affected by the pastoralist invasions of recent months and was severely damaged in the attacks. It is to be hoped that the Government will get matters under control soon.

It is no secret that lots of what we print has been borrowed from the thousands of magazines and newsletters published on the web. We always try to attribute material where we can and I find it both surprising and uplifting how generous people are with their copyright. I think we have only ever been refused reprint permission once in the four years we have been in existence.

cb

KENYA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

FIND US ON THE WEB

WWW.KENYAHS.COM



The Shamba Times is published quarterly for the benefit of its Members by the North Coast District of The Kenya Horticultural Society. Articles for publication are welcome and should be addressed to the Editorial Office, as should any comments, suggestions, or corrections.

The Kenya Horticultural Society was established in 1923 for the purpose of stimulating and increasing interest and knowledge of gardens and plants in Kenya. The North Coast District extends from Vipingo in the South to Malindi in the North. Annual membership is Ksh 1000 per person (Ksh 1300 per couple). Corporate Membership is offered at Ksh 2000. Members gardeners are accepted for limited membership at a fee of Ksh 500 per annum.

M-Pesa payments can be made on 0702 767177

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