

Alien Plant ERADICATORS

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Alien Invader Eradication Program, Tree Maintenance, Wildlife

February, March and April 2011 have been characterised by a negligible amount of rain on the courses and this has led to very dry conditions. The water level in Pani Dam is extremely low which is cause for concern as the dry winter months are fast approaching and Course 2 is irrigated from it.

As a result of the low water level and lack of fresh water inflow we have experienced mass die-off of our Tilapia stocks primarily due to lack of oxygen. This has been a slow process since the beginning of April, and a considerable amount of club resources have been spent removing these dead fish from the various dams and disposing of them.

A decision was made not to attempt to re-oxygenate the water mechanically as the process is very similar to what happens in nature under these circumstances, and we are extremely over-stocked with Tilapia.

Tilapia provide a food source for birds and are an essential part of the cycle, especially in keeping our dams free of aquatic plants. Not all of the stocks have been depleted and we estimate that the current water levels can accommodate the remaining fish providing that we have some rain soon.

In the meantime, the various Cormorants, Pelicans, Fish Eagle's and other species (even the Hammerkop has been observed eating a few fish) have been enjoying the benefits of this process and it has been amazing to watch two juvenile Fish



Eagles practicing their fish-catching skills on Pani Dam in the late afternoons. Other less sensitive fish species have not been affected at this stage. A number of fish were found strewn along the Pani Forest pathway, but we assume that these were the cast-offs of the Fish Eagles.

The Impala have had another very prolific breeding season and we allowed a game capture team onto the course to help reduce our numbers. This is particularly important to prevent over-stocking and to ensure that we have enough fodder to see us through the dry winter months. All-in-all they captured six Impala consisting of one mature male, two mature females, two sub-adult males and one sub-adult female. There is a possibility that we will let them take another six in the future. They have been relocated to the Nottingham Road area and have been assured of a good new home.

The amount of enquires with regard to the wildlife and alien invasive species continues to pick up, with more and more residents showing an interest in our activities. This is extremely encouraging.

ALIEN INVASIVE SUCCESSES DURING THE PAST TWO MONTHS INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

- The area from Stoney Bridge to the 15th tee box as well as the left hand side of the 15th fairway have been cleared of Lantana, Triffid Weed, Brazilian Pepper, Ageratum, Morning Glory and Indian Laurel. Where applicable, a suitable herbicide was applied to prevent re-growth. A number of indigenous trees that were all but impossible to see have been exposed and cleared.
- The EPA area adjacent the green and part of the fairway on

the 14th hole, Course 2 has been cleared of invasive aliens including fairly mature specimens of Bugweed, Indian Laurel and Triffid Weed.

- The EPA area adjacent to the 15th tee box on Hole 15, Course 2 is in the process of being cleared of a severe infestation of just about all the invasives found on golf course properties. The density of the invasion was quite severe and has been further compromised with thick infestations of creeper (particularly Morning Glory) and Singaporean Daisy.

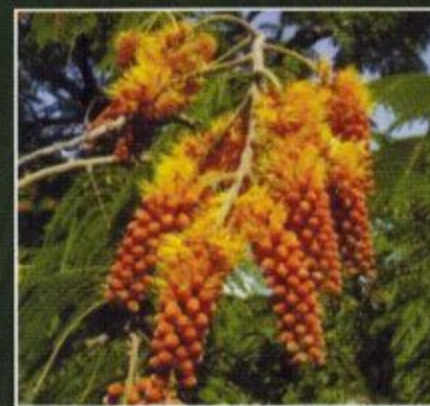


- The removal of the Water Lettuce from the dam between the 6th and 7th holes on Course 2 has been completed with a high degree of success. No more water lettuce is visible at all.
- Two fully mature Indian Laurel's have been chopped down and removed from the middle of the 1st fairway on Course 1. These were in full fruit and represent a huge win in the ongoing fight against this invasive tree.
- A Flamboyant tree which was rotting in the base and represented a potential hazard in the parking lot has been removed. This species is known for being particularly susceptible to white ant.
- The Thorny Elm adjacent to the green on the 13th hole, Course 1 has been severely pruned (as well as its neighbours) and removed to the dump. This should be particularly useful to golfers whose balls have disappeared into this thorny jungle in the past and will also enable the mowers to cut in this area.
- Two large Ant Trees have been removed from the 15th tee box, Course 1 and the stumps treated with herbicide.
- The Napier's Fodder infestation along the water course between the tee box and the fairway on the 11th hole, Course 2 has been chopped down and removed and the roots treated with the appropriate herbicide.
- Trees hanging over cart paths on both courses have been trimmed.
- Hand Watering of all trees on both courses has been conducted throughout the month.

Colvillea racemosa (Colville's Glory)

A number of residents have called to enquire about the beautiful exotic trees that have been flowering on the courses. It must be noted that although these trees are exotic, they are not invasive, in fact the Colvillea's have been placed on the "Red List" as endangered and rare in their country of

origin, Madagascar. It was first propagated successfully in Mauritius and is named after the 3rd Governor of Mauritius. It is extremely attractive in autumn when it is festooned with clusters of burnt-orange flowers pendant on branchlets situated above the foliage, which is feathery.



The clustered florescence's are a foot or more long, with grape-like clusters of round bright orange/red flower buds. These open from the top down, spilling out long yellow/orange stamens, giving a feathery look to the flowers, an amazing sight when the tree is in full bloom. Foliage is beautiful, twice pinnate leaves with numerous small leaflets.

Colvillea look very similar to *Delonix regia* (Flamboyant or Flame Tree) when not in bloom, although the leaves are not quite as bright green as the Flamboyant, nor does it get the incredible spread of canopy and the flowers are very different. The municipality in Durban has undertaken a program of replacing all the Flamboyant with Colvillea as the former are very susceptible to white ants and disease.

Another tree you may have noticed in bloom on the courses is the *Ipomea arborescens* (Morning Glory Tree) which hails from Mexico. Morning Glory Trees grow rapidly, up to 2 or 3 meters each year, peaking at 4 to 12 meters tall. They can also grow as a thick-stemmed vine (The name, *arborescens* means "grows like a tree"). Their bark ranges from grey to brown and often has a gnarled, bumpy texture. The Morning Glory is a deciduous tree, with the leaves ranging from 3 to 8 centimetres long with slender stalks. Leaf veins are clearly visible from the underside.

Morning Glories are distinguishable by their funnel-shaped flowers which emerge as white or cream with red centres'. The trees bloom in the winter after the leaves have fallen. They are a vital source of nectar for the hummingbirds of Mexico from Sonora to the Arizona border. The flowers bloom dependably, no matter how much or how little rainfall occurs.

Many of you have called with regard to assistance with alien invasives in your own gardens. Although McWade Landscapes is contracted to the Golf Club to take care of alien invasives, tree maintenance and wildlife, we are not yet on the approved contractor list for the estates although we have applications pending.

We will keep you posted in this regard. In the meantime, if you need any advice, contact Alistair McWade:

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