Jewels of the Garden Route

Sizamele Indigenous Nursery

by Ena McIntyre

Nestled under scrub: forest canopy at the foot of a large vegetated dune, Sizamele Indigenous Nursery gently unfolds in a ribbon along the boundary of Smutsville, Sedgefield. Today the drought-panched Garden Route is blessed with gentle penetrating rain – mist swells amongst the trees and along the narrow neatly raked passages under the canopy. Every so often a splash of sunlight brightens a forest clearing bursting with flourishing young plants. Sizamele has a uniquely creative layout. Pathways bordered with rows of bagged saplings meander through the forest inviting exploring while rousing a persistent sense of being in a magical fairy garden – a Jewel!

Sizamele means ‘make an effort’ in Xhosa, an apt description of Willy Pedro’s ‘can do’ attitude to life. Born and bred in the region his story is immutably tied to the forestry industry where his father made a living. Growing up in a humble cottage farmer’s Yeadd that accommodated an extended family, life was never easy. After suffering several life-shattering experiences beyond the family’s control, Willy, at a tender age with very little education, found himself in dire straits with a younger sibling in his care. Forced to earn a living to keep from starving, he took on any kind of work – selling fish, being a farm labourer, a construction worker, a domestic worker, a gardener and even a cook. In this unforgiving hands-on school he learnt about life and work the hard way. He amassed an enormous amount of practical skills and knowledge until almost inevitably he also joined the Department of Forestry. In his inimitable way he soaked up information about the forests. He was intrigued by how the forest regenerates itself with not even the tiniest detail omitted. In this purposeful manner Willy acquired an uncanny insight into nature and indigenous trees became his passion. When the Department of Forestry turned over the Southern Cape plantations and forests to private enterprise, numerous forest workers were retrenched. Willy didn’t despair and established the Sizamele Indigenous Nursery in 1995 on a green belt zone rented from the Municipality. At last he could realize his dream.

Willy mimics the forest processes and grows all his indigenous trees from seed, accommodating birds, buck and other small creatures. No commercial fertilizers, insecticides or herbicides are used. Only leaf-mould is composted. Some of the species being grown are Outeniqua Yellowwood (Podocarpus falcatus), Stinkwood (Ocotea bullata), Coral Tree (Erythrina lysistemon), Cape Chestnut (Calodendron capense), Ironwood (Olea capensis), Cape Ash (Ekebergia capensis) and Kei Apple (Doyvalis caffra). Willy still liaises with the Department of Forestry, although economic circumstances necessitated diversification, and some popular garden subjects are liaised with the Department of Forestry.

Willy’s daughter, Wilberine, at Waterwood Nursery, an outlet in Sedgefield. Sons Dehen and William make up the rest of the team. Willy and his team welcomes BotSoc members and their friends to Sizamele and Waterwood. Please contact him at 082 090 2147 or 082 678 8443.

Botaniese Tuin. Info: Dr S.V. Potgieter (Voorsitter), tel 051 436 3911.

Thurs 22 July Talk to be announced. 19h00. Edu B Tuin. Info: S V Potgieter svp@telkomsa.net

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GARDEN ROUTE REGION

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JUNE 2010 | VELD&FLORA