Date : 18th September 2025
Venue : The Home of Dee and Alec Roberts
Lecturer : Anne Powys
Topic: Plant Strategies and Adaptations

KHS Mt. Kenya Meeting Report by Faith Chelegat Kebenei

Introduction

The Kenya Horticultural Society (KHS) held its meeting on 18th September 2025.

To open the session, Keith Pearson spoke about a very inspiring "must-have" book on Gardening in East Africa, sparking members' curiosity and enthusiasm.

The day's lecture, delivered by Anne Powys, then focused on Plant Strategies and Adaptations—how plants survive and thrive under different environmental conditions.

Presentation Summary

The lecture highlighted the remarkable ways in which plants adapt to challenges such as drought, pests, and harsh sunlight. Examples included:

Tree Bark Adaptations

Acacia: Pale-colored bark reflects heat, conserving water in dry regions.

Barks rich in tannins protect against fungal and bacterial infections.

Traditionally used in medicine for wounds, sore throats, and diarrhoea.

Leaf Adaptations

Crotons: Orange leaf coloration aids in moisture retention. Carotene protects against excess sunlight, while bright coloration deters insect pests.

Maerua cappo boscia: Evergreen with slightly lobed leaves, adapted for drought resistance.

Olive forest tree: Thick cuticles and silvery undersides reflect sunlight and reduce heat stress. Leaves and bark have traditional medicinal uses.

Euclea divinorium: Evergreen leathery leaves allow year-round photosynthesis. Used in medicine for stomach ailments, toothache, and skin conditions. Twigs (mswaki) valued for oral hygiene.

Structural and Defensive Adaptations

Drepanalobium: Hollow thorns shelter ants; the plant provides nectar, while ants defend against browsers and aid pollination. Vital in the savanna ecosystem.

Euphorbia: Produces latex that protects against herbivores and insect attacks.

Flower Adaptations

Strong floral scents indicate high competition for pollinators.

Ipomea: Flowers rich in pollen attract bees and moths, aiding pollination.

Discussion & Member Engagement

Members reflected on the ecological importance of plant adaptations and the deep connection between plant survival strategies and traditional knowledge.

The conversation highlighted how plants provide not only food but also medicine and cultural value—showcasing their indispensable role in ecosystems and human life.

Conclusion

The meeting provided deep insights into the adaptive strategies of plants, leaving members both informed and inspired.

After the lecture, members couldn't resist exploring the garden's aesthetics, soaking in beauty and inspiration from nature itself.

Finally, after food for thought, the stomach couldn't be left behind—members concluded the day with a heartfelt meal, sharing not just knowledge but also fellowship.

Both mind and body were well nourished!

A special thank you to Dee and Alec for their warm hospitality, which made the meeting truly memorable.