

# FRIENDS OF THE CITY

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## *WORD OF WELCOME*

As we tip-toe into spring, we're thrilled to bring you the latest edition of our parks newsletter.

With the season's gentle warmth beginning to unfold, Cape Town's parks are about to burst into a riot of colors and life. Whether you're a nature enthusiast, a casual stroller, or simply someone who loves to soak up the beauty of our city's green spaces, there's something exciting on the horizon.

This edition highlights exciting initiatives and celebrates success stories. We also learn more about the history of one of our famous parks.

We hope that this edition encourages serene picnics under blossoming trees to invigorating nature walks. Spring is the perfect time to reconnect with nature and enjoy the vibrant landscapes that make Cape Town truly special.

Spring is here, and it's time to rediscover the beauty of our parks!

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# RECREATION AND PARKS

## ADOPT-A-TREE CAMPAIGN

By Susan Steyn

The Department is excited to launch the 'Adopt a Tree' program. The objective is for partners, such as our Friends Groups, to apply for trees, plant them, and maintain them to help increase our urban forest canopy cover.

We will soon pilot this project with the goal of planting 500 trees across the city. Guidance will be provided in terms of most suitable tree species for the site and current stock availability. Depending on accessibility a large impact tree requiring mechanical handling can also be considered to define or give specific meaning to the space or alternatively smaller more manageable trees can be considered. Arbor Month, celebrated in September, is a wonderful opportunity to plant trees in recognition of their importance in our daily lives. Although routine tree planting typically occurs during the winter rain season (April to August), we often continue planting in September due to late rains and if there is commitment to watering and maintaining trees to ensure their survival through the dry summer months.

As part of the educational component of Arbor Month, indigenous trees are selected annually to give South Africans an opportunity to learn more about our rich tree heritage. Since 2006, two Trees of the Year have been nominated each year: one common and one rare species.

### COMMON TREE



*Searsia lancea* (Swart Karee)

The karee is a small- to medium-sized evergreen tree that usually grows to a height of 7 m and a width of 7 m but can be larger depending on environmental factors. The *Searsia lancea* is usually a single-stemmed, low branching tree, which has a dense, soft, round canopy. Leaves are a dull dark green, bark normally dark to almost black. It grows easily from seed or cuttings. The tree is very hardy, drought and frost resistant, also resistant against

This tree is rare in Cape Town; but should grow well. The mountain karee is an essential 'bird-garden' tree, which also makes a good frost-hardy, and drought-tolerant shade tree.

*Searsia leptodictya* is a shrub or small tree with an irregularly rounded crown. It sometimes has arching branches, which may give it character in a garden. It can reach up to 9 m but is usually a rather scrubby bush of about 3 to 4 m. As with most other *Searsia* species the leaves are divided into three leaflets.



## RARE TREE



*Apodytes dimidiata* is the ideal tree for the home garden as it does not have messy fruits and is safe to plant near the house, not disturbing the foundations or paved areas. It is a small bushy tree 4 to 5 m tall, but reaching a height of 20 m when growing in a forest. It has evergreen, glossy, bright green leaves that have a paler green, dull underside. The bark is pale grey and smooth.

*Apodytes dimidiata* forms small, white, fragrant blooms in loose bunches, that are borne in summer and are frequently produced in striking profusion. The fruit is berry-like, black and flattened, with a persistent, finger like style in the notch and a scarlet, fleshy, lateral appendage that gives the fruit a kidney shape. Fruits are borne in mid to late summer.

*Apodytes dimidiata* is a protected tree in South Africa. It is also resistant against PSHB.





# MUIZENBERG PARK STREAM RESTORATION

By John Venn

We're delighted to share that the first phase of our restoration project for the stream and the ponds behind the Clubhouse at Muizenberg Park has been successfully completed! The transformation is truly remarkable—take a look at the "before and after" photos below to see the stunning changes.



Since finishing this phase of the project, we've noticed a wonderful increase in park visitors enjoying picnics, walking their dogs, and even taking wedding photos. It's gratifying to see so many people making the most of the revitalized space. In addition to the visual improvements, we've achieved significant environmental milestones. We've completed the initial fynbos planting, including two critically endangered species, *Psoralea glaucina* and *Serruria foeniculata*. We've also planted *Imperata cylindrica*, a crucial food source for the endangered Cape Flats Ranger butterfly. These efforts mark a meaningful step towards our conservation goals.



But this is just the beginning! Our plans for the next phase include further restoration work on both the stream and the ponds. This will involve planting indigenous trees and shrubs and removing silt from the lower part of the stream to restore the historic "lily pond" that once graced the area

# HART ON HERITAGE

## MUIZENBERG PARK: PART 2

By David Hart

In 1915 the Military made the Old Military Camp ground available to the Municipality to use which then leased the property to the Kalk Bay – Muizenberg Sports Club.

On 25 November 1915 it was reported in the Cape Times that the City Council would consider moving forward with portion of various proposed improvements that had been promised for Muizenberg: Including the foreshore improvements, new bathing boxes at St James, and the development of the military ground at Muizenberg leased to the Council for recreation purposes.

By October 1916 the contractor (a Mr Robert Allen) had 30 labourers working on excavation and levelling. First would be the Bowling Green, 120 ft by 120 ft, then the croquet ground which would be 105 ft by 84 ft and on a higher level the tennis court 120 ft by 60 ft. There would be the usual club house and tearoom. There would be no tennis on Sundays.

The plot of ground has two perennial springs of clear water running through a small ravine. The ravine according to a newspaper report of 1916 was bordered by the arum lily, pelargoniums shrubs of the pea family, creepers marigolds, baviaantjes and other striking kinds of South African flora. Just above the spring was a spreading shrub “to be made an arbour possibly” which had sheltered picnic parties over the past years.

An irate letter to the Cape Argus on 30 November 1916 complains about the lack of movement on various improvements proposed for Muizenberg and compares the progress made at Camps Bay where the Council had leased land to the Brighton Estate Syndicate. (Land controlled by the Council had been sold to private individuals on the understanding that the Old Camp Ground would be developed as a recreation ground.)

In 1921 the land was transferred to the Union Government, and then in 1936 to the Municipality.





### The Clubhouse

Tenders and the award of contract for the construction of the clubhouse at Muizenberg Recreation Park date back to 1917 with W. Delbridge (a local Cornish builder) being the successful bidder. The clubhouse was originally thatched and from photographs appears to have been an open structure. Subsequently plans were submitted in 1936 for a new club house which is the one currently on site. The area of the club house and lawns has a distinctive landscaping of walls, steps and terraces.

### Greens

The bowling and croquet greens date to c1916 when the recreation facilities were developed and form an intrinsic part of the sporting heritage of the site. The croquet lawn is the site of the old barracks. There is a distinctive landscape around the greens including stone walls and steps.

### Site of the Tennis Courts

While the upper tennis court was part of the original planning of the Muizenberg Recreation Ground, three were completed very early in its development. These were on three separate terraces. Currently the lower tennis court has been formalized as a parking area. The middle court is used for overflow parking.



## *RADLOFF PARK*

By Maartin Schurer

Over the past year, the Friends of Radloff Park committee has continued its tireless work to enhance and preserve Radloff Park for the community. The committee serves as the official representative of the community in all matters concerning the park, ensuring that it remains a cherished green space for both current and future generations.

The committee collaborates closely with the City Council to advocate for the park's needs, ensuring that it receives a fair share of the council's budget. This year, the committee successfully raised funds to improve the park's amenities, including the installation of new park benches and waste bins. Dog poop stations have also been added to maintain cleanliness and convenience for park-goers.

A highlight of the year was the substantial tree-planting initiative. In May 2024, the Friends group, along with the City of Cape Town, planted a total of 108 new young trees in the park. The community of Somerset West generously donated and sponsored 73 of these trees, while the city contributed an additional 35. This ongoing effort, which began in 2016 and resulted in hundreds of new trees being planted, aims to enhance the park's natural beauty and biodiversity. After planting and during the dry summer months several volunteer teams from the community, as well as a neighbouring wine farm, assist with the watering of the young trees with buckets. During the winter months these teams assist in the weeding of invasive plant species.

The Friends of Radloff Park also liaise with other organisations and its neighbours on shared interests and concerns, further strengthening their impact. A very successful fundraising for dog kennels was held. More than 50 custom build high quality kennels were lovingly painted, by their donors and the community during a fun filled day at the park, and donated to the various animal welfare associations in the Helderberg area.

In addition to planting trees, the committee and community support a dedicated worker, on a part time basis, who helps with various maintenance tasks, including poop scooping, cleaning toilets, clearing around trees, staking new trees, gardening and watering. This ensures the park remains well-maintained and inviting for visitors, a service highly valued by the community.

Looking ahead, the committee is working on attaching tree identification plaques that link to the SANBI website, providing educational opportunities for park visitors to learn about the diverse flora in Radloff Park.

The Friends of Radloff Park's dedication and hard work have significantly enhanced the park, making it a better place for everyone to enjoy. The committee's efforts have not only improved the park's infrastructure but have also fostered a strong sense of community involvement and environmental stewardship.