SUCCULENTA

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THE NEWSLETTER OF SUCCULENTA EAST AFRICA

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NatureKenya
THE EAST AFRICA NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Chairman's Notes

The job of editor (and now publisher – see below) seems to go with that of being Chairman, so I have taken over from this issue of the Newsletter. I hope to feature more articles on succulents, the explorers and collectors who named them, interesting facts and stories, conservation, and on gardening/ landscaping with succulents. In this regard I will be assisted by Barry Cameron, a member of long standing who is a close friend of Prof Len Newton; in addition to being involved in commercial plant nurseries which include succulents, he was Chairman of the Kenya Horticultural Society for many years and possesses a wealth of experience and knowledge: it is my pleasure to welcome him as an additional consultant to our Society. He has dug out the two articles by the late Dee Raymer below, previously included in "Ballya" some years ago: Dee's inimitable style makes them fun and interesting and not all members will have seen them before. Barry also contributed the new book reviews in this issue.

Sadly, Lizzie Lawrence has announced that she and Alan have decided to leave Kenya; they are going to South Africa where Alan has family. Lizzie's cheerful enthusiasm and willing spirit will be sorely missed – as will her past work publishing the Newsletter. Missed, too, will be Alan's apparently magical ability to resurrect knackered cars in the middle of nowhere. Lizzie has said that all members will be welcome to visit and stay once they have established their new home in SA.

Please help to make the Newsletter interesting by contributing your own stories, letters, photos and suggested articles. Without help, even a new editor will soon run out of ideas.

This issue has been prepared in Word and isn't very pretty. Once I've got the hang of MS Publisher or similar, I'll try to do better - - - - - .

Happenings

Christmas lunch at Jay Hewett's house.

Around 30 members attended a most enjoyable Christmas celebration at Jay Hewett's.
Jay had gone to considerable trouble to prepare for our lunch and the garden looked magnificent. Thanks to everyone who helped with the decorations.
While some members preferred to chat on the lawn and enjoy the gardens, other wandered down to the dam and admired the family of Egyptian geese and many other birds. The rocky area on the side of the dam was full of little succulents and much admired were the unusual craterostigma hirsutum (the white craterostigma), which were flowering in profusion, and the not often seen aloe myriacantha.
Everyone contributed to the delicious lunch which was washed down with copious quantities of prosecco.
To the joy of those present, the raffle (a haworthia limifolia) was won by Kate Hewett, Jay's daughter in law from Mpala Ranch in Laikipia, who had done so much to help with the success of the day.

Future events

Visit to Tumaren Lodge and Ranch, Laikipia

A number of members will visit Tumaren Ranch between 4th and 7th February 2019. Our search for succulent plants will be led by Anne Powys, whose knowledge of Laikipia plants is encyclopaedic.

Kenya Horticultural Society show

The 2019 KHS show will take place from 17 to 19 May at SSDS temple, Lower Kabete Road. It has a section for succulents and this is an opportunity not only to show off the attractions of succulent plants, but also to encourage others to become enthusiasts, perhaps in the context of waterwise gardening. We will explore whether we can use our new projector to show a rolling display of succulent plants in the wild as well as in members' gardens to this end.
So: keen members should start now to plant suitable material in containers, ready to make an impact and even win prizes at the show.

This article first appeared in **Ballya Vol. 1 No 2 February 1994** published by Succulenta EA, a division of the East African Natural History Society (Nature Kenya), and was authored by the late Dee Raymer.

BURNING ISSUE (NOT A THORNY ONE)

What do *Aeonium lindleyi*, blood, lemon juice and urine have in common? All are first-aid specifics for the treatrnent of euphorbia sap in the eyes, which causes agony on a par with spitting cobra venom, can ulcerate the cornea similarly and even cause blindness if not treated promptly. Milk, despite efficiently neutralising spitting cobra venom, is singularly ineffective as a treatment for Euphorbia sap, so don't waste time trying it. Anaesthetic eye drops have no effect either.

As I don't have a *A. lindleyi*, I cannot vouch personally for it, but am told that the juice should be squeezed into the affected eye or eyes.

Advice on the blood or urine treatments comes by courtesy of Kinyanjui, Ian Craig's head game-scout and tracker at Lewa Downs, Isiolo. I have seen both used, and they are singularly and rapidly effective. Genteel squeamishness is superfluous in the face of genuine medical emergency. Urine (the victim may be invited to be the donor), from a clean, preferably sterilised container, is used to irrigate across the eyeball from the inside to the outside corner, with the head tilted. A dropper or syringe is helpful, although a spoon will be quicker to locate. Continue with the irrigation until there is a considerable reduction of the pain.

In the present medical climate most people are chary of handling human blood, but animal blood appears to be equally effective, and I have seen both camel and goat blood used. A stout cord, strap or belt is tightened across the neck to raise the jugular vein. Blood is withdrawn by syringe and ideally 10 ml should be allowed for each eye. Again, a dropper, syringe (needle removed, of course) or spoon may be used, and the blood applied drop by drop as above. It is, of course, a rather gory business, but extraordinary in both the way the blood clots instantly on contact with the sap, and in the rapidity of relief to the victim.

With all treatments, once the pain has subsided, the eyes should be rinsed with plenty of clean, preferably sterilised water. The cornea will remain reddened for a day or two afterwards, when a mild, soothing eyebath (e.g. Optrex or milk) will prove helpful.

A fourth suggestion for treatment comes from a member who requests anonymity but speaks (with feeling) from experience. Her recipe is for a vodka-sized capful-which I measure as about l7 ml, or a fraction over 3 standard teaspoonful-of fresh lemon juice, to 1 old-fashioned teacup-approx. l/3 pint or 0.2 litres-of clean water. This solution is used to irrigate the eye at intervals between pressing a clean cloth or handkerchief wrung out in it, over the closed lid.

The most common way of introducing euphorbia sap to the eyes is by inadvertently rubbing them with hands which have spills or smears on them. The resulting agony is so intense that the automatic reaction is to rub the eyes further, compounding the problem and spreading the sap further. Profuse streaming of the eyes can then carry more sap into them.

The victim should be restrained from rubbing, and as soon as first-aid treatment has been effected, their face, hands and under the finger nails wiped completely clean with either the lemon solution, or urine if no lemons are available. Plenty of oral fluid should be taken to compensate for water-loss caused by the streaming eyes and nose, and profuse sweating from the distress.

Prevention, as any victim will tell you, is vastly preferable to cure, so it makes good sense, whenever working with euphorbias, to have a bottle of lemon solution -- or maybe a camel -- to hand.

This second article first appeared **Ballya Vol. 5 No 3 October 1998** published by Succulenta EA a division of the East African Natural History Society (Nature Kenya) and was also authored by the late Dee Raymer.

THE HEALING HERB

The aloe species whose name is instantly familiar to millions of people, from its appearance on jars of skin-care products, is *Aloe vera*. As any aloe enthusiast knows, it is also the species most asked about by laymen (or women) who want to know where they can acquire this plant, with its mystical medicinal and healing properties. They are usually disappointed, sceptical or both when told that much of what is commercially called "*A. vera*" is actually extracted from *A. ferox* in South Africa — the East and West Cape districts through to KwaZulu-Natal. An excellent detailed 61-page report appeared in 1996, full of fascinating facts on the "aloe tapping" industry and export records. [see David Newton's article on pp. 49–54. *Ed*.]

A further truth about *A. vera*, as many of us can ruefully testify, is that it is a rather undistinguished plant of little visual merit and marginal hardiness famous, in East Africa at any rate, for introducing the dreaded Aloe Rust (caused by the fungus *Uromyces aloes*) to collections, where it ravages many of one's more prized species and is almost impossible to eradicate. In the light of Hellen Oketch's researches (see *Ballya* vol. 2, no. 2, June 1995), the most widely used indigenous aloe with medicinal properties would appear to be *A. secundiflora*, which seems to be as resistant to rust as one can hope for, has considerably more visual merit than *A. vera*, and responds gratefully to cultivation.

There is, however, another extremely hardy and ubiquitous succulent plant found in gardens throughout Kenya that has sterling medicinal properties and that does *not* carry the risk of introducing troublesome diseases — the South African *Bulbine frutescens*, often (and mistakenly) referred to as "*Bulbinella*". So common that it is frequently overlooked, it survives even in the poorest soils and most unsuitable placements and because, after a year or two, it rises on its roots making messy clumps that need dividing and replanting, it is poorly regarded by many gardeners despite its being both drought-resistant and frost-hardy.

The most common form of *B. frutescens* has bright sulphur-yellow flowers that stand above dense clumps of green onion-like leaves. Leaves are cylindrical in cross-section and filled with colourless gel. The less common (and less vigorous) form (see next page) has bicoloured orange and yellow inflorescences. Folklore has it — where DO these myths arise? — that the bicoloured variety lacks useful properties. The South Africans, who use both and should know, say that properties are identical, although the bicoloured contains less lavish quantities of the gel.

The bulbine's healing properties are very similar to those of "*A. vera*", useful in the treatment of burns and scalds, eczema and irritated skin conditions, blisters, rashes, insect bites, fever blisters, cold sores, pimples, mouth ulcers and bee or wasp stings. A soothing preparation for dry, chapped skin or for sunburn is made by mixing equal parts of bulbine gel with aqueous cream (available from most chemists) and heating it in a double-boiler for 20 minutes before straining into a storage jar.

Letters, miscellany

Sir: Odile Keene's comment on roundabouts in the August Newsletter referred, I presume, to Nairobi's Uhuru Highway. The original work by the late Peter Greensmith was described by Dee Raymer in her wonderful book "Down to Earth": the roundabouts featured very large imported rocks to form focal points and minimal, uncluttered but complementary plantings, beautifully balanced. As she wrote, part of PG's unusual talent was that, like the great oriental painters, *he knew what to leave out*. They survived droughts and traffic fumes, not to mention the droppings of myriad nesting marabou storks, for over forty years on rainfall alone - but not NCC's new-improvements.

The fully-grown fever trees and aloes barberae and ballyi were chopped down some years ago; fortunately some Succulenta members were alerted and rushed to rescue crashed barberae branches before they were all removed.

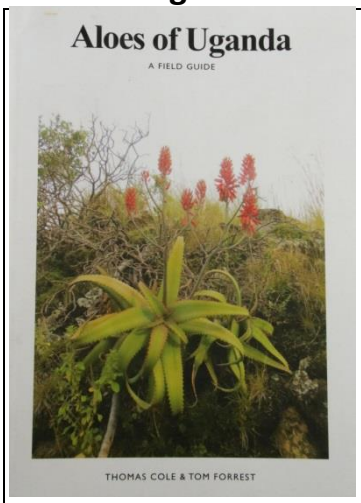
Have You Heard?
In the March 2018 edition of The British Cactus and Succulent Society journal Cactus World mention is made of a report that the University of Johannesburg has recently stated that a new portable scanning machine has been developed and is now being introduced at major airports in an attempt to stop the smuggling of rare and endangered animal parts (e.g. rhino horn) *and* plants (e.g. cycads, seeds and plants).

Previously, if suspicious parts were found these items had to be sent to a laboratory to determine the DNA and the species involved and this could take days or weeks. This new portable equipment is able rapidly to identify the DNA barcoding and the details of the species, giving customs officials the evidence they need to arrest and stop smugglers..... if you like to pop the odd plant or two into your baggage, be warned!

Book Reviews

These reviews are printed with the kind permission of the **British Cactus and Succulent Society** which appeared in their journal **Cactus World**, Volume 36 No 3, September 2018, the review being by **Al Lais**, editor of the journal

Aloes of Uganda – A Field Guide *by* Tomas Cole & Tom Forrest



This is the first book devoted specifically to Ugandan aloes and is a user-friendly field guide to all the known aloes in the country. You do not have to be an 'aloe-nut' or live in Uganda in order to enjoy this book as the photography alone provides a visual feast not only of the plants themselves, but also their habitats, with stunning scenery. Moreover, many of the plants also appear in Kenya.

The aloes are arranged in alphabetical order and there is a short description of the size, growth habit, leaves, flowers and habitat for each. Conservation status based on the author's own assessments is provided. A distribution map and numerous photos are included for all the taxa (22 species and two subspecies), and flowering periods are mentioned. If all that is not enough to help you identify the plants then distinctive characters are also highlighted in each case. An extensive bibliography and glossary appear at the end.

After the forward and introduction we have a chapter on conservation, followed by another on cultural and medical practices before the main part of the book, the alphabetical journey through the species (and subspecies). However, it is the stunning photographs of the plants which, for me, are the highlight. Averaging around five per plant, there are always photos of the flowers as well as habitat shots, and often other succulents are included in the picture. This is a delightful book to savour and dip into, if only to look at the pictures that could be right out of National Geographic magazine.

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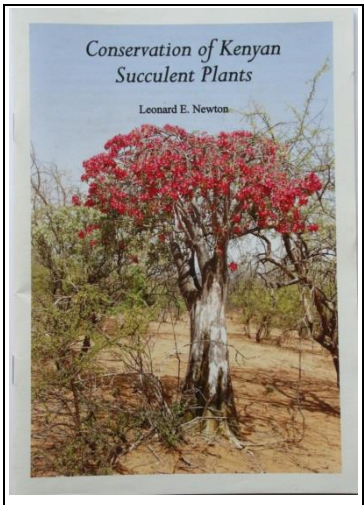
Conservation of Kenyan Succulent Plants *by* Prof. Leonard E. Newton



This is the ninth in a series of booklets produced for members of Succulenta East Africa. Some previous issues have been directed at local gardeners' interests in xerophytic plants as water shortages become more common. However, this issue focuses on conservation, not only by outlining concerns and threats but also offering action plans in terms of behaviour in the field, legislation and effective conservation in reserves and gardens.

An introduction is followed by a section on plants and their habitats. Type localities and reports of those that have vanished are also discussed. After the above- mentioned action plans, a 13 page check list of Kenyan succulent and caudiciform plants, which includes dates of publication, follows. This is particularly useful as it updates the last list published in 2003. A page of references and further suggested reading ends the text.

What really make this booklet a delight are the colour photographs. With just 40 pages, it soon becomes obvious that if over half of the booklet is text, then to fit in 75 photos as well was quite a challenge, and of necessity many photos are small. This is not a problem as the images are of excellent quality and colour reproduction, with many showing plants in flower. These pictures are a great aid to identification and it is only a pity that the author had to whittle down what must have been originally a multitude of photos. Perhaps a future offering could be a full -sized book, a colour field guide to all the succulent plants of Kenya?

Stop Press: The article below is just in from Prof Len Newton, providing abbreviated descriptions of two new delospermas and one new Kenya aloe species. – Ed.

NEW LITERATURE

Liede-Schumann, S. & Newton, L.E. (2018) Notes on the *Delosperma*-clade (Aizoaceae). *Haseltonia* 25: 100–114.

The genus *Delosperma* has about 160 species, most of which occur in southern Africa. The few species in East Africa and Arabia are now in the subgenus *Proterogyna* because they are distinguished by having the flower stigmas presented before the anthers open to release pollen. In this paper two new Kenyan species are described. *Delosperma heidihartmanniae* was collected by Len Newton on Mount Baio. It is a sprawling plant with pink flowers. The name commemorates Dr. Heidi Hartmann, a German botanist who specialised in the family Aizoaceae but died before she could finish her work on these two new species. *Delosperma melepoense* was collected on Melepo (Malepo) Hill during a Succulenta field trip, when it was first spotted by Sue Allan. It is distinguished by having a basal tuber, finely hairy leaves, and white flowers.

Newton, L.E. (2018) A new species of *Aloe* in Kenya, with forked marginal teeth on the leaves. *Haseltonia* 25: 125–127.

Aloe sergoitensis was seen on Sergoit Hill, on the Kruger Ranch, during a Succulenta field trip. It had been seen earlier by Maria Dodds, and a specimen growing well in Belinda Levitan's garden flowered and provided material for the description. It branches at the base and the stems lie along the ground, eventually producing a branching inflorescence. A distinctive feature is that the marginal teeth on the leaves are forked, a feature shared with only one other species in Madagascar.

Members

Succulenta East Africa would like to welcome Rupert Partridge (Aug 2018) and Delta Willis (Dec 2018) as new members of both the society and Nature Kenya.

Please remember to pay Shs1,000/- to renew your 2019 subscription on the anniversary of your joining. It will coincide with the renewal date for your membership of Nature Kenya. Please pay both together to Nature Kenya, making sure that you inform Nature Kenya so that they will know to allocate Succulenta's portion accordingly – thank you.

Plants and planting

Succulent plant sources

It can be quite difficult to source aloes and other succulents, either to increase numbers or numbers of species. The best source for aloes is fellow members, who ought be willing to share cuttings and offshoots so that, if/when the dreaded snout beetle causes losses, it may be possible to get relacements. Otherwise, Plants Galore at Runda (many varieties) and Brian Williams (some aloes) near Thika are commercial nurseries; and roadside, jua kali nurseries have increasing ranges. KHS hold annual plant sales and members often bring a few plants for sale to our AGM and other meetings.

Questionnable! plants

This space is to allow members to ask their fellows' help in identifying plants they just cannot find in the usual sources. A photo or two, a brief description – someone out there might recognise it or point in the right direction and finally put that frustration to rest.

The first could be Sinana or Adigratana; the second Neosteudnerii. They could be none of these, but are unlikely to be hybrids. Can anyone pin down the identity of these aloes?

	
14-18 ascending leaves are 50-60cm long X 7-8cm wide; red tipped 3-4mm teeth are in "waves", slightly forward pointing, 25-30mm apart; sap dries orange-ish; inflorescence 75-90cm tall, 3 to 8 branches, some re-branched, upward curving; fairly densely capitate flowers. Older plants bear longer stems.	30-32 leaves in spread rosette are c35cm long x 8-10cm wide, when dry take on reddish tint; red/brown, upright (pungent) teeth are tiny (1.5mm); sap dries clear over green pulp; teeth 12-20mm apart; infloresence to 90cm, 3-5 branched, upward curved; laxly-flowered. Stemless (so far).

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Succulenta East Africa Newsletter is produced four times a year. Contributions are most welcome and should be sent to the editor.