



BOTSOC NEWS

November 2007



Dear members,

Xmas greetings! May you all spend very relaxing holidays at the end of this year in a green and rainy Namibia and may we see each other safe and sound in 2008.

REPORTS ON PREVIOUS ACTIVITIES, TALKS AND WALKS

The talk "Surrogate Sex – Opportunities in Pollination Studies" presented by Eugene Marais on 20 September described the weird and wonderful ways of flowers to attract and captivate pollinators in a very informative yet amusing presentation. The lecture hall was packed – did the topic arouse curiosity? Eugene is thanked for the "tongue in cheek" presentation.

Esmeralda Klaasen introduced her audience on 18 September to "A Taxonomic revision of the genus *Pentatrachia* (Asteraceae), a group within the daisy family, largely occurring in crevices of cliff faces (cremophilous habit). A specimen of *Pentatrachia rehmi* was collected in 1930 by Dr. Rehm and never seen since. Esmeralda "rediscovered" and studied it together with the other three species in this genus as part of her Masters of Science degree. Essi is thanked for her interesting presentation.

UPCOMING WALKS AND TALKS OF INTEREST

WALKS:

The Year end function will take us to "**Auas-Born**" by the kind invitation of Mr and Mrs Reinhardt. We are planning a late afternoon easy botanic walk, followed by a "sun-downer" and "full moon-upper" on the plot. Please bring a picnic basket and a chair. We'll meet on **Saturday, 24 November 2007** at the gate of the plot at **17h00**. Directions: Turn into D1504 off the Rehoboth road, pass the Harmony Centre entrance for a little over 1 km., turn left on a tarred road to "Uitsig", stop at gate with signage "Reinhardt: Auas-Born" Please contact Ellen Gudde at tel. 228815 or Diana Thompson at 226871 not later than Monday, 19 November 2007 to reserve a place or arrange a lift.

The last guided walk for 2007 will take place on Saturday **1 December 2007** in the National Botanic Garden, at 8 Orban Street at 08:00. The guided walks have become very popular and on average 20 people have visited the Garden on Saturdays. It is planned to continue the guided walks in 2008 and the first guided walk will take place on **Saturday, 2 February 2008**. Thereafter guided walks will be as usual on the first Saturday of each month. Entrance for non-members is N\$10. Muffins and tea/coffee will be on sale.

TALKS:

Mr David Palacios will present an "**AN INTRODUCTION ON THE MEDITERRANEAN FLORA**" on **Tuesday, 20 November 2007, 19h00** at the National Botanical Research Institute, 8 Orban Street.

Mr. Palacios will give a short overview of the vegetal formations in the Iberian Peninsula and describe the forest and bush formation in Eastern Spain as well as touch on the altitudinal patterns, natural dynamics and the main threats to the vegetations. Refreshments will be served after the talk.

BOTANICAL SOCIETY TREE AWARD 2007

October, being the month for Arbour Day saw the first awards function of the Tree Award on Thursday, 18 October 2007. The Botanical Society of Namibia presented the first five "Tree Awards" to individuals, companies and institutions, which have been particularly instrumental in preserving existing indigenous trees and/or planting indigenous trees. Nominations were invited from the membership of the Botanical Society and the following recipients were selected to be recognised for their efforts.

Mrs Meriam Mbapeua Rukoro, owner of the "**Mecha Fuel Services**" service station in Nelson Mandela Avenue was awarded the Tree Award for preserving a camelthorn tree (*Acacia erioloba*), which is estimated to be 300 years old. Mrs Rukoro gave a very emotional account of her affection for the tree, which reminds her of her youth and the Otjozonjupa Region where she grew up. The tree served as good omen when she bought the business. It affords shade to her customers' cars and her employees enjoy sitting underneath it. She nurtures it daily.

Mr and Mrs Steenkamp of **Bougain-Villas** shopping centre received the Tree Award for generally preserving trees during the development of the property, for planting many new indigenous trees, and for in particular for

accommodating an old ringwood tree (*Maerua schinzii*) in the fencing of the property. These remarkable trees are very hardy, they regenerate easily and at times of drought, together with the shepherds tree (*Boscia albitrunca*), are the only indigenous trees with green foliage.

Dr Annemarie Marais and Mr Church, the principal of **St Paul's College**, accepted the Tree Award for planning and planting an indigenous garden on the school property in Sam Nujoma Drive. Dr Marais and her mother, Mrs Christine Marais – the well-known artist - are the master minds of the indigenous garden, of which the first and second phase have been completed. Indigenous plants of a biblical theme were planted in the chapel garden, and the front garden has many sweet thorn acacias (*Acacia karroo*), ana trees (*Faidherbia albida*), wild olive (*Olea europaea*), and wild raisin bushes (*Grewia spp*). In just six months the trees have grown by at least a meter, so that, not long from now, pupils and visitors can relax under trees during breaks. The new indigenous garden at the Recreational Centre has already attracted over 35 species of birds. Phase three of the project will be completed in the new year.

Mrs Annemarie Stritter accepted the Tree Award for preserving and planting indigenous trees when building the **Goheganas Wellness Centre**. The garden exemplifies the peace of the Centre and adds ambience, beauty and serenity to the complex. With much expertise the existing trees were incorporated into the complex, the trees do not need excessive watering and now, in the time of drought, they attract much wildlife to the Centre.

Mr Masche accepted the Tree Award on behalf of **Namibian Breweries**. He explained how during planning and expansion the trees are always considered - in fact he named the complex "Breweries in the Park" or "Park in the Breweries". Of over 200 old camelthorn trees and *Acacia karroo* at least 120 could be preserved. Mr Strack, the architect of the complex related how he changed plans to accommodate trees. Today the Breweries operate among trees and the industrial atmosphere is softened by the green foliage of the surrounding trees.

Mr Strack also referred to another remarkable tree which stands on the south-western corner of the Ministry of Finance. This old camelthorn tree is estimated to be 2000 years old and so must have been around during the times of Jesus Christ. Apparently the building was shifted 4 meters during its planning stage to accommodate the tree. This is the kind of attitude towards trees the Botanical Society of Namibia wishes to encourage by the presentation of the Tree Awards.



Luise Hoffmann and the recipients of the Botsoc Tree Award 2007

Sadly all too often trees are indiscriminately removed to give way for new developments and buildings. Often developers promise that new trees will be planted once the building has been completed. Yet, how long will it take to replace a beautiful old tree and why then, destroy those that have survived for such a long time? Mr Strack cautioned that the railway shunting area will be moved to the northern industrial area at some time in the future and appeals to all in the planning thereof to consider the trees. Hopefully the shunting docks will be moved well beyond the *Acacia* forests, so well known to all who use the drive to Okahandja.

The well known Namibian artist, Helge Denker, designed the certificate, which very aptly depicts a tree. The Tree Award function will hopefully become an annual event in celebration of trees and of people who preserve them for prosperity.

"In Praise of African Trees"

You who would pass by and raise your hand against me, listen before you harm me;
 I am the heat of your hearth on the cold winter nights,
 the friendly shade screening you from the summer sun
 and my fruits are refreshing draughts quenching your thirst as you journey on;
 I am the beam that holds your house, the board of your table,
 the bed on which you lie and the timber that builds your boat;
 I am the handle of your hoe and the door of your homestead.
 The wood of your cradle and the shell of your coffin;
 I am the gift of God and the friend of man.
 You who pass me by, listen to my prayer..... harm me not.

(Anonymous)

BOTANIC GARDEN NEWSFLASH

With the first light showers falling at the end of October the Acacias started to sprout new leaves, giving the garden a refreshing green tinge. The rain also triggered the Mountain-thorn or Bergdorn (*Acacia hereroensis*) to come into bloom. Its prolonged flowering period and non-aggressive root system make it an ideal shade tree for Windhoek gardens PLUS it is well adapted to grow in Mica Schist and, once established, can withstand frost and droughts. The Shepherd's tree, also known as Witgat or Hirtenbaum (*Boscia albitrunca*) is in full fruit. The berries turn bright red when ripe and are eaten by birds and people. It too makes a good garden tree.

Unfortunately there are not many herbaceous plants out yet, but hopefully with some more rain in December there will be lots to see in January. The garden will remain open throughout the holiday season, except on weekends and public holidays. If you are staying in Windhoek during December and don't know what to do with yourself or your kids, why not visit the Botanic Garden and learn something about our fascinating indigenous plants.

Bizarre pod outgrowths on *Acacia karroo* caused by a highly infectious fungus in Windhoek.

By Dr PM Chimwamurombe, Department of Biology, University of Namibia. P. Bag 13301. Windhoek, Namibia.

The mysterious genesis of strange growths on the stems, leaves, flowers, pods and roots of plants have intrigued plant biologists for time immemorial. Galls or hypertrophies, are tumorous (neoplastic) outgrowths that develop from rapid mitosis and morphogenesis of plant tissues and come in an astounding array of colours, shapes and sizes. Like a cancer, they divide non-stop, disobeying laws of contact inhibition. Galls may be smooth, spiny or fuzzy, and resemble everything from marbles and ping-pong balls to dunce caps, saucers and sea urchins.

Many galls provide the food and brooding structure for various species of harmless insects. Due to the general nature of galls, many authors refer to any swollen structure bearing insects as galls.

This is not only incorrect, but it detracts from the marvellous evolution of some remarkable plant species which have literally developed little "condos" to house their special symbiotic insects. These help-mate insects provide a vital service to their host plant in the form of pollination or protection in a highly competitive environment where these plants could otherwise not survive.

However, some of the most unusual and remarkable galls are caused by fungal mycelia that permeate the host tissue other galls are indeed bad such as those in found recently in Windhoek Acacias. Similar galls have been observed elsewhere in malformed mango and *Syzygium* inflorescences being caused by fungi. The Windhoek fungus associated with *Acacia karroo* pod malformations is particularly highly infectious.



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Figure 1. Unsightly eruptions of dreadlock-like features on pods of *Acacia karroo*. Seeds will not set in such peripatetic galls.

VIOLATION OF TREES:

Municipality:

Parks & Gardens: Mr Pretorius, Mr Huysamen or Mr H Voigts	Tel.	290 3540
City Police	Tel.	290 2239

Forestry:

Mr Visagie, Mr Shilunga	Tel.	208 7349
or Emmanuel Pieters of the Forestry Directorate	Tel.	208 7323

For the above mentioned persons to take legal action against the cutting down of trees there needs to be evidence in the form of wood from the cut tree, photographs, witnesses etc. Taking photographs or filming may even be an effective way of stopping the destruction.

INDIGENOUS NURSERIES:

The Forestry Nursery at Okahandja - Contact: Andries, Cell 081 260 7864

Forestry Nursery at Grootfontein - Tel: (067) 242128 / 242129 or Fax: (067) 242106

MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF NAMIBIA**BOTSOC SUBSCRIPTION FEES**

Please be reminded to update your subscriptions as soon as possible.

Membership is N\$ 50.00 for individuals
 N\$ 80.00 for families
 N\$ 10.00 for students

and covers the calendar period from January to December.

Address: **Botanical Society, c/o NBRI, Private Bag 13184, Windhoek**

Banking details: Name of account: **Botanical Society of Namibia**
 Branch Code: **461609 Main Branch**

Bank: **Nedbank**
 Acc No: **11000111289**

REGULAR INFORMATION & CONTACT NUMBERS**Botanical Society of Namibia - THE CORE OF ACTIVE PLANT PEOPLE (CAPP)**

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National Botanical Research Institute)	Web: www.nbri.org.na
National Herbarium (8 Orban St. Windhoek, Tel 202 2111
Botanic Garden)) open to Visitors Monday – Friday 8h00 – 17h00, no charge

With kind regards

Luise Hoffmann and CAPP of Botsoc