



## Greetings,

Back to work after the Festive Season and we trust you are refreshed and ready to tackle the new year. In Numerology, 2018's number was 2 and was predicted to bring an increase in natural disasters. Sadly, we realise the accuracy of that forecast as the 2018 fire season extended beyond the end of October and the Cape season began early with the monster fires in the Garden Route. Happily, 3 is the number for 2019 and hopefully the year

will resonate with all the optimism, creativity and inspiration brought by Number 3! The 2019 LEFPA calendar is included in this issue, a print out and keep for your desk. Thank you for your loyal support, LEFPA looks forward to another year of working closely with our members. Until next time.

## Kishugu Host Aerial Firefighting Presentation

In November Kishugu hosted a presentation on aerial firefighting at Zest restaurant, inviting Fire Protection Associations and forestry companies to listen to Hugo Arceo from Air Tractor in Spain. His talk, 'Key ingredients to be a successful aerial firefighting operator' was of great interest to the audience who enjoyed the discussion about the effectivity of the Air Tractor 802 bomber. In a lucky draw on the evening, Vaughan Lascelles was the winner and went home with his own model 802, which is sure to be a hit with his sons!



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## Kicking Off 2019 With Purpose

While New Year resolutions to lose weight, stop smoking and become more active are common, with the rapid environment changes it may be a good idea to set our goals for the New Year with a bigger picture in mind. Put fire safety at the top of your list and to help you, here are a few ideas to implement with resolve in 2019!

- Start with a fire risk assessment: identify what you need to do to prevent fire on your premises,
- Fire fighting equipment: the type of equipment required depends upon your premises. Ensure equipment is properly installed, tested and maintained,
- Fire drills: train new staff and advise employees about any new fire risks, carry out regular fire drills.

Now is always the best time to implement goals so don't leave it until a fire breaks out to make the necessary safety changes.



## Mexican Sunflower or *Tithonia diversifolia*



Sunflowers are such cheerful, happy plants but watch out for the Mexican crossing our borders. *Tithonia diversifolia*, commonly known as Mexican sunflower, is a bright yellow aggressive invader we need to declare war on, according to Johan Louw.

**IAP Species:** *Tithonia diversifolia* **Nemba category:** 1b.

**Common names:** Mexican sunflower (English), Mexikaanse sonneblom (Afrikaans)

Mexican sunflower is an annual or perennial shrub which may be woody at the base and grows 1,5 -3,5m high. The leaves are deeply lobed and five-fingered, growing up to 150mm long and 120mm wide and pale velvety below. The large flowers, up to 100mm across, grow solitary on long stalks and are a vivid yellow. Several may occur together in branched clusters and appear in autumn from April to June.

**Where does this species come from?**

Central America, particularly Mexico.

### **Where in South Africa is it a problem?**

Warmer climates in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo.

### **How does it spread?**

Seed dispersal.

### **Why is it a problem?**

A fast-growing and aggressive weed which competes against indigenous plants, Mexican sunflower invades savanna, grassland, roadsides and riverbanks.

### **Does the plant have any uses?**

Ornamental due to its strong visual impact but it is now highly invasive.

### **Control**

The precise management measures adopted for any plant invasion will depend upon factors such as the cost and availability of labour, the terrain, the severity of the infestation and the presence of other invasive species. It is best to treat the weed infestations when they are small to prevent them from establishing themselves; early detection and rapid response approach is recommended. Controlling the weed before it seeds will reduce future problems. Control is generally best applied to the least infested areas before dense infestations are tackled. Consistent follow-up work is required for sustainable management. *Tithonia diversifolia* can be dug out when numbers are low. Beware of slashing as this can result in re-sprouting from uncut stumps. Suitable herbicides may be applied as a foliar spray or a spot spray.

### **Biological control**

For *T. diversifolia*, a highly damaging leaf-feeding beetle, *Physonota maculiventris* (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae: Cassidinae), was screened and found to be adequately safe for release against this weed in South Africa. An application for permission to release this beetle was submitted to the authorities in May 2015, and the approval is still pending.

### **References**

Henderson, L. 2001. Alien Weeds and Invasive Plants. ARC. Paarl Printers, Cape Town. Invasive Species of South Africa. *Tithonia diversifolia*. Available at : <http://invasives.org.za/component/k2/item/459-mexican-sunflower-tithonia-diversifolia>. Management of Invasive Alien Plants <http://www.arc.agric.za/arc-ppri/Pages/Tithonia-species.aspx>.

## **\$9 BILLION...And Counting!**

Yes, you read that right. Preliminary insurance claim figures released late December 2018 in connection with the catastrophic wildfires in California, USA, broke the \$9 billion mark and continued climbing. The total cost of 89 lives and the destruction of 19 000 homes and businesses, including the loss of an entire town, has not yet been tallied.

This is probably a good time to take a fresh look at your fire insurance cover - what is your exposure should the unimaginable happen? What happens if a fire breaking out on your land damages or destroys your neighbour's property, crops, livestock or worse?

Wildfires are devastating enough, and the financial costs could wipe out your future. Adequate insurance cover alongside LEFPA membership should provide some peace of mind.



## TRAC N4 Alien Invasive Plant Removal

Alien plant eradication has been part of TRAC's environmental obligations since the beginning of the concession. In the 2013 / 2014 financial year TRAC intensified the project by funding an annual programme aimed at removing alien invasive plants along the N4 as part of their Corporate Social Investment (CSI) programme. Utilising LEFPA manpower, equipment and transport after the fire season, the programme has grown from strength to strength.

With safety being a priority, TRAC runs safety talks every year prior to commencing work and inspects the sites before the teams are sent out. Working on the road side is a high risk job by itself, compounded by working



with herbicides and sharp tools. Fortunately, there hasn't been any serious accidents to date.

As the LEFPA teams operate from Mbombela (Nelspruit) in Mpumalanga, the programme focuses on the sections of TRAC N4 Toll Route around this city between Machadodorp (eNtokozweni) and Malalane. During this financial year, TRAC funded the LEFPA team to clear bush along the shoulders of the Mara/Boulders road just off the N4 in the Croc Gorge Nature Conservancy area.



Slashing, cutting and chemical folio spray and stump treatment are inflicted upon the massive alien stands along the road. It's a daunting task, tackling Category 1 alien species such as Bug Weed, Lantana, Yellow Bells and Prickly Pear to name but a few. Despite the challenges, there has been a notable reduction of invaders and the impact of the LEFPA teams is clearly visible.

As under the radar and physically demanding as this ongoing project is, there is no doubt that slowly but surely TRAC and LEFPA are making inroads and an important environmental difference.

Some of the LEFPA team hard at work removing alien vegetation during the hot Lowveld summer. This is tough work.

## Activities for the Month - January

- Mow airstrips.
- Update firebreak registers.
- Identify all fire-related risks.
- Attend LEFPA meetings regularly.
- Classify and map fuel load status of all areas.
- Prioritise and schedule firebreak preparation plan.
- Inspect the condition of power-lines and servitudes.
- Slash burning allowed if weather permits - get a burning permit from LEFPA.
- Develop a training programme for your drivers, crew leaders and proto teams.



### Important Notes

- LEFPA office will reopen 7th January 2019 after the break. Burning Permits will be available from 7 January 2019.
- Basic Firefighting Training is available to LEFPA members. Interested parties should contact the LEFPA office.
- FDI weather emails and SMSs are available to LEFPA members, contact Ivina for more information.
- PLAN YOUR TRAINING NEEDS EARLY!
- **SUCCESS** cannot be spelt without **U**. Attend and participate - we need your contribution!



# 2019 LEFPA Calendar



JANUARY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
1 NEW YEARS DAY						
7 LEFPA OFFICE REOPENS						
17 LEFPA OPERATIONAL MEETING						
24 LEFPA BOARD MEETING						

FEBRUARY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		
11 LEFPA OPERATIONAL MEETING						
14 LEFPA GENERAL MEETING						

MARCH						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
11 LEFPA OPERATIONAL MEETING						
14 LEFPA SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING						
21 HUMAN RIGHTS DAY						

APRIL						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				
8 LEFPA OPERATIONAL MEETING						
9 LEFPA BOARD MEETING						
11 LEFPA GENERAL MEETING						
19 GOOD FRIDAY						
22 FAMILY DAY						

MAY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
1 WORKERS DAY						
6 LEFPA OPERATIONAL MEETING						
9 LEFPA GENERAL MEETING						

JUNE						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
10 LEFPA OPERATIONAL MEETING						
13 LEFPA AGM						
17 PUBLIC HOLIDAY						

JULY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			
8 LEFPA OPERATIONAL MEETING						
9 LEFPA BOARD MEETING						
11 LEFPA GENERAL MEETING						

AUGUST						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
5 LEFPA OPERATIONAL MEETING						
8 LEFPA GENERAL MEETING						
9 NATIONAL WOMENS DAY						

SEPTEMBER						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					
9 LEFPA OPERATIONAL MEETING						
12 LEFPA GENERAL MEETING						
24 HERITAGE DAY						

OCTOBER						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
7 LEFPA OPERATIONAL MEETING						
8 LEFPA BOARD MEETING						
10 LEFPA GENERAL MEETING						
25/26 LEFPA FIRE SEASON FUNCTION						

NOVEMBER						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
11 LEFPA OPERATIONAL MEETING						
14 LEFPA GENERAL MEETING						

DECEMBER						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				
30	31					
16 DAY OF RECONCILIATION						
25 CHRISTMAS DAY						
26 DAY OF GOODWILL						

FIRE SEASON: JUNE TO OCTOBER - MEETINGS START AT 09H00  
 OUT OF SEASON: NOVEMBER TO MAY - MEETINGS START AT 10H00  
 LEFPA OPERATIONAL MEETING IS FOR BOARD MEMBERS ONLY