



HALGOLLA PLANTATION HOME
- THE *UNIQUE* SRI LANKAN EXPERIENCE -
MAY 2019

It's been several years since we began sending out this Newsletter but there has never been a time as challenging to do so as the present, after the terrible atrocities of Easter Sunday where, in an act of unparalleled savagery, so many innocent lives were taken. As a simple mark of respect, we have blacked-out the space usually occupied by a large, bright and cheery landscape at the top of the first page. That is but a small token of the terrible sadness we feel at this time.

Apart from our own need for Sri



Baikaea insignis

Lanka to return to

normalcy, we hope that all our friends will return to this land once more to enjoy its wonders and warmth of its people now that the truly evil perpetrators are being taken into custody and removed from the general population.

The unremitting scorching weather has recently been broken by afternoon heat thundershowers which, to understate the case, have been only too welcome. Our vanilla flowering season was two months late in arriving; we were pollinating in January last year but didn't begin doing so till March this year, with only about a third of the blossoms we had in 2018. We can but hope that the recent precipitation will bring a fresh blossoming of our vines, Seeking to preserve every little bit of moisture on HPH over the years has paid dividends, though

even those efforts seemed to be in jeopardy due to the recent unprecedented heat wave.

The electric fence in the vanilla patch seems to be effective in the matter of keeping the wild pigs and porcupines at bay.

Our *Bakeii insignis* tree has lots of blossoms and their fragrance fills the air, particularly at night: a lovely sight and an even lovelier fragrance.

May is the month in which the most important Buddhist festival – Wesak – is celebrated and

everyone in our neighbourhood will make sure to visit a temple or shrine on that day particularly given the terrible violence that recently overtook this land. Whether the brightly-lit *pandals*, will be as much a feature this year as in years past is a matter for some conjecture, given the recent violence.

In matters more mundane, we have a plan to exclude the toads, their strings of eggs and their tadpoles from the fish pond outside our living room windows but it is too complicated to detail here. Suffice it to say, though, that it will not only follow on the heels of our successful efforts to prevent the toads using it as a breeding

ground but also encourage a luxuriant growth of water lilies, both the *Olu* and *Nil Ma-nel*, the latter being Sri Lanka's national flower. Further updates will follow in the months ahead.

To the right of this sentence is an example of what we believe is being caused by climate change – unprecedented examples of deformed Parrot mangoes. Comments anyone?



For May, as in past months, we'll continue our "Surprise Basket" of HPH "goodies," which appears to delight our guests as they take their leave of us!

Some Recognition of HPH

■ Certificate of Excellence from Trip Advisor

In the belief that it is better late than never, let us express our thanks to so many of you from all over the world who sent us messages of solidarity and support at the most trying of times - last Easter Sunday. Suffice it to say that those expressions of concern and friendship were most appreciated.

In our immediate circle of workers at HPH there was a visible coming-together that proved the value of mutual support in trying times. Our immediate families and friends have also expressed their support, particularly given our relative isolation from urban Sri Lanka. For our part, we would like to extend to our Muslim friends the hand of friendship and support that

they have earned over the centuries as productive citizens of this country which some of their violent co-religionists have deliberately sought to sully at this time.

If this Newsletter is shorter and less “newsy” than usual, we trust that the reasons for it being so will be accepted by all those reading it.

We hope that, next month, our missive will be more cheerful. Goodness knows, it can't emerge a sadder time.

With all good wishes!

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