

## **GROMOR FEBRUARY 2016 NEWSLETTER**

I've just finished reading the biography of a most remarkable man, Elon Musk. Born and raised in South Africa into an unstable family environment, he was bullied at school and lived with a father who enforced strict discipline at home, but on the other hand went out of his way to broaden his children's horizons, taking them with him to inspect engineering jobs around the country.

Elon completed his schooling at Pretoria Boys High before going to study in the USA. Being an IT wizard, he soon landed up in Silicon Valley, where he became the highly successful man behind PayPal, from which he was subsequently ousted by his business partners, but not before he had accumulated a lot of money, which he all but "blew" setting up Tesla Motors, SpaceX and Solar City, all of which sent shock waves through the business community. Tesla, which has reached the production stage, manufactures beautifully designed high performance electric cars, which can accelerate from 0 to 60mph in 3 seconds, driven by a motor the size of a watermelon. Leaving no stone unturned, he has set up a grid of "power charging" facilities, eliminating a problem foreseen by most people.

Space X, another company created by Musk, continues doggedly on its path to conquer the universe. Just a few weeks ago on 22 December 2015 there appeared on pg4 in the KZN Daily News, a picture and write up of Space X's latest launch. It was the first space rocket to have been launched into space, delivering it's satellite load and then returning to earth in position for another launch.

Rockets have never before been reused and most pundits said it was impossible. This is a revolutionary breakthrough, which is going to save a heap of money in the future. (Despite the article being in a local newspaper, no mention was made of the South African connection)

Musk's dream is to send "man" to Mars and start a colony of "life" there, where he has expressed a wish to spend his last days.

Musk is without a doubt one of the most extrovert and complex characters I've ever read about. Currie, one of his long time business partners had the following to say about him.

"I could never get used to Musk's swearing; he curses like a sailor and does it in mixed company. He fully understood the value of talent to his enterprises and would search through the woods, turn over every rock and dig through brambles to find one person with the specific experience and skill he wanted, but that guy could just as easily be gone in a few months should he disagree with Musk. On the other hand, he could find his niche, becoming a long time partner in his ventures. Musk's work ethic was astonishing. He could work for 18 hours per day, 7 days a week for months on end. His time was meticulously allocated, going so far as allowing himself 10hrs/week for romantic distractions. "(He fathered 6 children including a set of twins and triplets)" Currie recalls being in China and sending Musk an e-mail at 2:30am USA time and getting the answer to a complicated question back within 5 minutes."

Richard Branson has the following to say: "Elon Musk is a man after my own heart: a risk taker, undaunted by setbacks and ever driven to ensure a brighter future for humanity."

Read it, even if it means skipping through sections that you do not fully understand, as happened to me. It's inspirational!

### **THE DROUGHT**

It is going to affect everyone, mostly negatively with failed crops and a lack of feed and water for livestock. But there will be people less effected than others, whilst some will even profit from the situation i.e. those who, through their production methods have produce to supply the shrunken market at elevated prices.

These are the people whose methods you need to observe. Was it pure luck or were they following some strategy that you could benefit by e.g. No Till, adjusting planting time and veld burning strategy to the season etc. etc.

In the garden the best advice I can give is to follow Alan Savoury's hobby horse - avoid bare ground and so conserve soil structure and organic matter, both of which will make for better water and nutrient retention and temperature stability, all of which will lead to better and healthier plant growth.

### **Gromor Pinebark Mulch**

30dm<sup>3</sup> R15.00

50dm<sup>3</sup> R24.50

(I often get asked about ants when using a mulch. Yes, you may get more ants, but having watched a hive of them active on a corner between my driveway and pinebark footpath, my response to ants is the same as to moles: "so what" they improve and bring to the surface soil, which one can easily spread. I would not poison them!)

### **GROMOR IS MOVING**

Last month the first "sod" was turned for the new GROMOR premises at Umlaas Road. The actual move is unlikely to take place before 6 months.

It will certainly be the end of an era for me, having been part of the original move to Harrison and still having an office here, ±43 years later.

### **FERTILIZERS**

Dr. Lawrence van Niekerk reported at last years Fertilizer Society of SA Symposium that the plant food element sulphur, which has received very little attention in fertilizers, is starting to show up deficiencies more and more.

The cheapest way to supply sulphur is probably through a dressing of GYPSUM at 300g/m<sup>2</sup> lightly dug into the soil.

In addition to the SULPHUR it will also supply CALCIUM and unlike the other main sources of calcium, (Dolomitic and Calcitic Lime), Gypsum will not affect soil acidity and will move down the soil profile.

The other common source of SULPHUR is POTASSIUM SULPHATE, where a dressing of 30g/m<sup>2</sup> should be adequate. This might be a better option if you are growing plants specifically for flowering or fruiting.

### **WHAT TO PLANT**

Although the drought is not broken, we are getting adequate rain for the vege garden, particularly if you mulch. GROMOR PINEBARK MULCH or even grass clippings with 150g GROMOR ACCELERATOR/m<sup>2</sup>.

Plant: Cabbage, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Onion, Carrots, Broad Beans, Beetroot and Spinach.

### **INTENSIVE GROWERS ASSOCIATION (IGA)**

The IGA will be holding a one day Symposium with the Integrated Biological and Inorganic path for maximum yield on 17 March 2016 at Cedara.

Arrangements are being made for a renowned expert to talk on water quality and the negative role poor water is having on yields and what can be done to biologically rectify the situation.

For further details, contact the association secretary Johan van Veenendal at [iga@sai.co.za](mailto:iga@sai.co.za), cellphone: 082 653 0365 and e-mail/fax: 086 698 2354

Regards,

**GROMOR (PTY) LTD**

R. HAGEN

PS: Some final snippets from 2015 news.

1. On a recent trip to London, EFF leader Julius Malema told UK and US investors that in South Africa it can no longer be business as usual - it was time for change, with the need for employees, rather than BEE magnets acquiring stakes in their operations. No doubt the demand for land, mines and mineral rights to be "returned", also came up. I would have loved to have observed the reactions of the potential SA investors!
2. Evita Bezuidenhout. "there might be light at the end of the tunnel, but unfortunately no new train will fit into it!"
3. Players gathered for a shower in the Locker room after a round of golf at the Country Club.

A hands-free telephone with a loudspeaker rang. The new member of the group picked it up and everyone else stopped to listen.

WOMAN: "Are you at the club, honey?"

MAN: "Yes, darling!"

WOMAN: "I'm at the Mall and there is a beautiful leather coat, going cheap R9999-99." Can I please have it?"

MAN: "Sure, go ahead!"

WOMAN: "On my way here, I stopped in at the MB dealership and the price of that model I told you about, that I'd love to have, is now only R1, 35 million with all the optional extras." Please could I have it?"

MAN: "OK, but make absolutely sure that all the extras "are there!"

WOMAN: "Thanks darling, enjoy your socialising with the boys!"

MAN: "Bye, love you!"

His fellow golfers look on dumbstruck at this new member, who then smiles and asks: "Anyone know whose phone this is?"