

Amazon Lily (*Eucharis grandiflora*)

HALGOLLA PLANTATION HOME - A SRI LANKAN DESTINATION - SEPTEMBER 2017

Last month's newsletter began on a personal note with a reference to the arrival of Alain and Gabriel van der Poorten from Saskatchewan, Canada. This month's edition has, of necessity, to bid them adieu as they return to an autumn on the prairies of Western Canada.

We continue with our efforts to extend our resources while maintaining what we've already achieved in the

rehabilitation of ancestral land, attempting, at the same time, to enhance the lot of our desperately poor neighbours. A small but significant recent light at the end of our tunnel has been the news that the worst of our approach road, which we share with local residents, is to be re-surfaced by the Road Development Authority. We can but hope that, after all the "commissions" etc. are doled out, there will be a large enough surplus to do the job right.



Stick insect (*Phasmatodea*)

camouflaged as either sticks or leaves. Over 3000 species of this fascinating and totally harmless creature, one pictured here at HPH, have been described.

As I write this, in the early hours of September 3rd, the rain squalls that began, in earnest, the night before have recommenced and we hope ended the terrible protracted drought we have endured, one of historic proportions.

We now have, on a short-term basis at least, Suresh and his wife and one-year old son giving our lives at HPH a new

dimension apart from providing a young, able-bodied male to help in and around HPH and drive us around when required. Not to be sniffed at in our twilight years!



Jungle vines around the *Maha Ela* (Big stream)

I couldn't resist the temptation of inserting this picture of the flower of the Soursop (*Anona muricata*) which can be consumed in so many forms – as a fresh fruit, as a *phool* dessert and as a delectable drink. We are going to try to save this wonderful fruit from the attentions of the squirrels and monkeys by doing what we've successfully done in the case of the

Custard Apple (*Anona squamosa*): simply encasing the fruit, at flower stage, in a polythene sleeve. Wish us luck!

The kapok pods pictured with Senevi on the next page produce the "cotton" with which the pillows at HPH are filled and for which our guests are so full of praise. This was also the material which went into flotation devices before the advent of Styrofoam, saving so many shipwrecked mariners over hundreds of years.



Soursop (*Anona muricata*) flowers

For September, as in month's past, we'll continue our "Surprise Basket" of HPH "goodies" that appears to delight visitors as they take their leave of us and HPH!

- Certificate of Excellence 2015 from Trip Advisor
 - rated as [Best Home Stay](#) in Sri Lanka
 - recommended by [Bradt Travel Guide for Sri Lanka](#) 5th edition, 2014

The name Phasmatodea comes from [Ancient Greek](#) *φάσμα phasma*, meaning an apparition or phantom and the whole order is



Senevi with Kapok pods

Recently, we've had an unexpected "value addition" to our operation: guests requesting gift parcels of our spices to take back to their friends and families on distant shores. While our packaging is certainly not flashy, we have been able to fulfil the requests we've had with no complaint.



Stained-glass window from the van der Poorten studios in Brussels, circa 1880



Cymas (Madu) leaf shoots

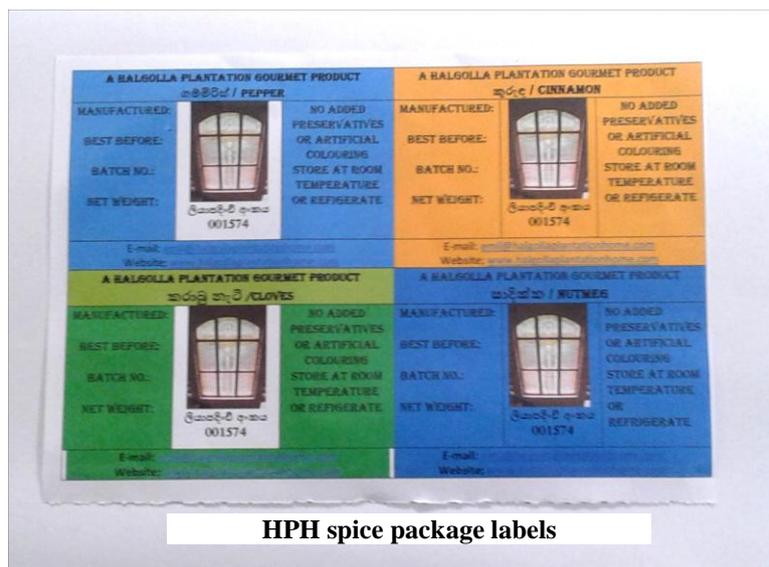
These Cymas leaf shoots from a clump which greets you as you alight from your vehicle at HPH, not only make a superb curry but can be prepared in a manner that makes them indistinguishable from Asparagus tips! This is a plant that goes back to the time of the dinosaurs and to varieties of which

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As you enter HPH

there is a whole section devoted at the internationally-renowned Royal Botanical Gardens at Peradeniya, about 20 kms from HPH.



HPH spice package labels