

**July  
2022**  
Vol 9 Issue 3

# The Shamba Times

*Kenya Horticultural Society North Coast District*



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# North Coast District



## Chairman's Notes

A very warm welcome to the July 2022 edition of The Shamba Times. This month we have some of our regular features that appear here every quarter along with occasional pieces such as My Garden, which in this edition features the garden of Janine Angell. Janine's piece comes to you as part of The Shamba Times, but also as an electronic add-on that we shall make available to all members through the internet.

And speaking of our My Garden occasional feature, I wish that more of you, our members, would write for us here at The Shamba Times, as well as send us photographs or other pieces of material that you think might be of interest to our wider membership. You don't have to send us polished articles, if you don't wish to. Just send us your piece and some photographs and we will do the rest to get them into Shamba Times shape. And if you don't have time to write us a finished article, just send us an idea for themes, subjects, gardening problems and possible solutions, and we will try and work them up into a piece that is of interest and relevance to our readers.

As some of you may be aware from my posts on our NCD WhatsApp group, I managed to get myself to England and Southern France last month, and was fortunate enough to visit a number of open gardens in England including Houghton Hall in Norfolk and RHS Wisley in Surrey. In Laroque des Alberres in Southern France, it was inspiring to see a local council that is investing time and resources in the creation of small but very attractive public garden spaces throughout the village. Flowering plants lift the spirits, they bring us joy. Well planted public spaces, even if they are small and simple, give a reassuring sense of order and civic pride to all who see them and encourage us all to do better things in our own gardens, if we are fortunate enough to have one.

Come the day, maybe we at KHS can find a meaningful and sustainable way to contribute to the public spaces in the towns and communities in which we live. The challenges in doing so are well known and real, but I hope one day soon we can share our gardening skills and talent with the wider community, and encourage them to share the pleasure that we enjoy in gardening.

**Crispin Sharp.**

## *Cassia fistula*

Our cover photo this month taken by one of our members at the Mnarani Beach Club in Kilifi is of a beautiful *Cassia fistula*, also known as a Golden shower tree. The tree is a flowering plant in the subfamily, Caesalpinioideae, of the legume family.



Sadly the tree is not native to Kenya, but originates from the Indian subcontinent and adjacent regions of Southeast Asia, but we have chosen it as our cover picture this month simply for its beauty and the way in which it cheers up anybody who sees it in flower, be it here on the coast, upcountry, or even outside Kenya.



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**  
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Hon Sec This post remains open

Hon Treasurer **Mr Rupert Partridge**  
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**NCD MPESA 0702 767 177**

NCD Shop **To be announced.**

# My Garden

## OUR GARDEN ON VIPINGO BEACH by Janine Angell

In 2007, my husband and I purchased a 1-acre plot on Vipingo Beach. We set about clearing all the bush trying to keep as many indigenous shrubs as we could find. To our shock horror, the base of the garden turned out to be huge coral outcrops. Well, we managed to buy loads of soil from Vipingo Ridge as they were clearing the area for their runway and our dear gardener, Lazerus, set upon the laborious job of hacking out the coral with a sledgehammer and *tarimbo*. We filled the now level ground with soil and started planting.

When delivering one of our truck loads of soil, our driver ran over a little seedling. We discovered later it was a baby baobab (*Adansonia digitata*). One of our neighbours had brought back seeds from the famous baobab tree in Dar-es-Salam and scattered them all around our estate. The baobab survived. This is it today with our memory bench underneath. We absolutely love baobabs so we relocated two more to our plot.



As I mentioned, I did try to save some indigenous shrubs which are thriving and we love the fact that the birds, bees, butterflies and beetles enjoy them too...

*Feretia apondenthera* and *Premna hildebrandtii*, as illustrated, are but two.



did keep one coral outcrop and placed a large clam shell on top which gets filled daily with fresh water for the birds.

## My Garden continued ...

Moving on from indigenous...we decided we would like to try a Nakuru acacia (yellow bark) reminding us of happy days around the lake in Nakuru National Park. It has survived and is doing well. Then, there are “stink bombs” (*Caralluma...*) from Baringo of which we also have many happy memories and *Aloe vera* collected from around the country.



Of course, every garden has to have *Bougainvillea*...which has been absolutely wonderful in the dry months. And here it is on our roof top.



We decided that our garden must provide plenty of shade so we planted from seed an avenue of Flamboyants (*Delonix regia*) along our driveway.



We have built a swimming pool and are loving all our palm trees around it...all grown from seedlings. We have loved watching the various stages of their growth with palms now as high as our first floor.

## ... continued

Our Frangipanis (*Plumeria obtusa* and *Plumeria rubra*), as illustrated, too have been a delight... even used the flowers in our daughter's bouquet for her wedding.



Our garden has been a wonderful splash of colour and has given us such joy...Not least, we love watching the sun setting behind our palm trees.

*Please Note:*

*The piece that appears here in this edition of The Shamba Times is an abridged version of Janine's garden story. For the full version, follow the link below:*

<https://kenyahs.com/wp-content/uploads/VIPINGO-PLOT-High-Res-NCD.pdf>

# What's up on our NCD WhatsApp?



*A recent WhatsApp posting on our NCD WhatsApp members' group on organic garden products generated some discussion about the term 'organic'. Here, with the help of member Rose Kigathi, a senior lecturer in the Department of Biological Sciences, Pwani University, we delve into its meaning and application.*

These days, we are all very much aware of the term but what does 'organic' really mean? Actually, there are two very different definitions for the same word, one from chemistry and one from agriculture. In chemistry, the definition is based solely on chemical structure. With very few exceptions, a chemical is classified as organic if it contains at least one carbon atom, regardless of its source. Generally, that carbon atom is bonded to at least one hydrogen atom.

The agricultural use of the term 'organic' is entirely different and is focused on product **labelling**. For a food or feed product to be labelled 'organic', there are agronomic and animal husbandry practices that have to be followed. Organic food is produced without using most conventional pesticides, fertilisers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, bio-engineering or ionising radiation. Labelling a food 'organic' does not mean that the product is nutritious, healthy or safe: the labelling standards are based solely on agricultural field or farm practices.

*Organic agriculture* is being driven more and more by consumer demand: there are an increasing number of consumers world over - 335% increase since 1999 - who want food that is safe and free of pesticides. In Kenya, organic agriculture was initially driven by the export market of horticultural produce to the European Union (EU). This meant meeting European standards of organic agriculture. Certification was done by the European-based companies that often proved quite expensive for local farmers. As the market for organic products in East Africa Community (EAC) grew, however, an "East African Organic Products Standard" (EAOPS) was developed in 2007 by the Community to harmonise the many standards that existed in the region and thereby to enhance organic farming and trading therein. Thus today, to be an organic farmer in Kenya, one needs to know the EAOPS to trade. In addition, there are a raft of other local and international networks, organisations, and certification practices which exist to provide credible guarantees for consumers seeking organic produce.

Does organic farming work? It appears that the jury is still out...but we shall leave that debate for another occasion! Suffice to say, studies show that this form of agriculture is playing a key role in improving biodiversity in many different areas and it is clear that pesticide use has been harmful on biodiversity. But there are questions about the productivity of organic agriculture. It often needs more land for similar productivity to conventional agriculture. However, this does not have to be an intractable problem as new methods are being developed to allow increased productivity for both organic farming systems and conventional ones.

And so, to our own backyard and '*organic gardening*'. Reflecting the earlier definitions, this simply means growing plants, vegetables, and fruits in the best natural way without the use of pesticides or synthetic chemical fertilisers. But it is certainly more than this: it *is about* supporting the health of the entire gardening system naturally, *observing nature's processes and systems and emulating them in your garden as best you can. The most important way to do that is to understand the make-up of your soil and to give it what it needs. According to Gardening in Eastern Africa, "organic gardening starts and ends with a healthy living soil."*

# Continued



Chapter 16 of this book describes the major methods in organic gardening with the use of organic fertilisers to enrich the soil being one of these. Amongst these, compost is the organic gardener's first choice, higher in nutrient value than normal, fresh manure, such as cow, pig, or chicken. But the production of newer types of organic fertiliser may be seen to challenge this. First, *frass*, which is the faeces generated by black soldier fly larvae, after having devoured rotting food and other waste. N-P-K values are a common way of displaying the nutrient levels of different fertilisers. The N-P-K value of a fertiliser describes how concentrated the nutrients nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P), and potassium (K) are in any given fertiliser. Frass has proven to be far more concentrated than normal manure and even beats home-made compost. It also has more organic matter than the other three manures mentioned.



Then there is vermicast production, which involves the breakdown of organic matter by earthworms into worm castings or manure. It provides a way to treat organic wastes more quickly than others. Vermicompost contains water-soluble nutrients and is a nutrient-rich organic fertiliser as well as a soil conditioner.

Finally, a soil conditioner is one of the items made by Organix Limited, a Kenyan company specialising in fully organic garden products, feeds, potting compost, and organic pesticides. Note the many organic ingredients contained with it. Later in the year, KHS NCD plans to hold a members' meeting at which you will be able to see, touch and understand how this and other products work, and what use they might be to us as organic gardeners. Watch out for the notice in due course.

**Asilee**  
Organic Soil Conditioner

**18 ORGANIC INGREDIENTS**

- Neem:** Rich source of Nitrogen
- Sesame:** Rich source of proteins
- Sal:** Source of organic carbon
- Ginger:** Source of organic carbon
- Rock Phosphate Natural Mineral:** Rich source of phosphorus
- Magnesium Ore Natural Mineral:** Rich source of magnesium
- Shea:** Source of phosphorus, potash & organic carbon
- Mustard:** Rich in phosphorus, potash and micronutrients including natural sulphur
- Pongamia:** Source of phosphorus also known to improve soil porosity
- Marigold extract:** Rich source of organic carbon and phosphorus
- Castor:** Rich source of potash
- Mahwah:** Rich source of potash
- Mangium:** Rich source of organic carbon
- Palm:** Rich source of potash
- Cashew:** Source of potash
- Soya:** Rich source of protein
- Silica Natural Mineral:** Rich source of micronutrients
- Turmeric:** Rich source of organic carbon

<https://www.organix-agro.com/> or call us +254 720 937 535

Sources:

*Safe & Healthy Food for Your Family*, Division of Extension, University of Wisconsin-Madison, November 2017

The Critter Depot webpage

*Gardening in Eastern Africa*, Kenya Horticultural Society, 2017

Photo. credits:

Frass - Google Images; Worm Manure - Betty Bundotich; Soil Conditioner - Organix Limited

# Grow bags

## Following up on Odds & Ends

A Growhouse for growing our vegetables (see *The Shamba Times* April 2022) may not be within the reach of all of us but *gunia* - gunny bags - probably are. Sukuma wiki and spinach are ideal candidates for growing in *gunia* - not only this but they can be grown together since they are in the same family, require the same environmental conditions to grow and take a similar amount of time to mature - and, are even attacked by the same pests. So, here is how you do it...



## Gunia preparation



Take a 50 kg *gunia* (gunny bag) and fill it with soil; if you have manure, mix it in in equal measure. When the *gunia* is about 30-45 cm filled, take a container (use 2kg tin commonly known as *gorogoro*), cut off the bottom so that it is open on both ends and place it in the middle of the *gunia*. Fill it with small pebbles - such as the *kokoto* used in construction and continue adding soil around it up to the top; gently remove the tin leaving the stones in the middle.

Sukuma wiki and spinach seeds have to be grown in a nursery for four weeks before being transplanted to the *gunia*. For this, use a container (20-litre jerrican cut into two). With a stick, make shallow trenches 15 cm apart. Thinly spread your seeds, fill the trenches with soil, cover with some grass and water - use a watering can that spreads water in a shower.

## Transplanting to the gunia

After three days, the sukuma/spinach will have germinated. Water daily and after four weeks they will be ready for transplanting to the *gunia*. Choose a cloudy day to do this or do so in the early morning (6-10am) or evenings (4-7pm) to reduce plant stress from direct sunlight. Before uprooting seedlings from the nursery, water them at least an hour before transplanting. In the meantime, prepare your *gunias* to receive the young seedlings.



## By Wendy Taylor

A 50 kg *gunia* should handle a maximum of 35 plants. Using a knife, make holes in a circle around the *gunia* 30 cm from each other. Go 30 cm below this row and do the same thing again. Water your *gunia* from the top, uproot your seedlings from the nursery - remember to hold the bottom part of the stem when uprooting and use your fingers to plant the seedlings into the *gunia* holes. Only bury the plant about to a half an inch from the roots.

### Watering and fertilisation

Water the transplanted seedlings twice a day, in the mornings and evenings and don't miss a day. After two weeks, the plant will be experiencing extensive leaf growth so, if possible, spray the sukuma/spinach with a foliar fertiliser like Easy Gro foliar feed fertiliser. Alternatively, use your own organic plant tea made by soaking pawpaw leaves in a bucket of water for two weeks, stirring the mixture every three days to add oxygen which is needed for decomposition. Sprinkle on the plant roots and leaves, dilute in the ratio of 1 part plant tea to 3 parts water and use a maxim of one cup per plant.

### Harvesting

Your sukuma wiki/spinach should be ready for harvesting in 3-4 weeks after transplanting. Harvest in the mornings or evening. When harvesting sukuma wiki, break off the leaf branch but leave a section of the branch still attached to the main stem to avoid rotting. For spinach, break off the whole leaf branch from the main stem to avoid rotting.



Source: *Urban Farming: Here is How To Grow Healthy Sukuma Wiki and Spinach...* by Gabriel Onyango, May 2, 2018, Potentash.

\*Why not write and tell us about your experiences with growing green-leaved vegetables in a gunny bag and get your name in print in the October issue of *The Shamba Times*!\*

# Images from NCD gardens.

## A gallery of members' recent photographs



***Rain awaited***

Robert Horner, Kalifi.



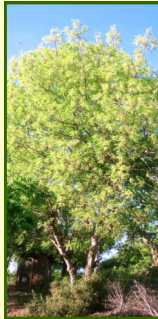
***Rain on the way***

Carissa Nightingale, Kuruwitu.



***Rain***

Elizabeth Bizzie Frost, Vipingo.



***Zanthoxylum chalybeum***

Kaiungu Gona, Msabaha.



***Cassia fistula.***

Elmer Venta, Kilifi.



***Combretum schumanii***

Norbert Rottcher, Kilifi.



***Epiphyllum oxypetalum***

Samini Ngumbao, Che Shale.



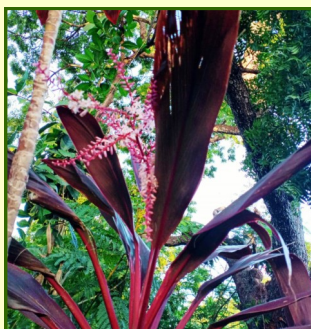
***Pitaya dragon fruit.***

Rolf Lattman, Ngamani.



***Turraea wakefieldii.***

Baraka, Ngamani.



***Cordyline fruticosa***

Jo Harris, Kilifi.



***Pycnocoma littoralis***

Lisa Reuben, Malindi.



***Blighia unijugata seeds***

Ursula Brenneisen, Shanzu.



# North Coast District 2022 Meetings

## THE HANGING GARDENS IN MALINDI - 25 January

On Tuesday 24 May, 36 North Coast District members and their gardeners met at the well-known Hanging Gardens outside Malindi north. The Hanging Gardens were established by Nick Conway as a site for the propagation and marketing of indigenous and tropical orchids. Nick has been importing young orchids from Thailand for many years, and nurturing them at the Hanging Gardens (nowadays imported orchids have to go through a strict quarantine process) before selling them on, many to upcountry Kenya and some overseas.



In addition to growing orchids, Nick has for several years run a very productive salad garden growing salad leaves for sale locally in Malindi and Watamu. The salad garden is dependent on large amounts of water being available for irrigation of the rocket and lettuce plants and maintaining production of leaves throughout the year is a major challenge. Recently Nick has built a large pond at Hanging Gardens which has been stocked with tropical fish imported from around the world, but which is a hobby rather than a commercial enterprise.



The NCD meeting on 24 May served as a highly instructional and informative event for members and most particularly for gardeners. Nick is always generous in giving of his time and expertise and seems to relish explaining 'how to' and to sharing tips and advice that help all gardeners achieve their aims with the minimum of fuss and worry, not to mention losses. Nick is a fluent Swahili speaker and readily engages the attention of our gardeners who are keen to learn how to replicate the commercial success that he has enjoyed. A visit to the Hanging Gardens is always a learning experience, and a useful one at that.



Many thanks are due to Nick Conway for once again hosting the NCD in his gardens, and to Holly for organising the event in her usual very efficient manner.

**Continued ...**



## **ANNE ROBERTSON'S GARDEN - 28 June 2022**

Thirty seven NCD members and gardener members gathered at the remarkable indigenous garden created, planted and nurtured 45 years ago by Ann and her late husband Ian on their plot on Casuarina Road in Malindi.

The meeting began with a briefing to members on the issue of the protection of the Cha Simba area off the Kaloleni road south of Kilifi. Ann Robertson informed members that the site was one of only three in the world that served as a habitat for rare species of the African Violet, and that recent proposals to mine limestone adjacent to the site threatened its existence and its future viability as a natural habitat for many species of flora and fauna. Wendy Taylor then informed members of the various efforts being made by concerned bodies, including Nature Kenya, National Museums of Kenya, and of KHS North Coast District to bring awareness of the very likely negative impact of mining so close to Cha Simba site. Letters have been sent to NEMA in an attempt to influence the Environmental Impact Assessment currently being conducted ahead of a decision on whether to allow the mining project to go ahead. It was agreed that more pressure needs to be brought to bear by all concerned parties.

Ann Robertson then spoke to members about her background as a professional botanist in East Africa and her role in collecting plant specimens, pressing them, and sharing them with major collectors and keepers of plant specimens worldwide. She explained how she and Ian had collected indigenous seeds and seedlings and planted them on their otherwise barren plot, and had brought them to maturity. More than 13 pages of carefully identified wooded plants and trees have been catalogued in Ann's garden, many of which are still alive and thriving and which were there for members to see.

There was also an opportunity for members to acquire seedlings and small plants to take home to plant for themselves. Members left the meeting inspired and immensely grateful for the work and protection that Ann and Ian have afforded to so many indigenous species in their remarkable garden that is now owned by Dino Martins and in very safe hands.



# Odds and Ends



**The fate of our trees is no laughing matter.**

**They deserve our full respect - from the beginning to the end!**



## Diary of upcoming events



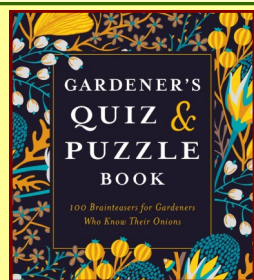
### 26 July 2022 - Kipepeo Butterfly House at Gede Ruins

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.



### August 2022 - What is Nature Kenya?

Following our June meeting at Ann Robertson's garden in Malindi, where Ann emphasized to members the importance of Nature Kenya as one of the primary protectors of plant and animal habitat within Kenya, and as an educator, we invite a representative of Nature Kenya to explain to our members the work of the organization and why it is important to us in KHS and indeed to the nation of Kenya. The date and location of the meeting will be announced nearer the time.



### September 2022 - The Great NCD Gardening Quiz

We invite all members and their gardeners to a very friendly but competitive morning in which we test our members knowledge of gardening. Do we know our plants? How long do trees live? Indigenous or Exotic? A creeper or a climber? What's the most common palm in Kenya? What's the largest grass in the world? What's inside a baobab tree?

Come along for a morning of fun, of learning, and of enjoyment of the company of fellow NCD members. Date and location to be announced.

