

The Aliens in Retreat

April 2010

A chronicle of Helderberg Hackery

Under the auspices of the Friends of the Helderberg Nature Reserve

The hunt for Pittosporum



Belinda Reyers looks over her handiwork: a pile of Pittosporum trees.

Pittosporum undulatum is one of the Cheesewoods. There are about 150 species of *Pittosporum*, only one of which, *Pittosporum viridiflorum*, is native to South Africa. Like many of our invaders, this one comes from Australia.

They can be tricky to spot at first, as they blend in so well with the natural growth, but if you crush one of the wavy-edged leaves it gives off a strong distinctive sweet aroma. The light-brown bark is also covered in whitish bumps.

They are fast-growers and produce a lot of seeds (see picture at right) which are scattered by birds. Because they grow so well in shade they are often found deep in the bushes and can be hard to get at — as many a hacker can testify! If not uprooted, the tree must be cut close to the ground and herbicide applied — otherwise the stump will resprout. During hacks we often encounter one or two that have resprouted.





Searching high... Harlan Greig and Nicholas de Villiers.



Searching low... Rupert Swanepoel and John McNaught-Davis.

Back to the central garden again and hunting for *Pittosporum*. And just like last month we found plenty. At first it seemed there wasn't much of it about, but once everyone got deep into the bush we soon found we had enough on our hands to keep everyone well occupied.

The pack of hunters comprised Annegret Gruner, Karen Hansen, Belinda Reyers, Darryl Stander, John McNaught-Davis, Rupert Swanepoel, Justin Williams, Nicholas Williams, Bienke Botha, Heléne Booyens, James Owens, Paulo Scholle, Thomas Owens, Nicholas de Villiers, Harlan Greig and James Silberbauer.

This glow worm was found crossing the parking area after the hack and was moved to the safety of the bushes. This is probably a larva, possibly a female of the Lampyridae family. Interestingly, the last two segments which here are markedly darker, is where all the glowing takes place!



Next Hack

The next hack will be held on Saturday 8 May 2010. Starting at 8:00am.

For enquiries, contact:
James Silberbauer
jamessil@telkomsa.net
078 306 1660