

View from the Top

South Africa has only recently experienced massive rioting and looting. Our television screens were filled by images of wanton destruction. It is easy (and perhaps natural) to become distressed, and even depressed when we realise just how shocking the behaviour has been of a large proportion of the population. At these times there have been many calls for prayer for South Africa (we support those calls). Nevertheless, it is important to remember why we live in South Africa. We really do have some of the most exciting and pristine wildernesses in the world. We have wonderful weather. And despite what we have seen the majority are warm and friendly people. We have the ideal ingredients for a land where one may still find sanctuary and escape from the daily problems. If you had a wobble, go to one of our great reserves and you should expect to come back rebalanced.
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Birding Plant of the Month

Paperbark Tree (*Vachellia sieberiana*)
I really love this tree! Now the disclaimer – I have never actually had one in my garden. My love for the paperbark stems from bushveld experiences, and, strangely enough, the wonderful ambience (and challenge) they bring to our woodland golf courses.
The great cautionary is that you need a large garden for this tree. They will grow in (essentially) all frost free areas in South Africa, even where active watering may be required. They love sun, and will grow tall into the sunshine.
The tree is likely to attract a variety of nesting birds (including those nesting in holes, starting with barbets). It will also attract many insects, and obviously draw many species of bird by those means.
Never forget though, that your garden is a place for relaxing and entertaining. Get some deckchairs and exploit the wonderful shaded area under this tree. A paperbark is a non-financial investment.



Paperbark Tree

Nature's Heart

Specials of the Month

WE INTRODUCE 2 NEW PRODUCTS!

Introductory offer is continued from July until 27th August or while stocks last.

1): Terracotta Seed Bunny (incl. small seed pack) R100,00

2): Sparrow Nest and Rest House R300,00

Bon Mots

"Do not let making a living prevent you from making a life."
(John Wooden)

Environmental Chirps

I have recently read a large number of comments relating to the feeding of garden birds. I am sure that the large majority who do feed will not have commented, and will simply continue feeding. However, a large number did make their voices heard, and they were opposed by disparaging viewpoints from some vocal sources.

The arguments are summarised by:

- Wild birds become dependent upon human offered food sources,
- The food products are harmful to wild birds,
- Feeding birds encourages breeding of unwanted species,
- Garden feeding disturbs natural avian equilibriums, and finally,
- Garden feeding causes relocation of birds (with secondary effects such as affecting wild plant pollination.

We at Nature's Heart are proud to say that we feed a number of species of wild bird, and that we categorically refute these statements.

- There is no evidence of wild birds becoming dependent on humans at all. That they may enjoy their treats and come to anticipate them we gladly accept. Simply go on leave for a full month, and upon your return, we challenge you to find any starving "dependents" in your garden.
- We offer products of the highest grade, and they are all perfectly safe to feed to wild birds. We are obviously not able to comment on competitors products. In

principle, if you are not very sure, do not use that supplier!

- There are valid concerns over what we describe as "irresponsible feeding". This may result in increased numbers of birds such as feral pigeons. We attempt to supply products that make it easier to practise responsible feeding. Problem birds are quite manageable.
- There are periods where equilibrium is affected. (A recent example was the Knysna fires). Yet the worst creators of inequilibrium are our own human developments. Concrete jungles and mining are not good for birds. If anything, feeding garden birds helps to restore equilibrium!
- The last argument is very simply dealt with. If the impact of garden birding was considered so disruptive (it isn't), birds would increase breeding to compensate for the added resources. Be assured, plant pollination will not be affected!

Thus we encourage you to continue with your bird feeding habits and take a few minutes off to enjoy your garden birds! At the same time, we encourage you to feed responsibly, and make sure that the bird products are of a suitable quality, and that you maintain a clean feeding area. On one area we absolutely agree with the opponents of garden bird feeding – safety of the birds is not to be compromised!

Bird of the Month

Cape Sparrow (*Passer melanurus*)
I am not sure if there are any parts of South Africa where one would not find this cheerful fellow in abundance. Needless to say, this is the bird that featured on so many South African coins – the "mossie"! Being a seed eater (yet they do love Bird Grub!), those who feed seed at their feeding areas will no doubt enjoy a daily acquaintance with the little bird (about 6 inches in length). Since they are so well known we will rather add our view – they are great for breeding in your garden! We recommend one of Elaine's Birding sparrow breeding products for hours of great fun!

