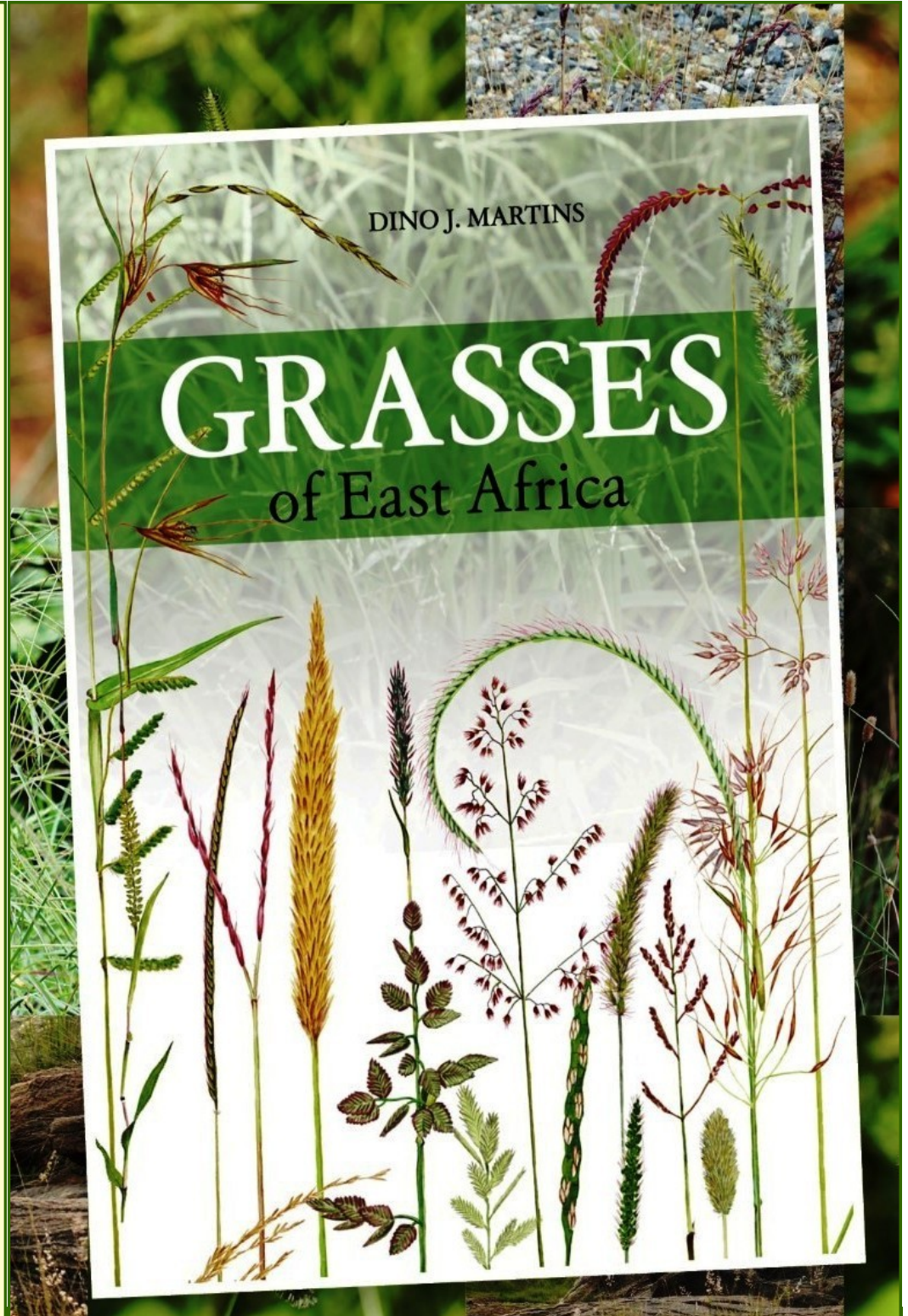


April
2022

Vol 9 Issue 2

The Shamba Times

Kenya Horticultural Society North Coast District



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North Coast District



Chairman's Notes

Welcome to the April 2022 edition of The Shamba Times. In this edition we report to members on our first open AGM since 2019. Thank you to all members who managed to attend the AGM and who signed off on our Treasurer's Report and supported the election of our NCD office bearers for the forthcoming year.

The NCD committee meets around six times a year to plan monthly meetings and to support our regular events such as the annual Gardeners' Courses, the NCD pop-up shop, our AGM and our yearly fund-raising raffle. Committee members do a great deal of work for the Society, much of it behind the scenes, but it is thanks to them that our monthly meetings and other NCD events seem to run so smoothly. I would like to thank each of our committee for his or her work and commitment to the district. Where would we be without them?

Earlier this month, on our WhatsApp platform, I shared the 2021 North Coast District rainfall chart compiled from rainfall figures measured on Bofa Road in Kilifi. The chart showed that rainfall in 2021 was significantly below average, But why did rain not fall in 2021? Was it global warming? A Nino or a Nina? Just bad luck?

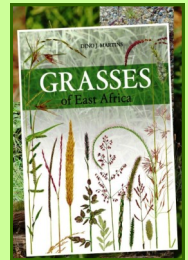
I am sure we all know that gardening is never without its challenges. Although our district is blessed with a lovely warm and sunny climate, we never seem to have as much rain as would wish for, many of our members garden on coral not sweet soil, and we seem to have our fair share of bugs and dudus to deal with, not to mention strong winds and salty air. And yet we accept the challenges, we find and store water wherever we can, we bring in top soil, we make our own compost to feed our plants, and we are taught to embrace the bugs as part of a natural and essential biodiversity.

Gardening often seems to me to be something of a metaphor for life. Indeed our plants and trees go through a life cycle much like our own. We care for them, as others care for us. We feed and nurture them, as we ourselves are fed and nurtured. And we are saddened when a plant or tree dies. But we start again, we plant again, we hope again. And the cycle of life keeps turning. With us, or without us. Life goes on.

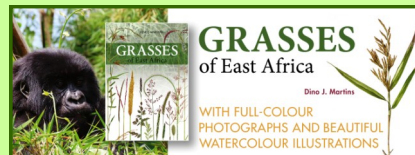
Crispin Sharp.

Grasses of East Africa

Our cover photo this month is a cover. That of Dr. Dino Martins' latest book, Grasses of East Africa that was launched on the coast at our North Coast District AGM on March 30th.



This new volume is a guide to the enormous variety of grasses found in East Africa and will allow readers to identify any grass type they find. The book will be on sale and available to members through our NCD pop-up shop at monthly meetings, and/or through KHS. Please get in touch if you would



like to purchase a copy.



KENYA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
Gardening Kenya

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. Of course we welcome new members, so why not see if you can introduce a new member to us? this quarter?

Contacts

Chairman **Mr Crispin Sharp**
sharpcrispin@hotmail.com

Hon Sec This post remains open

Hon Treasurer **Mr Rupert Partridge**
rdbpartridge@gmail.com

NCD MPESA 0702 767 177

NCD Shop **To be announced.**



NCD 2022 AGM



The KHS North Coast District 2022 AGM was held at 1000 on Wednesday 30 March 2022 at the Turtle Bay Beach Club in Watamu. Advice of the day and time of the meeting were sent



out to all NCD members by email along with a copy of the minutes of the 2021 AGM, the 2021/22 Chairman's Report and Treasurer's Statement, and an Agenda for the 2022 meeting. The AGM was also promoted to members on the NCD WhatsApp group. The AGM included a Plant Sale, a Lunch, and the draw for the 2022 NCD Raffle.

The 2022 meeting began with apologies from members unable to attend the meeting, and a moment's silence to reflect on members who had passed away since the last meeting. 84 current members attended the 2022 meeting.

There then followed approval of the Minutes of the 2021 AGM, and of the 2021/22 Chairman's Report and Treasurer's statement.

A vote of thanks was proposed to Elfried Hoogeweegen who is stepping down from the NCD committee to retire to the Netherlands after many years of service and 12 years running the NCD pop-up shop.

The current committee was then re-elected to serve for 2022.

The meeting then heard a 10 minute presentation made by the Founder and CEO of Kuhenza and a Kuhenza Board member. Kuhenza is a registered NGO advocating for the education and advancement of young people with disabilities in the County of Kilifi. Kuhenza has asked for the support of NCD in landscaping their new headquarters outside Gede, in training a gardener for the site, and in the design and construction of a model vegetable garden that can be used to raise awareness of what people with disabilities can achieve to help provide their families with food.

Finally our key-speaker, Dr. Dino Martins, gave a 45 minute talk on the importance of Grasses as a family of plants and their role in the broader horticultural, food production and economic environment. Dino also launched his new book, Grasses of East Africa, copies of which were on sale at the meeting and which were snapped up by members eager to learn more. We offer great thanks to Dino Martins for his talk.



There then followed a three-course lunch at Turtle Bay Beach Club and the draw of prizes for the NCD 2022 Raffle. Members who were unable to attend the meeting but who have won prizes will be informed accordingly by telephone.

Special thanks are due to Holly, who took on responsibility for setting up the meeting, and who managed logistics, liaison with TBBC, the plant sale, the raffle and much besides. Thank you to all members of the NCD committee for their support for the event. Biggest thanks are due to *you* our members for attending the AGM and for your continuing support to the Society.

Miss. Olive Collyer and the KHS

As we approach the KHS Centenary in 2023, we share with members the second part of our piece about Olive Collyer, one of the co-founding members of the Kenya Horticultural Society.

We had always thought that our Great Aunt Olive was rather 'kali' and we were a bit frightened of her, but we think now that her formidable manner belied great kindness. Victoria Kabetu, who lived on the coffee estate, remembers that her father became – at Olive's instigation - the first African train engine driver in Kenya. Victoria also remembers as a child wandering along the murram road with other *watoto* when Olive would drive by in her truck, stop and gather all the children into the



back to take them to her house for a children's party. Kit Taylor told us how, when bread was rationed during World War I, Olive gave her entire ration to the African children and she thought nothing of sitting up all night in the hut of a sick child.

Kit and Charles Taylor would always invite Olive to Christmas dinner and she would be placed on Charles's right; until one year when Kit moved her further down the table so that she and Charles would not talk endlessly about manure.

Dr and Lady Muriel Jex-Blake, who lived across the valley from *N'Dumbuini*, were also close friends. They lived on their own coffee farm known as Kyuna. Dr Jex, as he was known, edited "**Gardening in East Africa**." It seems, from what their daughter, Daphne, told me in the early sixties, that Muriel loved trying to grow rare plants and, as one wandered along the paths, under trellised arches of blooms, one could see that she planted plants where she thought they would flourish. This was much more important than the design of the garden. People flocked to look at the plants growing where Lady Muriel (and later Daphne) had thought they would be happy. How much I could have learned! But I was then a dizzy youngster.

We believe that there is no record of how Olive and Muriel set out to found an agricultural and horticultural society or how it was funded. It is possible that some documents about it were destroyed in an awful stable fire on Olive's farm, where not only some horses perished, but also stored family papers were destroyed. We have some small silver replicas of **The Sutton Challenge Cup** presented by Suttons of Reading, England. It seems logical to think that Suttons may have offered the newly formed society some funding also.

Part Two



Replica of
THE SUTTON CHALLENGE CUP
The Agricultural and Horticultural
Society of Kenya
Presented by Suttons of Reading
England

Olive Collyer was known as “*Nya Weru*” – which, we are told, means the woman who works. And work she did. We are told she “*entered whole-heartedly into all those interests and activities which come the way of a Kenya settler. Her coffee shamba alone might reasonably have been a whole-time job; but she found time for so much else – horses, dogs, flowers*” She refused to be called *Memsahib* and was always addressed as *Bibi*.

When Olive died, our mother – her niece, Joy Williams - told us that the church of St Mary’s was full and many people had to remain outside in the church-yard. The mourners were from all the communities. The writer in the local press of “**An Appreciation: Olive Collyer**” – we think it was probably Lady Muriel – wrote: “*The large number of Africans who thronged to her funeral was a sign of the deep respect and affection of her African neighbours, whom she had always helped with such unselfish care. It is the simple truth to say that Olive Collyer spent her whole life for others, without thought for herself.*”



Gloriosa Virescens
painted by Margaret
Collyer
for “*Gardening in
East Africa*”, edited
by Dr A.J. Jex-Blake

***Kaya* Forests and Biodiversity**

The *Kaya* Forests

The *Kaya* Forests, of which over fifty have been identified, are situated in the coastal plains and hills of Kenya and are distributed irregularly along a coastal strip approximately 50 kilometres wide and some 250 kilometres long, which stretches north to south across the counties of Kilifi, Mombasa and Kwale. They are small, residual patches, ranging in area from 10 to over 400 hectares, of the once extensive diverse lowland forest of Eastern Africa lying within the Zanzibar-Inhambane Regional Mosaic (UNESCO classification).

Kayas (a *kaya* meaning a homestead) are regarded as sacred by the Mijikenda community and, indeed, owe their existence directly to the beliefs, culture and history of this dominant ethnic grouping in the coastal region. According to local traditions, the forest patches sheltered small, fortified villages of the various groups or tribes (Mijikenda means “nine tribes”) when they first appeared in the region three centuries or more ago pursued by northern enemies. Distinct signs of past settlement and use are still evident in many of the *kaya* forests where the historical villages may have stood.

As conditions became more secure particularly since the late nineteenth century, the groups left the forest refuges and began to clear and cultivate the surrounding areas. While reducing the size of the forested areas, the *kaya* sites remained largely intact, being protected in varying degrees by the communities led by their local *kaya* elders, as sacred places and burial grounds.

As the twentieth century progressed however, the *kayas* came under increasing threat with their gradual encroachment for subsistence farming and other developments. There was also growing concern among local *kaya* elders, conservationists, and scientists about the integrity of *kayas* which culminated in an initiative taken by the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) to have them provided with some protected status as National Monuments. But such protection was to go beyond the cultural and sacred. A number of botanical surveys of the Kenyan Coastal forests undertaken by the NMK (notably, Robertson 1987; Robertson and Luke, 1993) brought to light the botanical richness and diversity of the *kayas*. It was these ‘newly-found’ aspects of the forests that also needed protection.

The Coastal Forest Conservation Unit

And so, in 1992, into being came the Coastal Forest Conservation Unit (CFCU) under the NMK with donor (World Wide Fund for Nature) support to take forward both the protection of the *kayas* **and** the conservation of their biodiversity in partnership with the *kaya* elders and local community. In this role, CFCU promotes the use of traditional rules and regulations but also co-ordinates enforcement action with the Kenya Forest Service and/or other agencies such as the police where the threat is of an external nature and beyond the capabilities of the elders. Since its inception, the Unit, which has two offices, in Kilifi and Kwale, has ensured the gazettement of 39 sites under the National Museums & Heritage Act, *Kaya Kauma* as shown in the sketch being one such example. Furthermore, in 1999, it set off on the long journey of having the “Sacred Mijikenda *Kaya* Forests” inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. Placing a site on the list not only endows it with global recognition but also provides an additional layer of protection with access to funding for conservation and research activities.

Compiled by Wendy Taylor in conversation with Anthony Githitho, Coordinator, Coastal Forest Conservation Unit

This was achieved in July 2008 - with the Unit being charged with fulfilling a set of tasks to comply with UNESCO requirements, which it continues to work upon today. CFCU's scope has also expanded to coastal forest biodiversity in general, with the Unit now being part of the Centre for Biodiversity of the NMK.

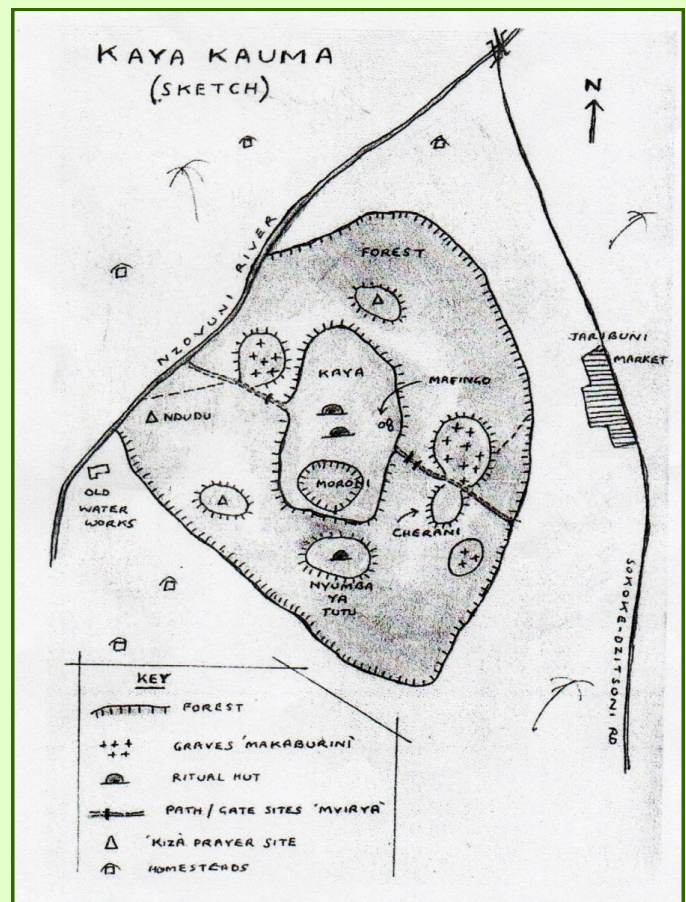
Biodiversity

The rich biodiversity of the *kaya* forests reflects the fact that they form part of the Eastern African coastal forests, which are regarded as important for biodiversity conservation globally. Accordingly, the proportion of *endemic* species in these forests is consistently high for all biological species groups including plants, birds, insects, and amphibians, as is *species rarity*. The term '*endemic*' means being native to a single defined geographic location and found naturally nowhere else, while '*species rarity*' refers to a group of organisms that are very uncommon, scarce, or infrequently encountered (and distinct from being '*endangered*' or '*threatened*').

In the case of the *kayas*, these characteristics have been particularly documented for plant species. Thus, studies on plant diversity values including *endemism* and *species rarity* have shown that, despite their relatively small size, **seven** out of the twenty coastal forested sites with the highest conservation value in Kenya were the **sacred *kaya* forests**. Furthermore, more than half Kenya's rare plants are found in the Coast Region, many within the *kaya* forests and include, for example, *Cynometra greenwayii*, *Diospyros shimbaensis*, *Cola porphyrantha*, *Uvariadendron gorgonis*, and *Bauhinia mombassae*.

Biodiversity Conservation

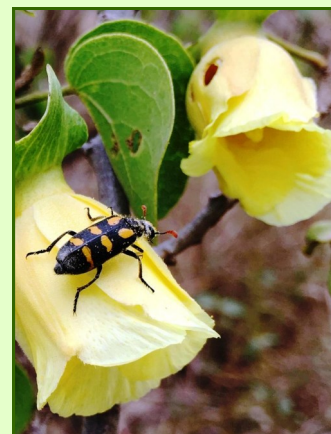
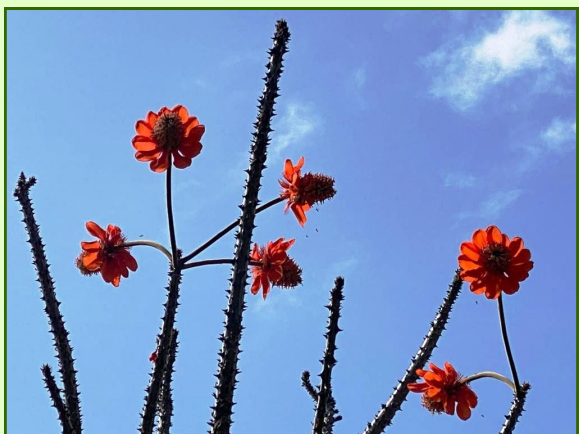
The fact that sacred *kaya* sites play such an important role in biodiversity conservation undoubtedly poses some challenges: a threat to the former is a threat to biodiversity. How widespread a recognition or an understanding is there of this role? How well-equipped are the *kaya* elders to act as guardians as the shared, common cultural values and traditional belief systems applied in protection measures become eroded? What about the external threats that have to be protected against such as agricultural encroachment, population pressures, and demand for forest products, as well as the negative aspects of the wider socio-economic and environmental context in which these forests exist?



Kaya Forests and Biodiversity continued.

As the lead agency in coast forest conservation, the CFCU promotes a range of conservation strategies, both *in situ* and *ex situ*, to support the *kayas* and beyond. *In situ* involves protection or policing of the natural site to preserve the plants species where they are found, basically the role of the *kaya* elders. *Ex situ* involves deliberate planting and/or propagation of the species away from its natural source area to ensure that it is widely spread and less vulnerable to total extinction in nature. Such an approach has been promoted as an income-generating alternative to the exploitation of the natural resources within the forests: local people are encouraged to plant indigenous plants which contain useful properties on their farms and even trade in them, thereby increasing the presence of such plants albeit outside the *kaya*. A similar approach involves the *kaya* elders/local community collecting seeds from the forests and selling them - to nurserymen, for instance, for propagation, who in turn would sell the plants onto customers such as KHS NCD members, an approach being promoted by a number of non-governmental organisations such as WWF and Botanic Gardens Conservation International.

And for us with coastal gardens, our *ex situ* conservation effort could be to plant any one or more of the following indigenous plants, one rare and some others endangered, which are very attractive and deserve to be better known: ***Erythrina saccleuxii***, *Gigasiphon macrosiphon*, ***Hibiscus schitzopetalus***, *Terminalia prunioides*, ***Bauhinia mombassae***, and *Kalanchoe lateritia*. (Those in bold are illustrated below in the order shown.)



As shown, the importance of the *kayas* and the coastal forests of which they are a part for biodiversity conservation in Kenya cannot be underestimated. CFCU seeks to raise awareness of this in order to broaden the stakeholder or constituency base beyond local communities. Packaging data and/or research findings about coastal biodiversity in a form that it is inspiring and accessible to the public generally and to policy makers, too, is an important part of this.

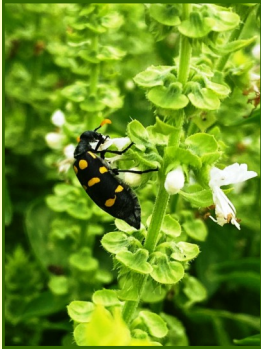
Sources:

Sketch of Kaya Kauma, 2008 World Heritage Nomination Dossier for Sacred Mijikenda *Kaya* forests, NMK

Photographs, Norbert Rottcher

Images from NCD gardens.

A gallery of members' recent photographs



Wild Basil and bee

Ana Parada, Malindi.



Bauhinia galpinii

Ursula Brenneisen, Shanzu.



Bougainvillea

Elizabeth Bizzie Frost, Vipingo.



Ferocatus

Katana Baya, Watamu.



Cereus sp.

Ana Parada, Malindi.



Coryphantha elephantidens

Katana Baya, Watamu.



Cordia somalensis

Janine Angell, Kuruwitu.



Rothea incisa

Marion Langham, Kilifi.



Veroninia sp.

Ana Parada, Malindi.



Euphorbia

Mariola Saliola, Malindi.



Cotton stainer bug nymphs

Elizabeth Bizzie Frost, Vipingo.



Bismarckia palm

Marion Langham, Kilifi.



North Coast District 2022 Meetings



GROWHOUSES - 25 January 2022

On Tuesday 25 January over 40 members attended a fascinating talk by Alan de Boer and Daisy Ritchie, co-founders of Living Machines at the home of Andrew and Cherry

Ritchie in Kuruwitu, south of Kilifi.

Both Alan and Daisy spoke with passion about how in lockdown they came up with the concept of Growhouses and started a new company, being Living Machines, which designs climate-smart food production



Growhouses and equipment for homes and schools. As they say bringing the future of home grown food into all our hands.

Daisy told us about setting up a Growhouse, which come in different sizes and are flexible and custom-built for each customer. They are modular with prices to match. After buying the base Growhouse system, you pick and choose what you want to grow. Living Machines come and set it all up for you and can also help you maintain it.

What we do...

- * Vegetable growhouses
- * Customised growhouses
- * Fish & chicken grow system
- * Flow through aquaponics
- * Potting sheds
- * Rainwater catchment & irrigation
- * Edible landscaping
- * Ecosystem restoration
- * Composting solutions
- * Gardener Training
- * Follow up garden support subscriptions
- * Sustainability Consulting
- * Garden equipment



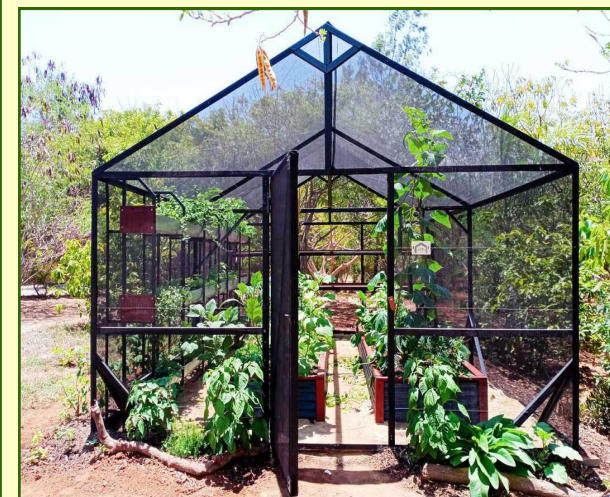
Growhouses
[LEARN MORE](#)



Growhouse Add on Features
[LEARN MORE](#)



Tree Planting & Landscaping
[LEARN MORE](#)



After the talk we looked at a Growhouse in-situ. Members were able to see the concept in reality including the fruit and vegetables that Andrew Ritchie is growing in his own Growhouse close to the Indian ocean shoreline. In particular Andrew showed off his extremely large cucumber!



Since the meeting we know of one member who has installed a Growhouse in Malindi and is delighted with the installation and end result. If members who were unable to attend the meeting would like further information on the Growhouse concept or would like to commission their own Growhouse, please contact Daisy Ritchie direct on 0726449804.

Many thanks to Andrew and Cherry, Daisy's parents, for having KHS members at their lovely home and for letting us picnic in their grounds.

This account written for The Shamba Times by Deborah Goodhart.



THE ART OF PROPAGATION - 02 March 2022



There was a moment of concern at the start of our guest speaker's presentation that she might face some competition from a loudly singing bulbul perched above her. But, completely undeterred by this, Sally Share, who now works as a consultant to Kenya's commercial flower industry and who is also Chair of KHS Naivasha, proceeded to deliver a clear and straightforward talk about, and demonstration of, propagation by cuttings to a class of attentive students



in the form of 66 KHS NCD members. It became clear that propagation requires quite a lot of preparation in terms of getting the right equipment and facilities in place. Knives, secateurs, sharpening stone, propagation containers (plastic containers with lids, for example), propagation cases on legs, a rooting medium including, for example, coconut fibre which is easily obtainable at the Coast, and

rooting powder are among the items needed. Rooting powder is especially important since it contains hormones which encourage the cuttings to grow roots. On then to showing us the different types of cuttings that can be taken from division, offsets, separation of clumps of plants to actual cuttings themselves, and demonstrating how to do this. Actual cuttings can be soft-wood, semi-ripe, or hardwood and even leaf cuttings.

Many thanks to Sally for this splendid and enjoyable presentation on the art of propagation and to our host, Belinda Walker, who provided us with the perfect setting for this - under a neem tree in her garden. Finally, thanks are extended to Susie Church, KHS Hon. Secretary, for attending this event and for briefing us on plans for next year's Centenary of KHS whilst reminding us and those members unable to attend the event that, in the KHS *Gardening in Eastern Africa*, there is a chapter on plant propagation co-authored by Sally. And thank you to the sixty or more members that supported this event and made it all worthwhile.

What's up on WhatsApp?

On 18 February Elizabeth Bizzie Frost, one of our Vipingo members, posted a picture of a variegated pink/white bougainvillea. Shortly thereafter Naveeda Manji posted a picture of another mixed colour bougainvillea, which was identified by Shenagh Lees as a Peter Greensmith. So, who was Peter Greensmith, and what was his role in Kenya's horticultural development?



'Peter' Goldsmith, his real name was Henry Powell Greensmith, a former British naval officer, was appointed Nairobi Park Superintendent in 1947 following his demob after the war. Nairobi City Park had already been created by the Nairobi Township Committee which was formed in 1901 under John Ashworth, the Nairobi Sub-Commissioner. The committee was tasked with carving Nairobi town up into residential neighbourhoods, largely along racial lines. City Park began life as the Nairobi Forest Reserve, later becoming the Municipal Forest. Following the first world war the Garden City Movement had gained traction back in Britain, and Nairobi decided to follow suit in the allocation of green spaces for the recreation and well-being of city residents. In 1923 the area was renamed City Park, and a pavilion was erected along with a network of public pathways that led visitors around the park.



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Following his appointment as Park Superintendent in 1947, Peter Greensmith set about developing the park in everyway possible. Over the next 18 years he would lead a team of gardeners in the creation of luxuriant formal gardens, the renowned and very popular Kei-Apple Maze, and the fishpond for which the park became globally acclaimed. Greensmith had a house constructed for himself within the gardens and lived, as it were, at his workplace. The park consisted of a remarkable display of flora and fauna, manicured lawns, neatly cut hedgerows, and a series of walkways emanating from the central pavilion. The former forest turned municipal park attracted a large variety of birds, flowers, butterflies, animals and boasted a tree nursery with more than 1,000 species of trees. The park also attracted numerous high profile visitors including HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother along with Heads of State and other visiting dignitaries.



Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother on her visit to Peter's house in City Park
Courtesy of Esmond Martin

Before his retirement, Peter Greensmith bought 35 acres along Langata Road where he established the Peter Greensmith Nurseries, at which many of the bougainvillea hybrids and varieties that still abound in Kenya today were developed. Greensmith died in Nairobi on 9 March, 1992. Sadly, City Park, which was formally gazetted as a National Monument in 2009, is no longer the wonder of flora and fauna that it once was, and its future remains uncertain. KHS has made concerted efforts to restore the maze, but the task is herculean. We will keep you updated.

Odds and Ends



Are you aware of the existence of HAK?

Browsing on the internet a while ago, it was interesting to discover the existence of the **Horticultural Association of Kenya (HAK)**, and then to learn that a new subscriber to our Kenya Horticultural Society was a member of HAK. HAK was registered in November 2001, drawing its members from persons engaged directly or indirectly in horticultural activities. Farmers, growers, students, corporations, professionals, buyers, sellers, national, regional or international stakeholders are all welcome to join.

HAK is a non-political and non-profit making organisation, which includes amongst its objectives the following:

to promote horticultural science in Kenya, through the generation, dissemination, and exchange of horticultural information and technology among members (*through periodic seminars, workshops, symposia, conferences, and congresses*)

to promote sustainable and environment friendly horticultural production in Kenya

to promote capacity building through study, research, training and teaching

to promote professionalism in horticulture

to promote co-operation with national institutions, societies, non-governmental and other organisations with vested interests in plant science, horticultural production, marketing and environmental conservation

And to promote the formation of branches for the furtherance of horticulture at local levels.

For more information or to join HAK please write directly to hakenya2019@gmail.com

Diary of upcoming events



26 April 2022 - Karakoram Adventure - a talk.

We invite members to join us at the Mnarani Hotel in Kilifi for an illustrated talk by Bizzie Frost on a remarkable trek that she made through the Karokaram mountains in Northern Pakistan, taking with her three family children. The trek leads through spectacular mountain scenery, full of wild flowers, mountain passes, blue skies, and snow-capped mountains.

This is something different. Do come along. We think you will be fascinated.



24 May 2022 - The Hanging Gardens of Malindi

This year we return to the renowned Hanging Gardens of Malindi where horticultural expert and orchid grower Nick Conway has made some changes.

In addition to the orchid garden and quarantine centre, there is a market garden growing salad leaves on a commercial basis, there are chickens, a wormery, and most recently a new pond stocked with exotic fish and boasting a range of aquatic plants. Come along and pick up some tips on how to create the perfect garden pond, how to compost effectively, how to care for orchids, and much more.



28 June 2022 - Kipepeo Butterfly House at Gede Ruins

North Coast District has been asked by Museums of Kenya to assist with the plants and flowers that are grown at the Kipepeo Project located at Gede Ruins just off the Mombasa Road and close to Gede township. We urge members to come along and see the task in front of us, to bring their gardeners with them, and to come up with ideas, plants, gardening tools and practical solutions to the challenges the butterfly house is facing in terms of maintaining an adequate supply of flowering plants to attract and feed the butterflies. This is one of our KHS Centenary Projects so we welcome your support.

