

GAUTENG SMALLHOLDER

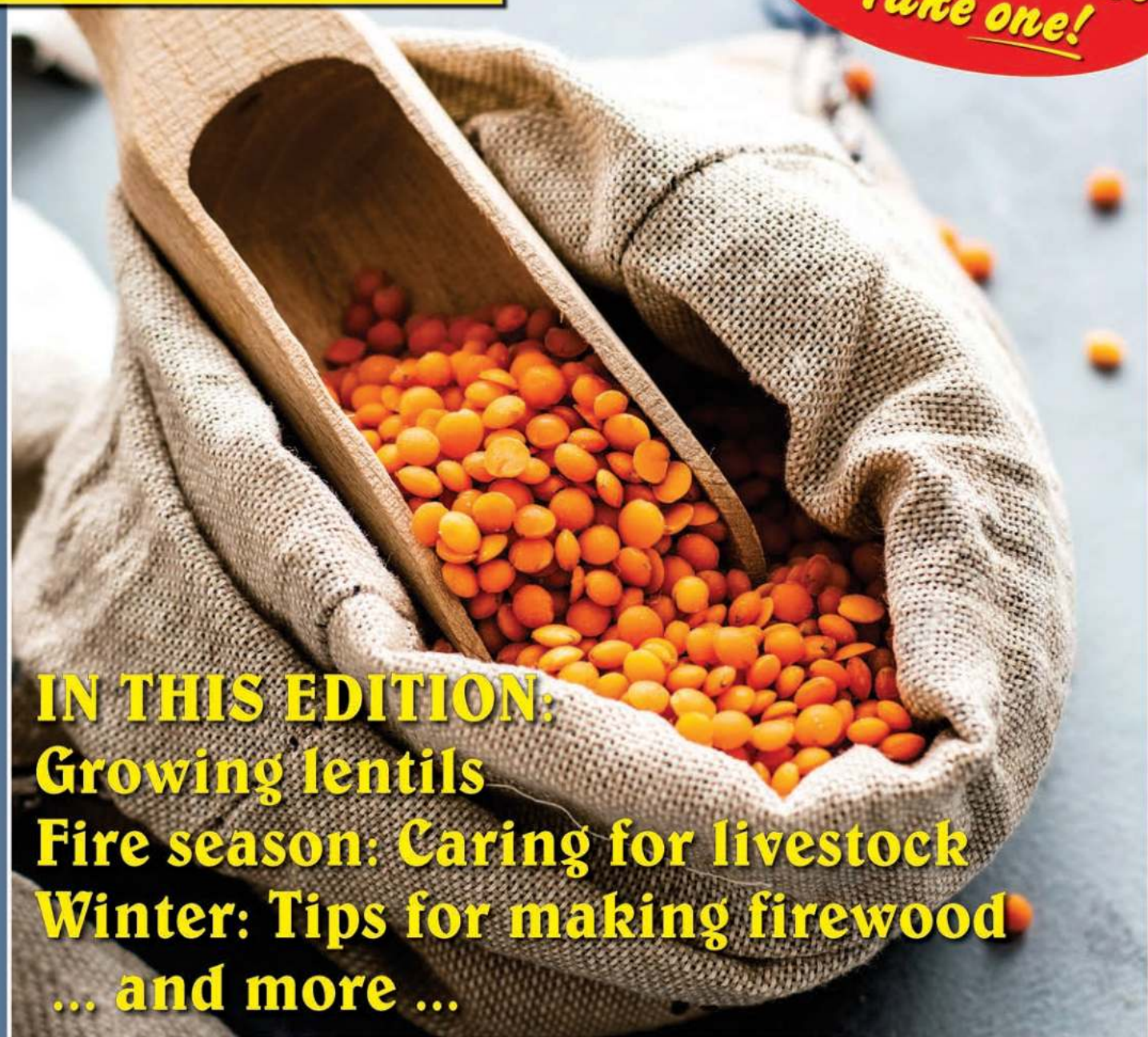
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FRONT COVER

Lentils. Read about growing them on page 14.

COMMENT, by Pete Bower Times they are a-changing...



First it was a trickle. Then the trickle became a stream. And now the stream has become a flood. As a result the *Gauteng Smallholder* is taking a step into the future, to embrace a much wider audience of smallholders and farmers countrywide.

Now in our 21st year as a paper-based monthly magazine with a distribution area limited to Gauteng, we have been observing how, in the last few years, our online audience has grown and developed.

Increasingly, our readers are embracing digital communication platforms such as the internet, Whatsapp and Facebook for information and advice. Recently, probably driven by the effects of the Coronavirus lockdown, this growth has been exponential, and has necessitated our adding ever-more features to our online business model, such as a Twitter profile, an Instagram page and in addition to our long-standing and popular Facebook page, a newly-launched interactive Facebook group for smallholders ~ *Smallholders in South Africa*.

For, one thing has become apparent, and that is that our printed magazine reader demographic is ageing with time, with the upcoming younger generation forgoing the printed magazine for an online version.

At the same time, one by one, our print advertisers are embracing their own digital futures in innovative ways. Some are expanding their markets by opening e-shops which offer nationwide delivery for their products. Others are making clever use of platforms such as Facebook, as marketing tools, for advice forums, etc. Trends in the growth and use of digital platforms are fast-changing, and ~ we believe ~ unstoppable.

We would be foolish not to be part of what is, in effect, a revolution in the way businesses do business, because to remain as we are would mean not servicing a new, exciting developing market of readers and advertisers.

As a result, we are ramping up our digital side, most notably with a redesigned online magazine, that will be easier to navigate and read on both desktop and hand-held devices.

At the same time we are greatly increasing the frequency and amount of information presented on our website, so that it more accurately becomes a national smallholder news and resource platform, rather than confining it to Gauteng.

Although this may seem like a leap into the unknown, it was always part of our medium to long-term plan for the *Smallholder* to develop nationally. Two decades ago, the plan was to start printed regional magazines in each of the major smallholder areas ~ Natal Midlands, Greenbushes in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga Lowveld etc. But we never found a way to make the logistics of editing, printing and distribution of these regionals work. Since those days, however, the internet has developed and e-publications that successfully achieve a much broader reach have become a possibility, with none of the logistical hassles of distribution etc.

So, to accommodate both demographics we will not close the printed magazine.

Rather, the frequency of publication of the paper magazine will change, from eleven editions a year to every second month, this edition being the last monthly version.

This will ensure that we still reach our traditional readership, in our traditional distribution area, albeit fewer times a year.

Getting the planning right for these changes has had a long gestation in our organisation.

For advertisers, the new format means a saving in advertising spend in the online magazine, a vastly increased (national) coverage by the online offering, plus direct links off their advertisements to their e-shops, websites and telephone numbers.

We have also added a number of platforms to our stable including the aforementioned Facebook Group, which will work alongside our flourishing Facebook Page. The group, *Smallholders in South Africa*, allows members to post questions, ask advice, share their successes and generally connect with smallholders and small farmers around the country. We have also added an Instagram account, @sa_smallholder, dedicated to showcasing readers' photos ~ their newborn lambs, best cabbage harvest, refurbished tractors, whatever our readers are most proud of. So follow us on Instagram, and "slide into our DMs" with your photos, captions and the location the photo was taken.

We invite advertisers and readers to join us on this exciting and dynamic journey into a brighter future, for traditional smallholders in Gauteng and new smallholders and small farmers countrywide alike.

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Bird flu comes to Ekurhuleni

Somewhere in the vast reaches of rural Ekurhuleni is a commercial layer farm that has identified and dealt with an outbreak of avian influenza ("bird flu") by culling all the birds on the affected farm. As a result, smallholders in Ekurhuleni have been warned to be on the lookout for symptoms of the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in their poultry. This comes after the Dept of Agriculture, Land Reform & Rural Development (Dalrrd) reported the deaths of the

birds, but did not respond to requests for further information as to where in Ekurhuleni the outbreak occurred.

The samples that were sent from the farm tested positive for the H5 strain of avian influenza. The Gauteng Veterinary Authority has placed the farm under quarantine and is said to be investigating the outbreak. The department thus urges poultry owners and farmers to be on the lookout for signs of the disease and must report any suspicion to the nearest State Vet immediately. The

the eyes;

☐ Coughing, sneezing and restlessness;

☐ Diarrhea;

☐ Black spots on the hock caused by hemorrhages.

A few deaths may occur over several days, followed by rapid spread of disease and deaths within 48 hours.

Poultry owners ~ commercial or hobby ~ must implement the following safety measures:

☐ Keep wild birds away from your flock;

☐ Control access of people and equipment into your chicken houses/coops;

☐ Do not provide food that may attract wild birds. Rather feed your free range chickens in a confined structure;

☐ Maintain cleanliness of your coops and chicken houses;

☐ Implement procedures for the safe disposal of manure and dead birds.

The office of the State Vet on the East Rand is in Germiston, tel 011 821-7709.

☐ After the news of the outbreak was released, Botswana, Namibia and Mozambique banned the

Continued on next page

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☐ Wattle and combs becoming red and swollen;

☐ Swelling of the skin under

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Exciting changes planned for the Smallholder

From next month the *Gauteng Smallholder* magazine will appear every second month rather than eleven times a year. At the same time, we are launching a national online *Smallholder* magazine catering to the needs and interests of smallholders throughout South Africa. The new title will be styled the *South African Smallholder Online*. As a result, we will be able to greatly expand our advertising options. The digital magazine will be

formatted especially for easy-reading on desktop computers as well as on smartphones and handheld devices, as our research has shown that our new target audience is overwhelmingly smart device-based. In months where the printed magazine is published, the online publication will also appear, with its contents different from the print version in that there will be national coverage where appropriate. Thus, there will be a June online publication, and both a

July print magazine and a July digital magazine. Distribution of the print magazine will be as before, through the same distribution outlets, and also at the same time of the month, namely the last few days of the month preceding and into the first few days of the month of publication. To ensure you enjoy uninterrupted content from us, to keep up to date with our eZine and other correspondence, and to find out about our next print edition, we recommend all our readers

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From previous page
 import of poultry and poultry products from South Africa. The South African Poultry Association (Sapa) has reminded consumers that eggs and broiler meat are safe to eat, provided they are properly cooked and accepted food preparation protocols are

BIRD FLU

practised. Sapa says the virus was controlled and isolated on one farm on the East Rand. The birds were culled and disposed of in line with HPAI protocols. No new outbreaks had been reported at the time of going to press. 🌿

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Pumpkin competitions set new records

When it comes to pumpkins, they grow 'em bigger in the Western Cape. Indeed, South Africa has a new record giant pumpkin this year, one of 867.5kg grown by farm manager Willem La Grange near Mossel Bay, and officially weighed at an event in nearby Heidelberg, Western Cape. According to La Grange, it took 50 days to nurture the plant itself, and 100 days thereafter for the pumpkin to mature. The winning SA pumpkin is

somewhat heavier than the heaviest ever grown north of the Orange River, namely the 790kg pumpkin by Wykus Lamprecht of Meyerton ~ his entry into Silverton, Pretoria's annual Goliat van Gat pumpkin festival in March this year.

Lamprecht, last year's runner-up at the event, named this year's winning vegetable Johanna.

Peet Joubert, last year's champion in both Pretoria and at the annual Livingseeds Giant Pumpkin Competition at the Walkerville Show (which did not take place this year due to Covid restrictions) was runner up this year at Goliat van Gat with a 532kg pumpkin.

The vegetables at Goliat van Gat were donated to charity after the competition had been decided, with organiser,

Henri Combrinck estimating this year's 22 entries would feed around 16 000 people around Pretoria.

South Africa's records,

however, are dwarfed by the world record-holder, a monster of more than 1190kg produced in Belgium in 2016. 🍂

CORRECTION

Oops...

A technical error in the last edition (April 2021) saw to it that two pages made it through to print carrying stories in unedited form.

The affected pages were page 23 and page 25, and the

stories were entitled "Best irrigation for your shade cloth structure" and "Cleaning your chicken coop".

Corrected versions of these stories are available in the online edition on our website and we apologise for the error.

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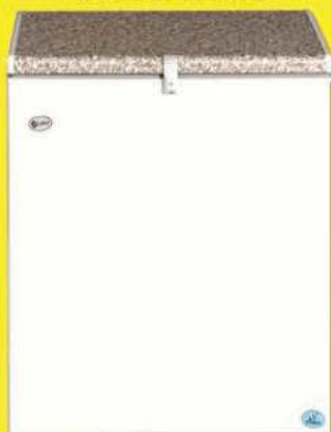


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LIVESTOCK Managing livestock during a veld fire

A fire on your smallholding is a traumatic event for everyone concerned and different people react differently during such an event. This is why the *Smallholder* recommends that you have a disaster management plan in place, so that each person knows what has to be done and who should do what.

Safety of human inhabitants takes priority in the event of a fire, but the safety of animals should be equally important, as they cannot do much to ensure escape or protection. In the dry winter months smallholders should constantly refer to the SA Weather Service's (Saws) fire danger index map, which indicates areas at risk of veld fires. You can check on the Saws website or monitor the weather forecasts which will feature the Fire Danger Rating. If there is a 75% chance or higher of a fire, place your livestock in an area where they can easily be moved to a safe or protected place.

If any of your livestock are, however, caught in a veld fire, you will need to be able to assess each animal and make a decision as to how it can be managed. According to the Livestock Welfare Co-ordinating Committee the animals can be allocated to three categories:

☐ Mildly or lightly affected;

☐ Moderately affected;
☐ Severely affected cases.

When you are assessing the animal, check its skin and coat for singeing or burns, particularly the face, feet and genitals; listen to its breathing; note the way it is standing: is it in a normal alert position, is it quiet and still, is it lying down, is it standing with head down or is the body position

not normal and does it have a normal response to noise.

A mildly affected animal will be breathing easily and normally, with little or no coughing or breathing difficulty. It can walk easily and is able to eat and drink normally. Hair or wool may be scorched and the skin only lightly scalded (first degree burns) over limited areas of

the body. These mild, superficial burns may be treated, and provided that animals are given good care, shelter, food and water, the prognosis for them is very good.

A moderately affected animal may have some difficult or heavy breathing and coughing, but is able to walk, stand,

Continued on next page



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From previous page
eat and drink. They may have more severe burns (second degree) over more extensive areas and swelling. Skin on the legs could be mildly affected or not involved. Check that teats are not affected, otherwise there may be problems with suckling young at a later stage. Hooves may show some sloughing. If you have the commitment and resources to properly care for and treat these animals, their prognosis is good. Severely affected animals will have great difficulty breathing and will be coughing due to

smoke inhalation; in addition or alternately, they cannot walk, eat or drink. There may be severe (third degree) burns over extensive areas, and any severe burns on the lower legs are a particularly bad sign. Since the prognosis in these cases is poor, even with treatment, it is humane in these cases to euthanase in order to end suffering. Sheep are more vulnerable to fire injuries than other livestock, as they are driven by the fire in a large group and often get trapped against fences or in gullies. The full extent of their injuries is not always obvious, so they must be very carefully monitored in the days following the fire. Pigs are particularly affected by heat stress and some might die just because of the heat of the fire. Poultry are also strongly affected by heat stress. Goats are more vulnerable to burns as their hair is not as

thick as those of sheep.

All animals are also susceptible to the after-effects of shock, and so the condition of some animals may deteriorate in the coming days, sometimes leading to death as long as three weeks after the event.

The injured animals should be kept in an area where there is shade and soft, level ground. They need easy access to good-quality, high protein feed and water. Burnt animals are reluctant to move and usually do not eat for a few days. It is important that they drink water. Check regularly for signs of flystrike and treat accordingly. Veterinary advice will guide the treatment of the surviving stock and is likely to include topical emollients, creams, wound remedies or antiseptics, along with antibiotics, especially where the lungs may be compromised, or secondary infection is a



Runaway veld fire.

danger. It is essential that painkillers are used because of the severe pain that results from burns.

Care of damaged hooves includes protective bandaging and antiseptics. Even where there is sloughing, the hoof can form again within a few weeks, although it may be deformed to some extent. 🌿

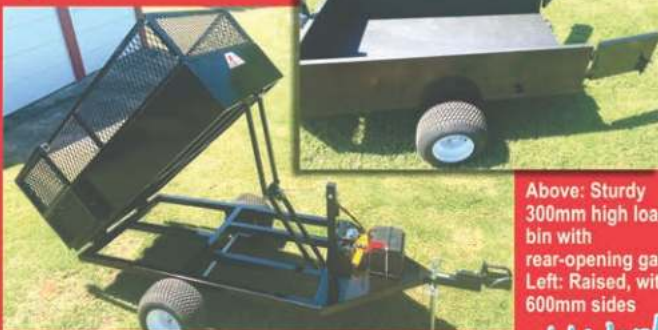
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IN THE GARDEN

Lentils: Good for you and good to grow

Lentils are a good source of nutrition in both human and animal diet. Because they belong to the legume family, they are beneficial to your soil both through their ability to fix nitrogen in the soil and their use as green manure.

So smallholders, particularly those in warmer areas, should consider growing lentils and May is a good time to do so. Lentils (*Lens culinaris*) are a hardy annual and grow on sparsely branched vines from 15-75cm. They have small whitish to light purple pea-like flowers. Pods are small, broad, flat and contain one or two flat, lens-shaped seeds that are green or yellow to orange, red or brown.

The crop should be planted during May to early June.

If you are only planting to feed your family it is suggested that you plant 4 to 8 lentil plants per household member. However the plants provide excellent



Brown lentils.

organic matter and can be turned under the soil when production ends for the benefit of your next crop, so you might consider planting more than the minimum requirement.

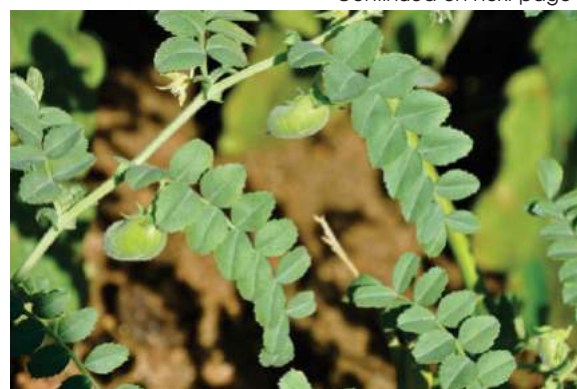
Plant in full sun and you should add aged compost to planting beds before sowing. They should be planted 40 to 60 mm deep. Lentils grow best at a soil pH of 6.0 to 8.0 and prefer a well-drained, clayey to loamy soil. However, they are very susceptible to waterlogging. The plants are well adapted to low-rainfall conditions (300–500mm annual rainfall),

but in Gauteng they should be planted under irrigation during winter. The plants are relatively tolerant to heat and drought stress. Lentils have some frost tolerance, but would be better to protect the new seedlings with frost cloth.

Keep lentils evenly moist. Do not water them once pods have begun to dry. Side dress with compost tea when the plants are about 12cm tall and again at flowering. Avoid planting lentils with onions or garlic. Support lentil plants with a low trellis. Without a trellis, the plants should be set 15cm apart to ensure ample air circulation.

Watch out for aphids and control them

Continued on next page



Lentil plant.

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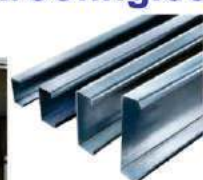
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LENTILS

From previous page
by pinching out infested areas or hose them off of the plant with a blast of water. Weevils may attack lentils – it's best to remove and destroy infested plants. Rotate crops to avoid repeat infestations.

Lentils have no serious disease problems, although mildew may attack those that are too closely planted.

Lentils compete poorly with weeds, so your fields or beds must be kept free of weeds at all times.

No herbicides are registered for use on lentils in South Africa. It is also known that



Lentil pod.

lentils are sensitive to herbicides of the sulphonylurea group and simazine is not safe for use.

Harvesting

Lentils should be harvested around 110 days after sowing.

If the pods rattle when you shake them, or if the pods have turned hard, brown and yellow, they are ready to be harvested. Lentils mature from the bottom of the plant up.

When you pull the plant up, grasp it close to the ground before lifting it. Spread the plants in the sun to dry.

Once the plants have turned brown, put them in a bag and hit it with a stick in order to free the pods from the plants and lentils from the pods. You can also shell the lentils by hand the way you would peas.

Store the lentils in a jar or

plastic container, in a dry, cool place. Dried lentils will last for about 10-12 months if stored properly.

You can also leave them unshelled until you are ready to use them.

Unshelled green-pod lentils will keep in the refrigerator for one week.

Cooking

To cook lentils place a cup of lentils in a saucepan with three cups of water. Bring to the boil and simmer without a lid for about twenty minutes, until they are tender. You may then add cooked onions, garlic, herbs and tomato or add the lentils to a curry or stew.

Lentils can also be sprouted.

In South Africa lentils are grown for human consumption, but in some parts of the



There are various types of lentils, including yellow, brown and orange.

world the plant is used as winter fodder for livestock and sprouted lentils are sometimes fed to chickens. 🌱

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How to keep warm with cozy fires

Very soon you will be needing to heat your home against the chilly winter nights, and one of the cosiest ways to do so is to light an evening wood fire in your grate.

Well-dried wood, from fallen or dead trees or from the removal of alien species, is one of the best fuels available. For apart from the cost of labour and fuel to prepare it (assuming you're cutting it up on your own land) it is also a sustainable resource, particularly if you plant new trees to replace those you have removed.

To burn well, and to make life easier for the person tasked with building and managing the fire each night, here are a couple of pointers.

□ When cutting up the limbs of a tree with your chainsaw cut them to the length of your fire grate. It may seem like a lot of cutting in the field, but it will save you having to cut again to make the pieces fit.

□ Gauge, by the size of your fire, how big a diameter log you can burn. The bigger the diameter of the log, the more heat you need to get it up to combustible temperature, so just because you have a big, dry log on your fire doesn't mean you have something that will burn easily and for long. Bigger diameter logs will need to be split. The easy, effortless way to do this is to invest in a hydraulic or electric log-splitter, available from most good garden equipment stores at this time of year.

However, if you want to play

lumber-jack a long-handled axe, with the handle preferably made of ash

wood, with a large chopping block, usually in the form of a



block will, inevitably lead to you blunting your axe.

tree stump cut parallel to the ground and firmly anchored. Splitting logs on a concrete

□ It goes without saying that wood for your fire should be dry ~ another reason to cut the limbs up as you fell the tree. The smaller the piece the faster it will dry out internally. And, not only does wet wood not burn well, there is also more chance of a wet log exploding, scattering burning embers across your

Continued on next page

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Bioproducts are products made with some component of biological or renewable materials and they can be

divided into two categories: biostimulants and biopesticides.

The definitions of these products vary. A biostimulant uses small quantities of natural resources to stimulate natural processes in the plant or around the roots to enhance nutrient uptake, nutrient efficiency,

increased tolerance to abiotic stress, and crop quality, vigour and yield. It can also be described as a soil-improver. Some preparations contain micro-organisms which do the same job as biostimulants, ie, improve the general health, vitality, and growth of plants and protect them against infections.

The main active substances used in such preparations are humic and fulvic acids, protein hydrolysates, compounds containing nitrogen, seaweed extracts, beneficial fungi and bacteria.

Some biostimulants are applied directly to the plant, while others are worked into

Continued on next page

From previous page floor.

☐ To get the fire started you will also need kindling and smaller bits of wood, which

can be the splinters and shaved bits that come off when splitting. Thus, if you run your brush from a tree felling exercise through a chipper to make mulch, be sure to keep a little aside as your fire starter material.

☐ A good supply of old newspapers is also necessary to start the fire. Newsprint burns more readily than the pages of old glossy magazines. Used teabags, dried and soaked in paraffin, make a

good home-made firelighter if you do not have access to newsprint.

☐ A useful liquid addition to nurture a struggling fire is a dollop or two of old cooking oil. While this may make a mess at the bottom of the grate, it will burn well when it reaches combustible temperature, but is relatively safe to add to a fire, without the explosive effect and fumes of adding petrol, spirits or paraffin. 🌿

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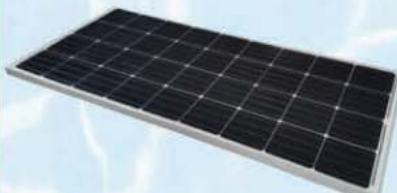
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IN THE FIELD

From previous page

the soil. Some are derived from plants and some from animals. They also vary according to the process by which they were created. These natural preparations are not harmful to the environment, nor do they contribute to atmospheric pollution. Biopesticides are certain types of pesticides derived from such natural materials as animals, plants, bacteria and certain minerals. They are mass-produced agents manufactured from a living microorganism or a

natural product and sold for the control of plant pests. The SA Bioproducts Organisation (Sabo) refers to biopesticides as biocontrol agents or products. Biocontrol refers to the use of living organisms, such as insects, or bacterial and fungal pathogens, to control pest populations. They are usually inherently less toxic than conventional chemical pesticides, affecting only the target pest and closely related organisms, as opposed to broad spectrum, conventional pesticides that

may affect organisms as different as birds, insects and mammals. Another advantage is that they are often effective in small quantities and decompose quickly, largely avoiding the pollution problems caused by conventional pesticides. Biopesticides form an important component of Integrated Pest Management programmes. We have biochemical pesticides which use naturally occurring substances; and microbial pesticides which use bacteria, fungi, viruses or

protozoans. This industry is vulnerable to the promotion of untested and ineffective preparations, so smallholders should look for products produced by members of Sabo. Their code of ethics promotes products that are based on scientific research and that are comply with regulations.

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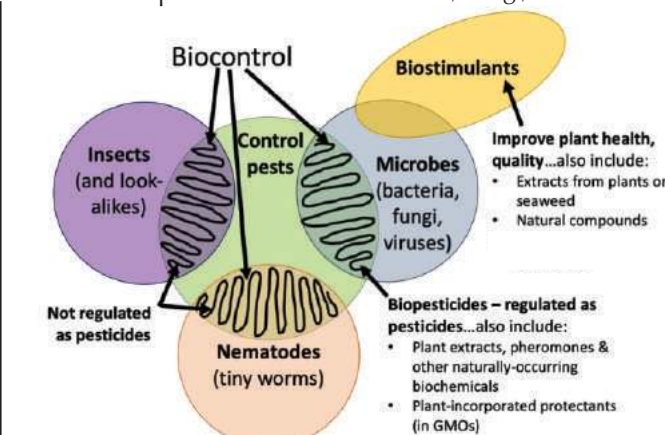


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Afriq Water supplies and manufacture agricultural irrigation products, with two product lines being the focus, namely the Quick Coupling HDPE Sprinkler System and Dripline.

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Since October 2020 Afriq Water manufactures dripline. To manufacture locally has many benefits, with the most important being able to supply on short notice, as opposed to the long lead times involved with imports.

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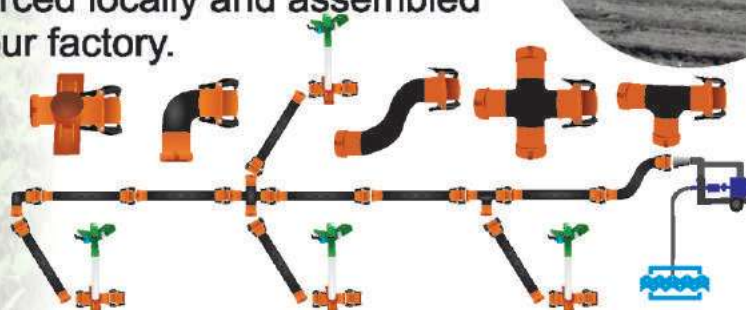


Afriq Drip now also comes in 12mmØ diameter!



The HDPE (plastic) Quick Coupling Sprinkler Irrigation System is a modular system that is easily installed on site, and very movable between areas.

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Choosing a petrol powered portable pump

When choosing a petrol powered portable pump there are a number of considerations to take into account.

Firstly, what is it that you wish to pump? This will determine the nature of the pump itself. Usually, you have a choice of a straight water pump, or a trash pump, able to handle small solids and semi solids such as are found in sewage, for example, or a chemical pump, which is used to move aggressive liquids such as fertilizer, pesticides etc.



The next consideration is the pump's flow rate. This determines how quickly you can move water from A to B and the power rating is a critical factor here, especially if you need to move large volumes of water. This is expressed as litres per minute. Finally, consider the pump's maximum discharge capacity: This is a combination of the vertical suction lift and maximum head lift your pump can manage. Vertical

suction lift is the measured distance from the water source to the pump. This is important if you are draining water from below ground level. Maximum head lift is the total height from the source of the water to the destination or drainage point. This provides the power to move water over a distance. Commonly, the greater this height the less will be the pump's flow rate, which will diminish to zero above this

height.

Coupled with these factors is whether the pump is a low-pressure unit or a high-pressure type. Commonly, low pressure pumps, such as standard water, trash and chemical pumps, move a large volume of fluid at low pressure, hence are not suitable for spraying. High pressure pumps, conversely, move a small volume of water at high pressure, and are suitable for spraying, firefighting, pressure washing etc.

Continued on next page

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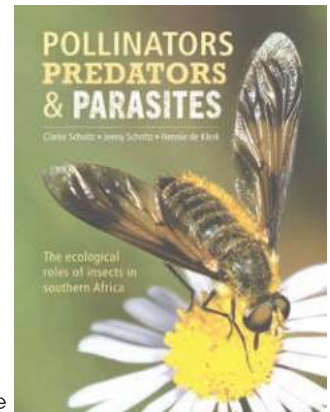
Bird, bug and plant books to add to your collection

Two books published recently by Penguin Random House will be useful additions to the smallholder library. *Pollinators, Predators & Parasites - The ecological roles of insects in southern Africa* is a lavishly illustrated and authoritative book that spells out the fact that insects arguably play the most important role in the functioning of the Earth's ecosystems. Authors Clarke Scholtz, Jenny

Scholtz and Hennie de Klerk structured the text around southern Africa's 13 distinct biomes, unpacking the essential role insects play in most ecological processes such as pollination, predation, parasitism, soil modification and nutrient recycling. We learn about how they serve as food for multitudes of other organisms, including bacteria and fungi, as well as

specially adapted plants, insect-feeding arthropods, reptiles, birds and mammals. There are 2 000 photographs showing the beauty and value of insects in the natural world. There is a guide to each of the 25 insect orders found in southern Africa, with images showing their diagnostic characters.

Now updated and expanded,
Continued on next page



PUMPS

From previous page



Other factors in choosing a pump will be the unit's portability. Smaller capacity pumps, such as the Husqvarna range, usually have a handle for lifting, while the larger units are built into a sturdy tubular frame. Finally, ease of starting and operation is important. Nobody has time to spend yanking endlessly on a starter cord, so an easy-starting engine is a must. Both men and women will find that Husqvarna's water pumps are designed to fire up easily. With high-spec pump houses and wide variety of power ratings ~ not to mention a nationwide network of dealers ~ Husqvarna water pumps will put the water where you want it. For more information, visit www.husqvarna.co.za.

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BOOKSHELF

From previous page

Southern African LBJs Made Simple by Doug Newman and Gordon King offers a unique method for identifying and distinguishing the obscure little birds that are known as 'little brown jobs'. The book guides readers through successive stages, each of which takes them closer to identifying the bird in question. As calls play a critical role in identification of

these birds, individual calls and comparative tracks are included via a free downloadable call app to scan barcodes on the species pages.

Concise text describes key ID criteria (such as size, habitat, habits, call and similar-looking and -sounding birds). The distribution maps are updated and illustrations are carefully labelled. This invaluable guide for anyone who wants to be able to tell one LBJ from another is also available as an e-book.

Aquatic and Wetland Plants of Southern Africa by CE van Ginkel and CJ Cilliers is a comprehensive identification guide to the aquatic and wetland plants of southern Africa. It includes scientifically accurate descriptions of 690 species within 91 plant families, illustrated with more than 2000 full-colour photographs.

The plants are divided into

habitat type, covering ferns, monocotyledon and dicotyledon plants. Each species page contains a summarised description, a distribution map, available measurements of characteristic plant parts, flowering times, habitat preferences, general information, known medicinal properties and potential lookalike plants.

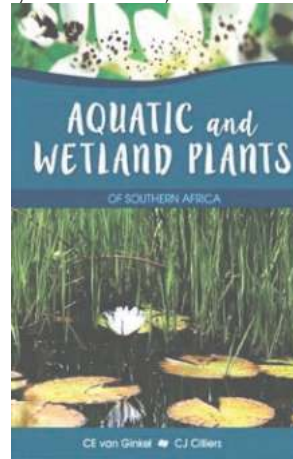
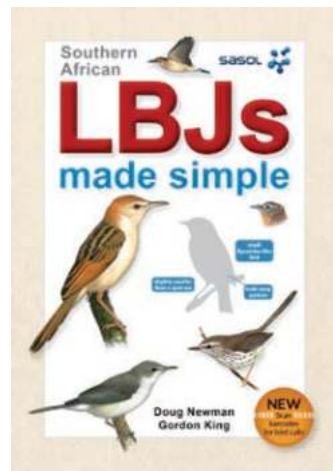
Scientifically correct plant names and historical synonyms are listed, as well as

the origin of the plant names, which often include characteristics of the plant.

All available indigenous language common names of the aquatic and wetland plants are included.

Icons enable the reader to easily identify habitat, indigenous or alien status, weed status and red data status.

The book is published by Briza Publications. 🌿



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DIARY



ATTENTION CRAFT MARKETS, CLUBS ETC: If you would like details of your events included in the Diary, please fax or email your information to the Editor. For non-commercial enterprises this service is FREE.

SPECIAL NOTE: These dates are valid at the time of going press. Due to restrictions related to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, some dates and venues may change. We suggest you contact the organisers before the event.

Every Sunday

SA Lipizzaners weekly display at 11h00. SA Lipizzaner Centre, Dahlia Rd, Kyalami. Go to www.lipizzaners.co.za / call Lizelle on 079 716 4792 for details of special shows.

Cattle drive with City Slickers breakfast, Diamond X Cowboy Ranch, near Rayton. Call Rudan on 082 410 3180 / visit <http://www.diamondxrange.co.za>, R500 per person. Mnandi Methodist Church, 09:00, Mnandi Centre, cnr Tulip and Short Streets, Jen 083 709 3235 or Gail 072 477 0708, a small community

who worship together. We have a Youth and Children's church.

Premier Mine Presbyterian Church, Lower Oak Ave, Cullinan. Garden of Remembrance (Columbarium), 079 060 9990 or 012 734 1640, Worship and Sunday school. Holy Communion for all on the 1st Sunday of every month.

Every Monday

Alcoholics Anonymous. 'Courage to Change' Group meeting, 19:30, NG Kerk, 8 Canadair Ave, Impala Park, Boksburg, call Warren 082 335 0049 or Tony 082 443 4425, if you want to drink – that's your problem! If you want to stop – that's our problem! No fees; no dues; just concerned fellowship.

May

1: Workers Day
3-7: Introductory Course in Poultry Production. R3 200. Transport and accommodation not included. For enquiries: Ms Mpho Makhanya, makhanyam@arc.agric.za.
11: New Moon
15: Gauteng Home Education Expo at Heartfelt Arena ~ 1000

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20: World Bee Day
24-28: Introductory Course in Beef Cattle Management. R3 200. Transport and accommodation not included. For enquiries: Ms Mpho Makhanya, makhanyam@arc.agric.za.
26: Full Moon
29: Kursus: Verstaan, beplan en installeer jou eie sonkragstelsel. Understand, plan and install your own solar power system. 08h00-17h00. Do you want to move away from the Eskom network? Are you thinking of having a solar system installed or even doing it yourself? Course presented by KragDag. Tickets from R1500,00. Visit kragdag.co.za to book.

June

5: World Environmental Day
5: Gauteng's annual Magical Medieval Fayre, La Vue Guest Lodge, Muldersdrift. Visit medievalfayre.co.za for more

information.

6: East Rand Motor Show. Woodlands International College, 51 Vosloo Road, Boksburg. Drinks & food, soundoff, supercars, show & shine, kids entertainment, muscle cars, car dealers, automotive vendors. Book online at eastrandmotorshow.co.za
10: New Moon
16: Youth Day
20: Fathers' Day
21-25: Introductory Course in Small Stock Management. R3200. Transport and accommodation not included. For enquiries: Ms Mpho Makhanya, makhanyam@arc.agric.za.
22-24: Africa Agri Tech 2021. Exploring Science and Technology in Agriculture. Time: 09h00-17h00. Venue: Sun Arena, Time Square, Menlyn Maine, Pretoria. Cost: Complimentary Trade Visitor Registration. Contact: Pula Dippenaar at Africa Agri Tech (Pty) Ltd. +27 (0) 11 465 0099 or pula@afrika-agri.co.za
24: Full Moon

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Viva progress...

The little eastern Highveld town of Delmas is famous for two things. For 18 months around 1985 the single-storey magistrates court in the town was the venue for the longest-running treason trial in South African history. A total of 22 anti-apartheid activists were on trial, including well-known political heavyweights such as Moses Chikane, Mosiuoa Lekota and Popo Molefe. Why Delmas? Because the apartheid government, determined to crush the United Democratic Front (UDF) with as little fuss as possible, decided that Delmas was a sufficient backwater that publicity of the trial would be minimal.

The government hadn't reckoned on the tenacity of the opposition and the Press, however, who decamped to the town, day after day, to observe and report on the trial. Later, in the late 1990s, past-speaker of Parliament Baleka Mbete was exposed as a liar and a cheat for her fraudulently-acquired, Delmas-issued driver's licence. She was exposed by a member of the press who asked her, innocently enough, where she had acquired her licence, and what the driver's test entailed.

Her answer was something along the lines of "Oh, in Delmas I did the usual test. I drove through some stop streets and traffic lights." And thus was she rumbled, because Delmas had no traffic lights at that stage. All its intersections were four-way stops.

As a result of that incident, Delmas became the go-to town for matriculants urgently seeking a licence, because the examiners were so strict they'd fail you if so much as your hair was out of place. Thus nobody wanted to go there, meaning you could sit your driver's test without waiting weeks for a booking.

Since those days Delmas has ~ in some ways at least ~ progressed. It has a smart new shopping centre, complete with upmarket chainstores. And many of the intersections have traffic lights. Or, rather, had. Sort of.

For, in the way of ANC-run municipalities, Delmas' robots have long ceased to shine. The municipality's solution? Rather than fix the lights it has simply affixed stop signs to the poles, thereby reverting to the four-way stop system of old. Viva progress.

Not that traffic moves today at much more than a crawl in Delmas, or any of the region's small towns, for that matter, because the roads are so potholed that they are a danger to life and limb.

The best (worst?) example I can find of this is Brits, where in at

least two of the town's main streets the potholes have now all but merged, so that the road surfaces have reverted to ox-wagon-era gravel. Viva progress, again!

But it's not only the little hick towns that have adopted innovative ways to avoid doing any maintenance and repair work.

In our own street in Ekurhuleni's plotland we used to have municipal water supplied. When we first moved in some 30-plus years ago we chose to have our house plumbed into the municipal supply because we were unsure of the state of the existing borehole.

However, the contractor who laid the 100m-long connection from the street to the house used sub-standard pipe to save a bit of money. As a result, the very first night it was connected the pipe burst, and continued to burst periodically from then on. To the extent that I took to keeping a supply of connectors and clamps, and the tools necessary to effect a quick repair, in a sort of pipework first-aid kit.

And thus, over the years, has the pipe become more a series of connectors than actual pipe.

Not that it matters today though, because over the years the pressure in the line has gradually dropped, to the extent that the flow of municipal water into our holding tank has reduced to a trickle, and often dries up entirely.

I have stopped bothering to report this to the council, because nothing is ever done. And the council, likewise, has resolved the problem by no longer bothering to charge me for supplying water, either. Not that the council ever let me know of this imaginative solution. Simply, the water stopped, and the bills stopped, too.

And thus, slowly but surely, things go to pot around us. And we citizens of this fair land and residents of these fair towns, simply adapt. Either that, or we'll die. And on that score, I'm looking forward to receiving my government-supplied Covid vaccination. Sometime in the future. But I'm not holding my breath.



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