



The Cannonball tree (*Couroupita guianensis*)

## Halgolla Plantation Home

Accommodation of a different kind

– February 2016 –

We enter the shortest month of the year, a day longer in 2016 because it is a Leap Year, with mixed feelings. Both Arlene and I have faced some significant health problems as have several of our staff. However, our hope is that, as January ends, we will be rid of them or, at least, face less serious versions of those maladies!

We have little complaint about the weather though it seems that climate change has resulted in our four mangosteen trees not bearing one fruit among them. Some of the mango trees have blossoms and some tiny fruit and the tropical olive – *veralu* – is festooned with little white blossoms which we soon hope will result in a bountiful harvest. The *Lovi lovi* is loaded with little green fruits which will soon turn an attractive cherry colour and which will lend themselves to Arlene's jam- and fruit-wine making efforts because this is (up to now!) the only fruit the monkeys and giant squirrels leave alone!

Apropos of the monkey menace, we have learned that a group of scientists have already laid recommendations for dealing with the monkey problem in the mid-country of Sri Lanka on the desk of the President of Sri Lanka who also happens to be Minister of the Environment. The anticipated cost of this initiative is modest, indeed, and ensures that the Buddhist imperative of no life being taken is fulfilled. We have seriously considered applying what skill and energy our aging bodies still might have in support of this initiative.

The unique flower at the top of this page is of a rather unique tree, hailing from Guyana in South America as the botanical name suggests, but which, for the longest time was thought by Sri Lankans to originate in Nepal and had been associated with Prince Siddhartha's life. In Sinhala,

this tree is called "sal" and is widely, and erroneously, believed to be the same as the "sal" tree in northern India under which Prince Siddhartha (the Buddha) was born and died. The true sal is *Shorea robusta*, a quite different species that is not found naturally in Sri Lanka. It's a long story, but, suffice it to say that once this error was discovered, there were some rather red (xenophobic!) faces around professional "supremacist" tables in Sri Lanka and there was much scurrying around to bring in, literally, thousands of plants from Nepal to take the place of those well-established already all over Sri Lanka. None of the foregoing, however, detracts from the fact that the unique blossoms are something to behold. The "sal" at our gate is truly exceptional in that regard as it flowers profusely day after day. It has, however, more than made up for its lack of "cannonballs" (the fruit) by the profusion and magnificence of its flowers.

Natta, our Heinz 57, much loved by all and sundry, has encountered a plethora of problems in the month past resulting in several visits to a (good) veterinarian. She is back, bugging anyone who will pay her the least bit of attention with her insistence on her (growing!) appetite for Cream Crackers every afternoon, which, if anything, proves that she is back to normal!

In anticipation of a protracted drought we have begun an inspection of our enhanced water supply and things look good even if we are hit with a long dry period.

We've had, as usual, visitors from all over the world and, in a change of "internal activity," Arlene's son, Shehan, and daughter-in-law Pinky were "artists-in-residence" as they prepared material for their forthcoming art show in Colombo. We have to admit it took some effort not to peek

into the room that they'd chosen for their (temporary) studio as they set about their work! They have agreed, however, to us printing their artwork in this newsletter in advance of the show at the Sapumal Foundation (32/4 Barnes Place, Colombo 07) starting March 17, 2016 for a week or so. Call to confirm opening hours: 011-269-5731.

Sri Lanka continues to receive rave reviews as 'the place to go'. The most recent is from [Huffington Post UK](#).

Incidentally, the TV network that the author of this newsletter most likes to hate – [Fox](#) – has rated Sri Lanka as the No. 1 tourist destination in the world. Does that prove the old adage that "There's no such thing as bad publicity?"

Warm wishes,  
Arlene & Emil

**For February we'll continue our very popular "Sampler pack" of HPH-grown and -roasted coffee and the "Surprise Basket" of HPH "goodies," both now famous trademarks of HPH hospitality**

### Halgolla Plantation Home

- now ranked #8/241 B&Bs in Kandy on Trip Advisor
- Certificate of Excellence 2015 from Trip Advisor
  - rated as [Best Home Stay](#) in Sri Lanka 2013
- recommended by [Bradt Travel Guide for Sri Lanka](#) 5th edition, 2014

HPH is highly recommended on Trip Advisor. See what our previous [guests](#) have had to say!



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Check In date:	Nights:	
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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.

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We are also on [Facebook](#). Bookings can be made on [Trip Advisor](#), [Airbnb](#), [Booking.com](#) and [Agoda](#) as well as by contacting us directly.

Sri Lanka: rated as a top tourist destination by [The Lonely Planet](#); [Condé Nast Traveller](#); [The New York Times](#); [National Geographic](#); and [the \(London\) Times](#). And most recently by [Huffington Post UK](#). In addition, [Fox News](#) follows the lead of The Lonely Planet by recommending Sri Lanka as the #1 place to visit!



Night of the whirling dervishes by Pinki Kumari Madawela



Options by Shehan Madawela