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To leaf or not to leaf

By Hannel Ham

And so April arrived without a drumroll, New Year's resolutions gathering dust, budget speech almost forgotten, and we all are in 2017 survival mode. However, anticipation for the Easter long weekend is like an electric storm in the air while Mother Nature is putting on a free show of intense autumn beauty.

April is also known as the Fool's month because of the traditional prank jokes on 1 April (April Fool's day). Historic records show that April was the second month in the Roman calendar and the traditional New Year's Day. However, when January was appointed (upgraded) as the first month, April moved down to fourth position. The reasoning was that January means 'door' and thus should open the New Year. Opposed to April (Aprilis) that means 'open' and initiates the turn of the seasons. Therefore, the birthstone is diamond and it is associated with humour. But it is also global child nutrition month, mathematics awareness month (counting your Easter eggs) and Earth Day on the 22nd.

Irrespectively of our cultural background, April is one of the most beautiful months of the year. Driving around the Winelands with all the autumn leaves in a spectrum of colour and the anticipation for rain to come around Easter Weekend, brings new hope and laughter in a year that is already slowing our January optimism of 2017. Although April was demoted to the fourth month, it brings more joy and chocolate than January.

April brings fun, April brings happiness, but April also brings love and the freshness of winter when it opens the new season for cosy indoor living around the fireplace with plenty of red wine and chocolate.

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Special Gems of Forestry 2017

April 2017:

- Indigenous: *Vachellia xanthophloea* (*Acacia xanthophloea*)
- Commercial: *Eucalyptus camaldulensis*

May 2017:

- Indigenous: *Vachellia karroo*
- Commercial: *Eucalyptus cladocalyx*



Fun Facts: Special Gems of Forestry: April 2017

***Vachellia xanthophloea* (previously *Acacia xanthophloea*): Family Fabaceae (SA no. 189)
Common name: fever tree, koorsboom, mooka-kwena, umHlosinga, nkelenga, munzhelenga**

The genus name *Acacia* is derived from the greek word *acantha* meaning spine, thorn or prickle and the species name *xanthophloea* is derived from the greek words *xanthos* meaning yellow and *phloios* meaning bark. However, in 2011 the genus name changed to *Vachellia*. *Vachellia xanthophloea* has a characteristic lime green to greenish-yellow smooth bark, yet slightly flaking, and coated in a yellow powdery substance resembling sulphur. Historic records indicate that people believed *Vachellia xanthophloea* (fever tree) caused Malaria as many travellers fell sick with fever whenever travelling in areas where it grew. However, the fever tree prefers swampy places which are ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes carrying malaria.

Habitat: it grows in shallow pans, swampy areas, margins of lakes, river banks or where underground water surface or collects after summer rains. *Vachellia xanthophloea* can form pure, dense stands of closed woodland in seasonally flooded areas on alluvial soils. It grows from Kenya in the north to KwaZulu Natal in the south.

Allergies: Unknown

Growth rate: 15 to 25m tall with an approximately 1.5m per year growth rate.

Pollinator: insects and bees.

Wood characteristics: wood is hard, heavy and suitable for general timber purposes. However, wood should be seasoned before use to prevent cracks. Main stems and larger branches can be used in fences and timber is mainly used for boxwood.

Uses: medicinally the bark is used for treating fevers and eye related complaints. It is an exceptionally attractive tree and often used to decorate gardens or urban landscapes. Its contrasting bark, feathery foliage, and architectural attributes make it an eye-catcher and thus suitable as a focal point in a landscape.

General: birds prefer *Vachellia xanthophloea* for nesting and protection against snakes or other predators. Young branches and leaves are eaten by elephant, while leaves and pods are eaten by giraffe and vervet monkeys. Monkeys and grey louries prefer the flowers, while the gum and green seeds are eaten by baboons. Due to its mature dimensions it is recommended not to plant *Vachellia xanthophloea* close to buildings. It can tolerate moderate frost and winter rainfall.



Eucalyptus camaldulensis: Family Myrtaceae
Common name: red river gum

Eucalyptus camaldulensis is indigenous to Australia and named after a private estate garden near Camaldoli Monastery in Naples. It exhibits considerable morphological, chemical and genetic variation throughout the distribution range, resulting in a number of intraspecific taxa. However, *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* var. *camaldulensis* is the most widespread. The tree can reach ages of 500 to 1 000 years and plays an important role in stabilising river banks.

Native: it is a common and dominant component of riparian communities. *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* prefers grey heavy clay soils along riverbanks and floodplains subjected to frequent or periodic flooding.

Growing conditions: it grows at an altitude of between 0 and 1 500m with mean annual temperatures of 3 to 22°C and mean annual rainfall of 250 to 2 500mm. *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* prefers deep, silty or loamy soils with a clay base and accessible water table, but can tolerate waterlogging and periodic flooding. It is also one of the species most tolerant to acid soils.

Allergies: unknown

Growth rate: grows up to 30 m tall (occasionally 50m) with a trunk diameter of 1 to 2m. Seedlings can grow 3m per annum.

Wood colour: brilliant red colour that can range from a light pink to almost black depending on the age.

Wood odour: unknown

Uses: it is a major source of light gold and reasonable dense honey (apiculture) with a distinctive flavour. Wood is suitable as industrial firewood used in brick kilns but not preferred for domestic use as it burns too fast and creates too much smoke. However, it produces good quality charcoal. *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* has good pulp (paper) and fibre properties (hardboard, fibreboard and particleboard). The wood has great strength and is durable, thus suitable for many structural applications (railway sleepers, poles, posts, floorings, wharves, ship building and heavy construction). The bole yields a gum that can be used as a dye. Some tropical provenances of *E. camaldulensis* are rich incineole leaf oil and are potential commercial sources of medicinal-grade *Eucalyptus* oil. Oils are used for relief of colds and influenza symptoms. The bole is also used in shiitake mushroom (*Lentinus edodes*) cultivation.

General: it is also used for shade or shelter. With its graceful form, it makes an attractive ornamental, avenue or garden tree. *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* trees are readily intercropped with maize in Agroforestry.



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Please mail any suggestions to Hannél Ham (hamh@basicr.co.za).

The Continuous Service Excellence Award to the Forestry Industry Awarded to: Marcel Verleur

Motivation Part 1: Marcel Verleur is awarded the SAIF's Continuous Service Excellence Award for the work that he has done since 2004 on managing the threat of *Sirex noctilio* to Southern African pine plantations. Marcel was employed as Manager Special Projects (Silviculture) within Sappi Forests at the time of the initial *Sirex* outbreak in KwaZulu-Natal. However, his entomology training and skillset made him the most suitable candidate within Sappi to assist the South African *Sirex* Control Programme. Marcel took on this responsibility over and above his job responsibilities at that time. His investigations and research efforts were instrumental in improving the knowledge with regards to differences in biological control of *Sirex* in the Western Cape compared to KZN. Furthermore his studies contributed towards refinement of various procedures within the control programme, for example:

- Methodology of inoculation of trees with the nematode, *Deladenus siricidicola*
- Identification of the most suitable herbicide to use for establishment of trap tree plots

Marcel also played a critical role in collection of *Ibalia* parasitic wasps from the Western Cape and the subsequent successful introduction and establishment of this biological control agent of *Sirex* in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. Marcel recorded his research in a MSc Thesis titled: "The Bio-Control of *Sirex noctilio* on Sappi landholdings" through the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and co-authored several research publications.

Marcel's contributions to the SASCP have not only been to the benefit of Sappi, but also to the benefit of the Forestry Industry. Sappi strongly believe that the contribution that Marcel Verleur has made to the South African forest industry through his role in the SASCP deserves recognition by the SAIF through its award for Continuous Service Excellence.

Motivation Part 2: Marcel Verleur is awarded the SAIF's Continuous Service Excellence Award for the work that he has done over the past decade and a half on managing the threat of *Sirex noctilio* to Southern African pine plantations.

Sirex is the first major insect pest to threaten South African plantations. In 2007, the threat was estimated by Forestry South Africa to have an actual impact of R150 m in affected areas and a potential impact of R440m in areas not yet affected at that stage.

Marcel has worked closely with the co-ordinator for the South African *Sirex* Control Programme since its inception in 2002. He has contributed significantly through his responsibility for the Sappi *Sirex* programme (an extensive one with open sharing of information and learning to the national programme).

Apart from a very efficient Control Programme today, Philip Croft and Marcel Verleur have adapted procedures from other countries and developed new ones that are suitable for South African conditions. This includes the development of Standard Operating Procedures for inoculating trees; chain of custody to ensure quality control is achieved; job creation for several contractors and their teams; safety standards for the field teams, setting up the emergence cage depots; strong collaboration with the University of Pretoria who supply the biological control agents; and masters of scheduling and logistics to ensure that the narrow window of opportunity for inoculation is utilized optimally.

Marcel was instrumental in bringing out Dr Robin Bedding to South Africa to share his experience with the team. Also, in the development of trap-tree plots to gain efficiencies for monitoring the pest and for the introduction of biological control agents. Marcel was awarded a M Tech Degree from the NMMU in 2009 for his work on managing *Sirex* infestations on Sappi holdings.

The role that Marcel Verleur has played, and continues to play, for the SASCP has had a significant impact on reducing the risk from this pest and in so-doing has saved the industry many millions of Rand in potential loss of timber production. The work that Marcel has done for *Sirex*, and the lessons learnt from this, provide a valuable platform for dealing with other major forests pests into the future.

The new narrative

By Rob Thompson

Early March 2017, whilst tens of thousands of cyclists waited nervously in the start pens of the Cape Town Cycle Tour, braced against impossible winds and wondering just why on earth they were there at all, an incredible illustration of the power of social networking was about to unfold.

Unbeknown to those of us in the pens, the lead group, already on the road, had been stopped by officials at around the 20 km mark given that conditions were deemed too dangerous to continue the race. Within seconds of the stoppage, and back in the pens, an agitated whisper spread amongst the crowd and grew rapidly into a crescendo as cyclists staring at their cell phone screens, started sharing the news that the race had been cancelled...and all this without an official announcement having been made. Only some ten minutes later was the official announcement made but by that time most participants were already on the way back to their cars! It turns out that spectators alongside the road having witnessed the stoppage, had immediately started to Tweet and WhatsApp the news and it spread like proverbial wildfire, even beating the official organiser's network. I was amazed to witness how rapidly the message spread from point of origin, the amount of people it reached, and how the content thereof was accepted and reacted to.

A week or so later, the Premier of the Western Cape, tweeted an opinion pertaining to Colonialism and within the space of an internal air flight, South Africans were embroiled in an unprecedented cyber debate on the topic, which has persisted to the extent of disciplinary proceedings being promulgated and potential changes on the Western Cape political horizon. In the aftermath of this particular social media storm the editor of the Business Day wrote in his daily editorial of the "New Narrative" that is unfolding locally and indeed globally. As I understood the article, the analogy of a narrative relates to a new and ever unfolding story as lived, experienced and told by the citizenry. Add the power of social media to the mix and the New Narrative is a powerful and influential discourse providing an accurate insight into what is important to people and what is influencing their behaviour patterns.

If you are still with me at this point of my article, you are asking yourself "What on earth does all this have to

do with forestry?" Well, in my view, all organisations and individuals (including forestry related organisations) ought to aware of the New Narrative unfolding in order to correctly align themselves in the direction indicated by the narrative. I was privileged to attend the March graduation ceremony at the University of Stellenbosch and through the process of watching many Masters graduates (Forestry as well as Environmental Sciences) of all races and genders receive their degrees and listening to the positive discourse between people after the event, I felt that this was one university that had indeed aligned to the narrative and whilst perhaps not having agreed with it totally (Fees must Fall et al) had nevertheless successfully adapted and innovated to the best interests of their students and communities.

Whilst attending a meeting at one of my employers chip mills in Richards Bay the other day, it struck me just how much the New Narrative has influenced forestry and its practitioners. The meeting comprised an assemblage of mill foremen, technicians, managers, and forestry practitioners. Within the grouping were people hailing from real old school influences through to young millennials with their "must have now" approach to life. A combination of people theoretically with a high flash point! The banter between the groupings however was amazingly convivial and the meeting productive and positive. The common denominator amongst those present, in my view, was a thorough knowledge and awareness of the New Narrative. Each person knew their limits and understood the position of the other, thereby allowing for mutual consideration and acceptance.

"But what exactly is this New Narrative?" I hear you ask. Well, in my view, it is a narrative being written and added to every day by ordinary people and communicated almost as fast as it is being written. It changes every day given life's dynamics and the story it tells is not necessarily always a happy one. It is necessary however that we each keep abreast of this narrative and draw from it positive guidance and direction. We should also contribute regularly and positively to the ongoing narrative particularly by means of considered actions.

It is up to us to extract the appropriate parts thereof and align our actions accordingly. Positive contributory actions within the framework of an unfolding narrative is really all that we can offer. It is the right thing to do and my sense is that the majority of people are indeed, either instinctively or by design, gradually creating a narrative acceptable to all.

SAIF 2017 photo competition

A reminder of the SAIF photo competition which is again taking place in 2017. The top 13 photos will be used to compile the 2018 SAIF calendar. The prizes are being sponsored by Stihl and are as follows:

1. STIHL RE 88 High Pressure Washer	R2435.40
2. STIHL HSA 25 Cordless Shrub Shears	R2145.00
3. STIHL SE 62 Vacuum	R2079.00

The rules of the competition are as follows:

- Entry is only to paid up SAIF members.
- A maximum of three photos may be submitted per SAIF member, of which only one can be in the top three positions. The other photos may still be selected for the calendar.
- If more than one photo is submitted, each photo must be different (not variations of the same subject).
- Any forestry related photo can be entered. The photo must have some evidence of forestry (natural or plantation) in it.
- The photo must be taken in Southern Africa.
- Previously entered photos may not be used and photos may not be older than 3 years (taken before 2015).
- During judging, very low pixel resolution photos will not be selected if they cannot be used for the calendar.
- Photos must be submitted through the branches (see contact details on the website and at the end of the SAIF newsletter).
- All photos submitted to the branches will be used for the national competition. It could occur that the winning national photo did not make the top three list of the branch.
- The SAIF reserves the right to use the photographs in their marketing material and on the SAIF website.
- The closing date for the competition is 30 September 2017.
- Judging is at a national level. Each branch will select a forestry related person that has good photographic skills. These five people will each select their top 13 photos.

Focus on Forestry – 19–21 April 2017

Final registrations are being taken for Focus on Forestry 2017, organised by CMO, NMMU and the ICFR. The event is being held from 19 to 21 April at Cedara, (close to Pietermaritzburg), South Africa. For more information or to register, please see <http://www.cmo.co.za/cmo-conferencing/>.

SAIF Western Cape branch news

It has been a challenging year for people interested in forests in the Western Cape. Most of us like to see good rain, for many good reasons. But unfortunately, the past year in the Western Cape has been a particularly dry one. In Somerset West, where I live, we have only received 463 mm since March 2016. This is alarming considering the average annual rainfall for Somerset West is over 800 mm. And these conditions, as well as other factors, have meant that the region has also experienced an extraordinary number of fynbos and forest fires this season, with major forest losses in Grabouw and Hawequas, and large conflagrations in Somerset West, Stellenbosch and Cape Town (Table Mountain). Hopefully the winter rainfall this year will be good.

In the meantime, despite the weather, things have been happening in forestry circles, particularly in –and– around Stellenbosch. Dave Drew and Cori Ham took over the reins of the local branch at the last W. Cape AGM. They are starting to get used to the new responsibilities! Since the beginning of the new year, the branch has hosted presentations from a number of international experts via a series of lunch time seminars. We kicked off the year with a talk by Mr José Henrique Tertulino Rocha, from the University of Sao Paulo (Brazil), who gave a good overview of the Brazilian forestry industry and nutrition issues they face. Prof. Marius Barbu, from Salzburg, Austria, gave a fascinating wood–products–focussed talk entitled “New developments in wood based products in Europe”. Prof. Dan Binkley, visiting South Africa as part of the “Semester at Sea” program, gave a talk on the exciting TECHS project in South America, and the incredible data and outcomes from that work. SAIF was also represented at the Fourth International Precision Forestry Symposium that was held in Stellenbosch from 28 February to 2 March 2017. This excellent conference was a major highlight, bringing a number of local and international foresters and forest scientists together for three productive days. As part of the meeting, a day to the magnificent Arderne gardens in Claremont, was a real treat for people interested in majestic trees! We are looking forward to much more action as the year rolls on.

ICFR launches new website

The ICFR's new website is up and running. The address remains the same – <http://www.icfr.ukzn.ac.za/>. The new site has a fresh and clean look, and has been developed to make accessing information on their research activities, staff and publications more efficient and effective. The key objectives are to promote the ICFR as an applied forestry research institute – and to provide information on research activities and staff expertise. The website is also a portal that facilitates dialogue between the ICFR and its stakeholders.

For the ICFR's funding members – the firewall protecting most of their publications remains in place and ICFR members can register as a user by creating a new account. To do this – they need to visit the site www.icfr.ukzn.ac.za and create a new account. Some of the features on the site are:

- **Publications and Searching:** Title, author and abstract details are available and visible to all visitors, but only funding members and research collaborators/partners who are logged can download full text our reports. The site has an overall search function on the Home page but also a search function from the Publications tab – and this has an Advanced search option to fine-tune and filter your search. They have reloaded most of our ICFR Publications for the last 20 years – and over the next few months they will be uploading some of the 400 files in the ICFR document collections which include peer-reviewed papers as well as miscellaneous but very useful historical reports. All the old FESA publications and handbooks will also be uploaded.
- **Events, Recent Publications and Latest ICFR_SA tweets** are visible off the Home page.
- **Research:** ICFR research projects are presented under the 5 Focus areas with a short paragraph on each and a link to the relevant project leader should you require further information. Over time they may look at adding workplans and progress reports for these as publications behind the firewall.
- **7th Forest Science Symposium – 2017:** More detailed information on the upcoming 7th Forest Science Symposium is available from the Events tab and the Home page Upcoming Event link. This include announcements, registration form, abstract submission form and information on the pre-Symposium workshop run by IUFRO. The ICFR will keep this updated with confirmed speakers and a draft programme over the next few weeks.

All feedback on the new website is welcomed @ Sally.Upfold@icfr.ukzn.ac.za

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April 2017 birthdays

01-Apr	UNDERWOOD M.J.	18-Apr	DIXON J.R.
01-Apr	LONG L.	18-Apr	AHMED A.A.M.
02-Apr	EDWARDS M.B.P.	19-Apr	OLSEN G.J.
08-Apr	LE ROUX P.J.	20-Apr	MOSTERT N.
08-Apr	BRINK M.P.	21-Apr	WINGFIELD M.J.
09-Apr	CLAASEN I.E.	21-Apr	LOUW E.
10-Apr	COBBY J.E.	22-Apr	DU PLESSIS S.P.G.
11-Apr	NORRIS-ROGERS M.	23-Apr	VAN DER MERWE J.
13-Apr	VON DEM BUSSCHE G.	24-Apr	BRITZ M.
14-Apr	DENISON N.P.	24-Apr	MACKELLAR R.
15-Apr	BRONKHORST A.	24-Apr	DE WET A.
15-Apr	NYAKANDANGA J.N.	25-Apr	HUNTER M.
17-Apr	GROBBELAAR W.M.	26-Apr	VAN DER DUSSEN A.
17-Apr	DLAMINI L.S. (Ms)		