



Camouflage anyone? One of the many kinds of garden lizard at HPH



Averrhoa carambola - Star fruit

Halgolla Plantation Home

Accommodation of a different kind

– July 2015 –

June, unfortunately, saw more than our fair share of “health challenges,” as that euphemism has it and we are keeping our fingers crossed that they will (continue to) be simply signs of the “advancing years!” If they aren’t? Well we are not about to “roll over and play dead,” either literally or metaphorically and HPH will continue to grow in many different directions as it has over the last few years!

Our latest step forward has been to revise the website so that potential guests can now book directly with us from our website. Check it out at: www.halgollaplantationhome.com. And while we have tested the functionality, please do let us know if you come across any problems. When you sign in to our home page, you should see the following box on the top of the column on the right-hand side. If you don’t see it, try refreshing your browser and make sure that your browser is set to “allow blocked content”.

Check In date: Nights:

Use the widget above* to check for availability at HPH and to make your booking directly with us. Please note that there is a minimum stay of 2 nights for each booking.

There has been a very pleasant “hangover” from our winning of the Certificate of Excellence for 2015 from Trip Advisor because a number of friends and acquaintances appear to have been impressed by our achievement and have gone out of their way to tell us so! Thank you, one and all.

Perhaps, the quite significant increase in the number of Jak (*Artocarpus integrifolia*) fruit has diverted the monkeys from their usual depredations of our fruit supply, leaving us with even a few Mangosteens on one tree at least!

While our mango crop has been, to all intents and purposes, non-existent, we’ve had more avocados than we’ve had for

many years and the quality of the fruit from the trees which are descendants of the “Pollock” hybrid that the writer’s father, Ben van der Poorten, put down about seventy years ago has been very good indeed. The durian crop too appears to be exceptional though we have, as in several years past, leased the trees out to a “local” who seems to have done very well indeed this year.

We’ve also had a bumper harvest of Star fruit (*Averrhoa carambola*) and this usually bland fruit has been exceptionally large and very juicy and has more flavour than usual, making a delicious drink. What decent rainfall after so many years can do!

Last season’s crops of nutmeg, cloves, coffee and pepper are still in storage, awaiting an improvement in the abysmal prices currently prevailing!

The *Bakeia insignis* tree in our front yard which produces scores of tulip-shaped flowers of a lovely fragrance, has, after many years, produced significantly-sized seeds in their velvety pods. The only reason we can think of for this change for the better is the fact that the precipitation over the last year has enabled seed of decent size rather than the thin slivers (occasionally) encountered over the last five years.

As a result of the macaque monkeys doing marginally less damage to our fruit and nutmeg crops, we might even be able to harvest a few King Coconuts in the coming months if we can keep the giant squirrels at bay!

The feedback we’ve had from readers on the subject of identification of some of the more interesting flora on HPH has been overwhelmingly “pro.” The challenge now is in finding a format that is informative and **not** obtrusive.

With all good wishes
Arlene & Emil

Plants of interest at HPH – Ceylon Ironwood (*Mesua ferrea*)

One very special tree at HPH is *Mesua ferrea* (Ceylon ironwood, Indian rose chestnut, or Cobra's saffron; “Naa” in Singalese). This very old and very tall (30 metres?) specimen of this tree is near our water supply reservoir. Ceylon ironwood is historically important for the traditional use of its very hard and very heavy timber in the construction of carved pillars in such buildings as temples. In fact, it is a toss-up whether it or ebony is the heavier wood, because neither of them floats! In full blossom, with its myriad white and fragrant blooms or when it is covered with its pretty rose-coloured new foliage, this is one of the most majestic trees of the tropics.



Ceylon ironwood flower



Flushing Ceylon Ironwood leaves

Though most people believe that it is native to Sri Lanka (it has been chosen as the National Tree) is it not though we do have a related species, called Diya Naa (or “water tree”) that is found in the evergreen forests near rivers. Ceylon Ironwood is used medicinally in Ayurvedic medicine for a host of problems.

The National Ironwood Forest near Dambulla consists of almost 1000 hectares, much of which has been planted in olden times with Ceylon Ironwood. This forest also includes a range of hills made of Pink Quartz.

Guests who are interested can visit the National Ironwood Forest on a day-trip from HPH.



The beginning of the Boulder Path



Emil on the Boulder Path

HPH is highly recommended on Trip Advisor.

See what our previous [guests](#) have had to say!



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Sri Lanka: rated as a top tourist destination by [The Lonely Planet](#); [Condé Nast Traveller](#); [The New York Times](#); [National Geographic](#)

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