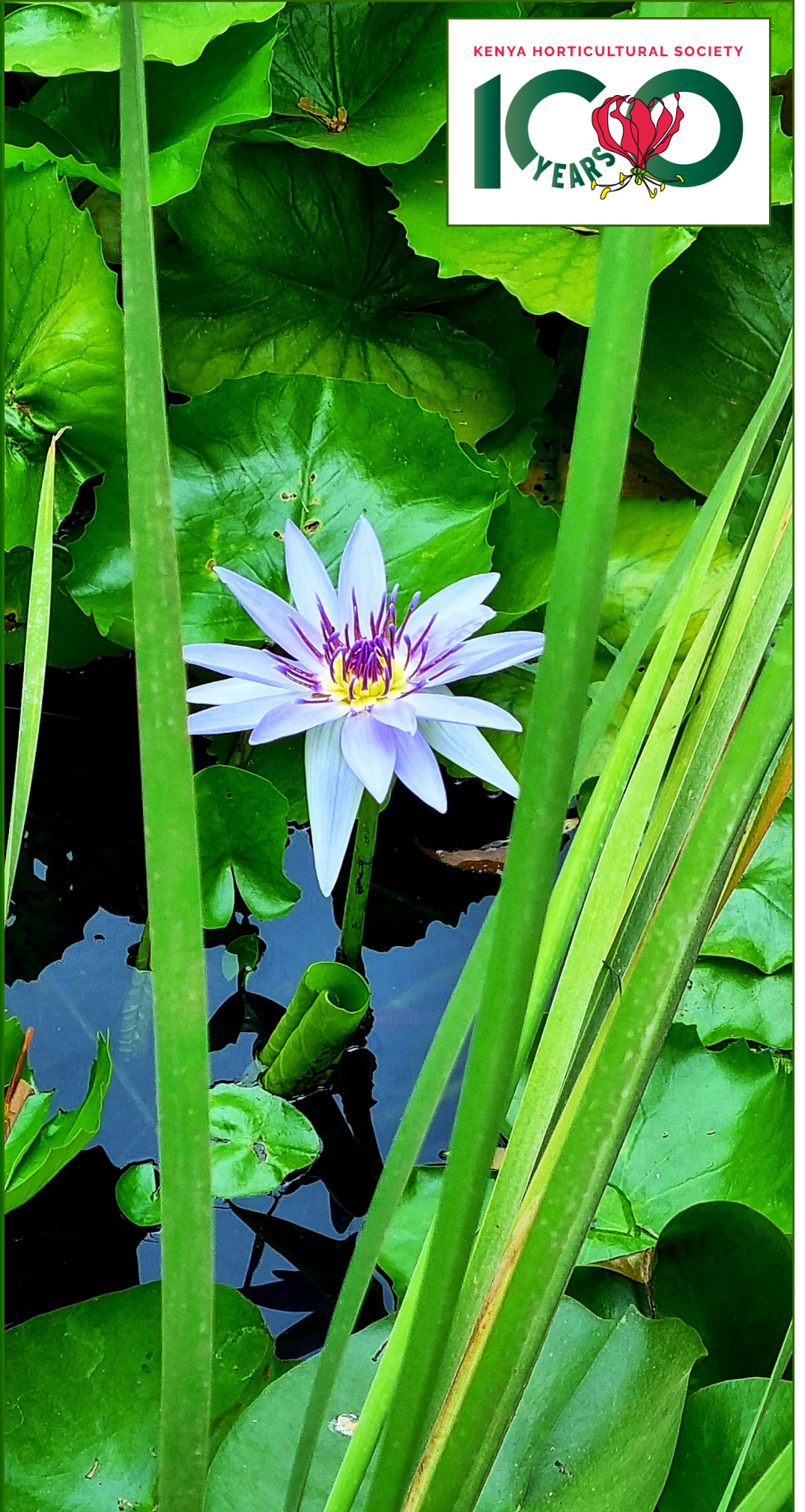


April
2023
Vol 10 Issue 2

The Shamba Times

Kenya Horticultural Society North Coast District



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A Diary of Forthcoming Events.

Our cover photo

Our cover picture this month is a very simple water lily captured in one of the many ponds in Marion Langham's garden in Kilifi. Below the surface were carp and koi and guppies too numerous to mention.



Members had the great pleasure of being invited to a meeting at Langham Place in February lunch and greatly enjoyed a wander through the formal gardens, and farmyard, that cover Marion's large plot, followed by a delicious curry lunch. A full report of the event can be found towards the end of this edition of The ST.

Chairman's Notes

A warm welcome to the April 2023 edition of The Shamba Times. And in this edition we report on our North Coast District AGM, held in March. The AGM is important in cementing the district within the Kenya Horticultural Society framework and ensuring that you our members have full view of what the district is up to, how we spend our revenues, and what we are doing collectively to advance the cause of good gardening, proper protection of the environment, and education of young people as we attempt to bring them into our tent, and to nurture a culture of the love of plants, trees, nature and care for our environment.

In this edition of the ST, Wendy Taylor has written a very interesting piece on botanical illustrations and their importance, and we have recently had a lively discussion on our NCD WhatsApp group after I enquired as to the provenance of two David Marian paintings that I had seen on the verandah of a member's home here in Malindi. One of them is pictured here.



As most of you are aware, I myself know very little about plants or indeed gardening, and I certainly can't paint them as David Marian to such good effect, but I know what I like, and so this month I have put pen to paper to write about one of my favourite plants, a faithful ally and friend in the constant struggle that is gardening on the Kenya coast. Some plants are like loyal friends. They are there for you come rain or shine. They never let you down. And they bring something extra to a garden. And it is one of those that I bring to your attention in this edition of The Shamba Times, in the hope that you will share my enthusiasm for such a stalwart of any garden, and a plant that is as easy to grow as it is to talk about. I am hoping for some converts. In the meantime, please sit back and enjoy this edition of the ST.

Crispin Sharp.

The North Coast District AGM



The Kenya Horticultural Society requires each of its ten districts to hold an Annual General Meeting for members, at which the district's officers and committee have to be elected and approved by members and at which the district's annual report and statement of finances also have to be approved. Here in North Coast District we usually hold our AGM in March and try to find a location for the meeting which is reasonably accessible to all members, not an easy task given that our district stretches from Lamu in the north to Mtwapa in the south. Watamu is generally considered the most reachable location and we have been fortunate enough to be supported by the Turtle Bay Beach Club who generously host our AGM each year and allow us to use part of the car-park for a plant sale.

This year our AGM was held at 1030 on March 14th 2023, and was attended by around 80 members. The meeting began with the official business of discussion and approval of the Chairman's Report to Members and the Treasurer's Statement of NCD Finances for 2022.

NCD AGM - 14 March 2023
At Turtle Bay Beach Club in Watamu.
With Guest Speaker
Dr. Dino Martins.

1030 for 1030

Dr. Dino J. Martins is a Kenyan entomologist and evolutionary biologist. He is currently the Chief Executive Officer at the Turkana Basin Institute and a Research Scholar and Lecturer in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Princeton University.

Special 2 course lunch for KHS members at Turtle Bay Beach Club, KSh 1,500 only. Please book your lunch by texting Holly on 0722244236. All payments by cash only.

Draw for the 2023 Raffle
At the AGM, buy tickets for the 2023 Raffle. The prize draw will take place at the KHS Lunch after the AGM.

NCD Plant Sale
There will be a sale of plants outside the venue. Please bring along any plants you wish to sell, and come ready to buy!

Special offer on room rates at TBBC for KHS members attending the AGM. KSh 6,000 per person per night B&B basis. Just tell Turtle Bay you are attending the KHS AGM when you make your reservation.

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AGM Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Notices convening the meeting
3. Confirmation of minutes of the AGM March 2022
4. Chairman's Report - circulated
5. Treasurer's Report - circulated
6. Election of office bearers
7. Any other business

KENYA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
100 YEARS

All of the 2022 committee, including the Chair, Treasurer and de-facto Secretary agreed to serve again in 2023 and were duly elected by a show of hands.

After the official business of the AGM was concluded, we were very fortunate to have the Chairman of KHS Council, Vishy Talwar, attend our meeting, and Vishy spoke to members about the

significance of the KHS Centenary and some of the commemorative events and flower shows that will take place in Nairobi in the course of this year.

Our keynote speaker at this year's AGM was the ever popular Dr. Dino Martins. Dino delivered a remarkable talk about the past, present and future of plants and the historical relationship between plants and humans. The talk began and ended in Turkana but ranged widely over a number of huge challenges facing our natural world, including the increasing frequency of drought in Kenya, the exponential growth of the human population, the destruction of Kenya's forest and woodlands, and the difficulty in establishing new and more efficient agricultural crops in a society that innately clings to its traditions, and in which vested interests make it hard to break the mould.



Dino's talk was, as always, very well received by our members and was followed by a lively Q&A session that could have gone on all afternoon, had it not become time for lunch. About 40 members stayed on at Turtle Bay Beach Club for a buffet lunch together and a chance to chat, network, and review the morning's events.

My Farm

Near the village of Kakyuni (about 11 kilometres from Gede and 14 kilometres from Malindi) lies Arabuko Farm, a 10 acre demonstration farm with a focus on fruit trees. It was established by me two years ago. I am a Dutchman and have been living in Kenya since early 2016. I moved to Malindi in August 2019 and started a forestry project near Baricho (500 acres), while also working as a consultant in the agribusiness domain.



The general idea of Arabuko Farm is to provide inspiration, to demonstrate modern and sustainable farming methods and to serve as a learning and research space. As most of the seedlings that one buys in Kenya are not of the best quality and often of a different vari-

ety than the one that was paid for, Arabuko Farm wants to come in to provide clients with top quality seedlings and inputs. The main focus is on fruit trees and natural trees but also local and indigenous herbs and decorative plants will be propagated and sold.

Technology providers are welcome to test their inputs and growing technology - for example, Organix is currently demonstrating and testing its soil supplements and water absorbents. In the coming months, a Dutch water technology company will put in rain-water harvesting technology as well as a borehole. As borehole water is often on the salty



side, they will be accompanied by another Dutch company that is highly knowledgeable about salt tolerant crops and on keeping the soil healthy despite using slightly saline water for irrigation.

By Bob van der Bilj



Arabuko Farm is also serving as a test farm for different varieties. For example, different varieties of mango, passion fruit, banana, citrus, guava are being tested. The testing is not only focusing on the technical aspects but also on the economics. In order to turn Kilifi County into a major fruit producing region, it is important that local farmers know which variety to grow and to make informed decisions on the profitability of the various fruit crops. Besides the aforementioned crops, visitors can also take a look at a large number of “new fruits”, such as jackfruit, sour-sop, and grapes. When it comes to sustainability, Arabuko Farm has installed drip irrigation, solar power and its own compost production. In order to create a healthy growing environment, the fruit trees are intercropped with other fruit trees and natural trees. At the moment, the main crops are passion fruit, pawpaw and some bananas. In two years from now, the other fruit trees are expected to be productive as well. In between the fruit trees, local and exotic herbs are planted.



Making a positive impact on the environment as well as on the local communities is important but can also be fun! As I aim to expand the production of fruit into other locations in the area, I am also investing in fruit processing. The main focus in this regard is on fruit wine and fruit beer. Arabuko Farm will serve as the outlet where these beverages will first be introduced so it will make a visit even more fun! Arabuko Farm will open officially in May with a bar and restaurant with several nice places to linger and enjoy beautiful views. At only three kilometres away, there is the elephant spotting place and we can also organise forest walks into the neighbouring Arabuko Sokoke Forest guided by our resident tree and herbs specialist. Hopefully, many people will find their way to this little oasis!



Introduction

Botanical illustration has played a significant role in the scientific study of plants for many centuries. Hand-drawn illustrations and paintings depict and represent the form, colour, character and detail of a plant with sufficient precision and scientific accuracy for it to be recognised and distinguished from another species. This article shows how the tradition of botanical illustration has developed over time and how and why it continues to flourish.

Illustrating Botanical Illustration

Conventional botanical illustrations are made from live plants, often whilst in their natural setting, or *herbarium* specimens to illustrate a botanical text. (A *herbarium* - plural *herbaria* - is a repository, a facility designed to ensure long-term preservation of scientific plant *specimens* and associated data.) An essential aspect of botanical illustration is the depiction of the plant's *morphological structure* such as the arrangement of reproductive parts, leaves and stems. This gives life and a three-dimensional quality to the species that contrasts and complements the dried plant specimens found in herbaria. In this way, botanical illustration serves as a bridge between art and science.

They are frequently in watercolour - often in monochrome - but may also be in oils, pen and ink or pencil, coloured or not, or a combination of these. The image may be life-size or not with the scale often shown. A good example is the illustration overleaf of *Notoboxus*, Buxaceae family, taken from the *Flora of Tropical East Africa* (see below). Botanical illustration can successfully combine scientific accuracy with visual appeal or aesthetic value but it is rather *botanical art*, a closely-associated genre, that places greater emphasis on the latter in its portrayal of plants.

Early History



The earliest surviving illustrated botanical work is the *Vienna Dioscorides*, an early 6th century Byzantine Greek illuminated manuscript of an even earlier 1st century AD work, *De Materia Medica* by Pedanius Dioscorides. He travelled as a physician and pharmacologist with the armies of the Roman Emperor Nero, which provided him an opportunity to study the features, distribution, and medicinal properties of many plants. The manuscript has 383 extant full-page illustrations, the majority of which were painted in a naturalistic style, though not drawn from nature, to aid the pharmacologist in the recognition of each plant. An example, *Cannabis sativa diori*, is shown here.

The Popularity of Herbals

Perhaps the work above was an ancient form of a *Herbal*. This is a book that uses illustrations and explanations to teach the various properties and uses of plants particularly for ointments and medicines. Plant illustrations needed to be instructional enough for a reader to identify the plant in nature, including an accurate rendering of the plant's proportions, characteristics of the plant, and the colours of the foliage and any flowers or fruit. For healers and herbalists, the stakes were high; the wrong plant or preparation could result in death.



Botanical illustration began to take off as an artistic genre with the rising popularity of these Herbals, such as the celebrated medieval Herbal, *De Historia Stirpium Commentarii Insignes*. This was published in 1542 by a German herbalist, Leonhart Fuchs (1501-1566). Some 400 German and 100 foreign plants, including many new ones from America, are beautifully illustrated by over 500 full-page woodcuts. Albrecht Meyer was the illustrator, who collaborated with a painter and an engraver, to produce the woodcuts. The accurate and detailed drawings which were printed from woodcuts were the most notable advance on its predecessors. His *Acanthus vera* illustration is shown here.

Age of Discovery

Botanical illustration continued to flourish during *The Age of Discovery*, the period between 15th and 18th centuries. Illustrators accompanied explorers and scientists on epic voyages around the world - to 'new' lands where they collected evidence of 'new' plants and flowers, which was documented through their drawings and paintings. Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues was employed in 1564 as the cartographer and official artist on a French expedition to Florida. His watercolours, later published as engravings, move away from the religious symbolism commonly associated with plants during the medieval period towards a more naturalistic approach. Shown here: *Pomegranate*, circa 1575, England.



Sydney Parkinson was the botanical draughtsman who accompanied Joseph Banks, the English naturalist, botanist and patron of the natural sciences, on Captain Cook's journey on the Endeavour to the South Seas and Australia (1768-1771). Parkinson's work was developed into *Banks Florilegium*, a set of copperplate engravings of plants collected by Sir Joseph Banks and Daniel Solander, a Swedish naturalist. His *Banksia integrifolia* watercolour is shown here.

A Period of Classification

By this stage, botanical illustration had changed in style quite radically - and it was Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), the Swedish botanist and explorer, who was responsible for this. As he developed the *Linnaean system* as the base of our modern classification system for plants and other living things, then, for identification and naming purposes, he required drawings which achieved a high level of scientific accuracy and detail. They would include, for instance, all the plant parts: roots, stems, leaves, flowers and seed pods, or the flower alone or the flower and fruit. George Ehret illustrated the first publication of Linnaeus's innovative botanical classification, *A Magnolia species: flowering stem with labelled floral segments, fruit and seed*, being one such illustration circa 1737.



When such systems of botanical nomenclature began to be published, the need for a drawing or painting became optional. However, it was at this time that the profession of botanical illustrator began to emerge. The finer detail of the printing processes, greatly improving in the eighteenth century, allowed illustrators to depict the minute aspects of the subject. There was widening interest of amateur botanists, gardeners, natural historians and a non-scientific audience generally in natural history and horticulture, which provided a market for botanical publications such as field guides, *floras*, catalogues and magazines. The illustrations increased the appeal and accessibility of these publications. All such developments were taking place during the period from around 1750 to 1850 known as the *Age of Enlightenment* in Europe, which was characterised by a passion for classification with botanical illustration playing its part. Indeed, it can be said that botanical illustration was at its height then.

As mentioned, many *Floras* were produced during this period. A *Flora* is traditionally a book containing a list with illustrations of all the plant life or flora - generally the indigenous plants, which are present in a particular region or time. Prepared as a set of monographs, the *Flora of Tropical East Africa*, a project of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, is a descriptive, extensively illustrated account of all 12,500 wild plant species of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. (The project was initially set up in 1948 with the first parts published in 1952 and the final part in 2012.)

Contemporary Times

Moving on to more contemporary times, one would have thought perhaps that the role of botanical illustration would have been diminished with the advent of photography and digital technology. Yet this certainly seems not to be the case. It is common practice, for instance, for botanical illustrators to be appointed to the departments of botany/plant sciences of institutions like the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC and Oxford University, England or to botanical gardens such as the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, London. A botanical illustration can preserve a plant species, variety, or cultivar in books and journals almost in perpetuity, even if it goes extinct in the wild. Illustrations can also help conservation efforts by creating public awareness and empathy for plants. Finally, they continue to be invaluable in identifying newly discovered plants, as the following shows. In the 1980s, Celia Rosser, a renowned Australian botanical illustrator, undertook to illustrate every known *Banksia* species (*Banksia* is a genus named after Joseph Banks, of around 170 species in the plant family *Proteaceae*). This resulted in a three-volume series of monographs containing the paintings being published in 1981. In 2001, a new species of *Banksia* was described after its publication: it was named *Banksia rosserae* in Rosser's honour.

Undoubtedly, digital photography will be increasingly used in the creation of images. However, it cannot make judgements about the intricacies of portraying the plant parts a scientist may wish to emphasise and a camera cannot reconstruct a lifelike botanical specimen from dried, pressed material. The thought process mediating the decision of every aspect of the illustration lives in the head of the illustrator... botanical illustration lives on.

Sources: *Botanical illustration*, Wikipedia; <https://www.botanicalartsandartists.com>; *The Science of Art - Why Botanical Illustration Matters*, National Tropical Botanical Garden, Hawaii; *Buxaceae, Flora of Tropical East Africa*; *V&A Membership Monday Renaissance*, February 2023, Victoria & Albert Museum.

Dracaena - a plant for all seasons.

Every garden needs a few 'go to' plants within it. Plants on which you can rely. Plants that will grow come rain or shine. Plants that can be readily propagated and that are easy to maintain. In



my garden my faithful friends are *Crinum asiaticum*, (pictured to the left) a big blowsy lily-like plant that covers the ground and is always green, lush, tropical and expansive, and *Dracaena*, (pictured on the right) being tall or short, wide or narrow, hardy as anything, always a rich dark green, constantly growing, always on the up, and drought tolerant.



According to Wikipedia, *Dracaena* is a genus of about 120 species of trees and succulent shrubs. The formerly accepted genera *Pleomele* and well-known *Sansevieria* are now included within the *Dracaena* genus. The name *Dracaena* is derived from the Romanized form of the Ancient Greek - *drakaina*, or 'female dragon'. The majority of the



species are native to Africa and southern Asia through to northern Australia. *Dracaena* basically come in two forms, either treelike (*Dracaena fragrans*, *Dracaena draco* and *Dracaena cinnibari*), with above ground stems, or as shrubs which have underground rhizomes and leaves on the surface (*Dracaena trifasciata* and *Dracaena anglicensis*).

So, why is *Dracaena* such a useful plant within a coastal garden? I think the answer is in its structure. Masses of green strap-like leaves that hang from the central stem, and the stem itself which can grow to at least six or seven metres in height. Planted in groups or clusters *Dracaena* will form excellent evergreen walls or dividers within a garden, and its density of leaf blocks out everything behind it, so great for screening off ugly walls, water tanks, compost heaps and so on. Once established, *Dracaena* is fast growing and prolific and as we shall see in a moment, drop dead easy to propagate. You only need one plant to start with.



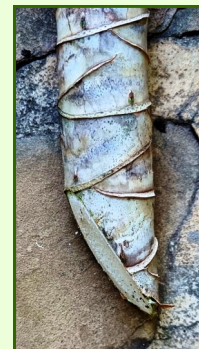
The process of multiplying Dracaena plants is a slightly brutal but very simple one. Find an established plant and then with one clean blow of a panga sever the stem about a metre above the ground. It is important to make a clean diagonal cut to give the transplanted part of the stem the best chance of establishing itself when replanted.



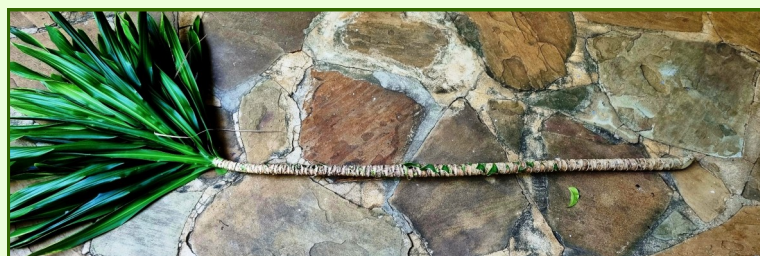
A sharp panga is definitely the tool of choice. Don't worry about the naked stem that is left in the ground. It will soon shoot

again, often as two separate new stems branching from the original stem and with a little time will grow back stronger, taller and greener than

ever.



Now, the amputated stem is ready for a little cosmetic treatment. First task is to strip the stem of most, but not all, of its leaves. It is important not to ask the stem, which has no root, to work too hard after it is replanted, and so the fewer the leaves it is trying to support, the better and faster it re-establishes itself after planting. The picture below shows an amputated stem with most of its leaves removed. It is now nearly ready for replanting.



The last task before replanting is an easy one. Do nothing. Just leave the amputated stem,

as seen above, to dry for 2 - 3 days. Not too long obviously. And then plant it. If the soil is fairly soft you can literally just push the stem down in to the soil like a spear and as soon as it is standing up firmly, it's done. As with all new planting, water liberally for the first few days. And don't worry if the transplant looks a little fragile for a while, and loses a few leaves. It seems to be all part of the process. I have never had one fail. Here's a picture of a Dracaena that was cut, prepared as per the advice above, and replanted a few months ago. Looks healthy to me.



I commend Dracaena to you as a plant on which you can rely and which will bring rich green foliage to your garden.



NCD Monthly Events Report



Arabuko Farm Visit, 24 January 2023

More than 50 NCD members, including a good number of gardener members, made their way to Bob van der Bijl's farm, some 14 kms from Malindi and 11 kms from Gede, on 24 January 2023 to attend this event. As usual, we first enjoyed our early morning refreshments though on this occasion bringing our own flasks of hot water as this is not yet on tap pending completion of the terrace/ restaurant. This fact and many others were presented by Bob in his introductory talk about the farm, a 10-acre demonstration farm with a focus on fruit trees including passion fruit and mango. Each of his senior staff members then explained their particular tasks on the farm such as the care of the indigenous herbs.



Then the large group broke into a number of smaller groups and, guided by the Arabuko Farm staff, set off to explore the many different initiatives that have been established taken since its inception about two years ago. Enjoyed, too, were the splendid panoramic views seen from the roof terrace. If you were not able to attend this event and visit the farm, you can read all about it in Bob's My Farm story in this issue of *The Shamba Times!*

Thanks first to Bob and all his staff who hosted the event and then to the KHS NCD Committee members who, as always, organised it in the usual efficient way.

A Garden Visit and Lunch at Marion Langham's garden in Kilifi - 21 February 2023

More than 60 NCD members were present on 21st February as we visited the remarkable new garden created by Marion Langham off a quiet lane behind Bofa. The garden has come on in leaps and bounds since we were last there and yet it is still not even three years old. Quite remarkable, and a testament to Marion's expertise and the training and hard work of her small team of gardeners.



And it's not just a garden. There is a farmyard with pigs, cows, chickens, fields of mchicha, pot-making, composting, a wormery and much more. Following a few introductory words from Marion, members spent a very pleasant morning looking at plants, ponds, palms and the assorted livestock. There was also a very useful plant and pot sale and many members went home with much more than they arrived with.

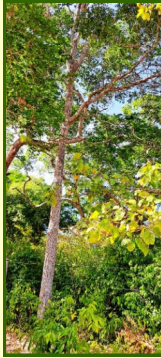


At around midday more than 40 members sat down for a delicious curry lunch. Our Treasurer, Rupert assisted by one of our gardeners Abraham, ran a very popular bar serving up cold beers and wines, along with soft drinks and a lemon cordial. It was an excellent day out, greatly enjoyed, and a good learning experience too. We owe huge thanks to

Marion and Lucinda for their kind hospitality, and we should also thank Marion's team of staff for their friendly welcome and helpfulness.

Images from NCD gardens.

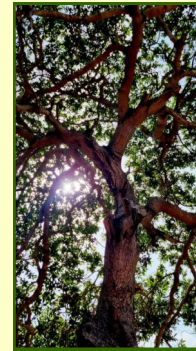
A gallery of members' recent photographs



Manikara sansibarensis
Zablon.



Adansonia digitata
Annelise de la Rosa, Malindi.



Anacardium occidentale
Crispin Sharp, Arabuko Farm..



Bee having breakfast
Emanuela Nesta, Malindi..



Daisies with bee
Peter Derry, Nairobi.



Bee on mchicha
Ana Parada, Malindi.



Amaranthus
Mariola Salioli, Malindi.



Gomphrena globosa
Elizabeth Cook, Kilifi.



Aphelandra sp.
Crispin sharp. Malindi.



Orchid
Ana Parada, Malindi.



Nymphoides indica
Robert Horner, Kilifi.



Nelumbia nucifera Lotus
Nicola Morrell, Kilifi.

Diary of upcoming NCD events



24 April 2023 - 'The Great Kenyan Horticultural Quiz', in Malindi.



Members are invited to test their horticultural knowledge in a light hearted quiz, played in teams of four. Questions about plants, trees, names and at least two sections of music from the garden. Whatever can that be?

The challenge, which is strictly for fun, though who knows what one may learn, will take place at 1030 in Crispin's garden at Kibokoni Residence in north Malindi. Don't worry if you can't make up a team of four before the event, we shall ensure that everybody finds their way into a team on the day. Coffee and tea as usual and a cash bar open at 1130. And oh yes, they'll be prizes!

May 2023 - Centenary Tree Planting event at Pwani University, Kilifi.



As members are aware, it is the aim of the KHS that each of its 10 districts should plant no fewer than 100 indigenous trees as part of the Society's centenary celebrations. Towards the end of 2022, the North Coast District met at Norbert Rottcher's indigenous tree nursery and we gave KSh50,000 to Norbert to purchase 100 young indigenous tree saplings which Norbert has been caring for since then. In May, at a time and date to be announced, we shall meet again, this time to plant our 100 trees in the grounds of Pwani University where they can be irrigated, nurtured, protected, and measured in a sustainable way.

June 2023 - An expert speaker leads us forward.



However much we think we know about gardening, there is always more to learn. Be it about nurturing the soil in our coastal gardens, about propagating plants from existing stock, dealing with pests, diseases, and invasive species, learning how to garden for a drier year in which less rain than usual falls, about identifying species - indigenous and exotic, or about motivating our gardeners, we all have more to learn. So at a date and location to be announced, we shall bring a garden expert to share their knowledge and experience to help us and our staff to become better gardeners. Watch this space.

KHS North Coast District



KENYA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY
Gardening Kenya

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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.

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To join the **KHS North Coast District WhatsApp group**, please contact **Crispin Sharp** on 0798 902 442 and ask to be added to the group.