

“LOCAL IS LEKKER.” A story.

TONI’S “MAKE MOTHER NATURE YOUR FOOD GARDEN” CAMPAIGN WITH SPEKBOOM AND OTHER EDIBLE WATER-WISE INDIGENOUS PLANTS



Living Water
Season of Creation 2026

IMMERSION IN LIVING WATER

Ezekiel 47:9, 12

Indigenous trees and shrubs, suited to the particular environment can save a lot of water, fight pollution and be sources of nutrients and medicinal help. Promoting their commercial cultivation can also be beneficial to food security.



Spekboom (pork bush, elephant bush or various indigenous names) is one local plant I like a lot, i.e. *Local is Lekker* (nice) says a lot. Spekboom is even called a wonderplant because of its many environmental benefits. A special blessing is its ability to absorb larger quantities of carbon dioxide than usual for plants of its size. However, my focus here is more strongly on edible, medicinal and water-wise uses.

Just imagine, spekboom is technically described as a weed, which really means “wild natural plant.” It grows almost anywhere, but naturally and extensively in the dry Eastern Cape in South

Africa. Plants are popular with animals – domestic and game - because of their water content. The plant is evergreen, easy to grow and is water-wise and drought resistant. Its medicinal benefits and uses include high Vitamin C and being good for skin ailments, stings, bites and sore throats. According to my “encyclopedia” *Food from the Veld*, it is one of more than 2000 edible indigenous plants growing wild that were known to local people, but sadly appear to be becoming forgotten in our more urbanized communities where pills and potions are commercial and synthetically produced.

“Make Mother Nature Your Food Garden”

My campaign began when I was introduced to the spekboom by our Cape Town Laudato Si’ community. September 2 2023, Day 2 of the SEASON OF CREATION was the occasion of the Spring Breakfast at our retirement village. In 2022 I had already promoted the health and environmental benefits and in 2023 I had gone further. Having researched and using recipes, which we gave out, we made spekboom jam and a breakfast smoothie, with leaves, blueberry fruit and yoghurt. Leaves can also be added to salads and cooked in chutneys and pickles. This I continue to do each year, raiding the bushes which are now prolific in our village today, giving out many cuttings on many occasions, at Season of Creation and other Laudato Si events, challenging people to try it, to chew a leaf each day, which of course, is very sour, being high in Vitamin C. My spekboom relish made with apples, onions, vinegar and spices is also a feature and I’m working on other ingredients and combinations, while other foodies I find are doing the same.



There are many more known and used edible indigenous plants, some also spurned, described as weeds.

Morogo. (amaranth) a wild spinach, has different versions and is one of a number that are traditionally harvested in the countryside, cooked and eaten or dried. Amaranth also grows almost everywhere and its leaves and seeds, which can be used in cooking, baking and as microgreens, are very good sources of nutrients. I have a booklet *EDIBLE WEEDS* listing many more edible weeds. However both spekboom and amaranth (morogo) are the most marketable with spekboom being promoted for reforestation in a rural

area which has a problem of serious soil erosion, due to drought and over-grazing by goats and cattle. Let's hope the elephants in the area – in and beyond the Addo Elephant Reserve - may even stage a comeback.



As with spekboom younger and urbanized people tend to look down on such traditional foods but I do believe that we, environmentally aware and, BECOMING ECO-FRIENDLY FAMILIES, need to market the idea, of growing vegetables but indigenous edible plants in particular. "Make Mother Nature your Food Garden" can be of great help in poverty alleviation and increasing food security. This attitude can benefit not only the poor but also all nature-conscious families.

The 2026 Season of Creation theme of Living Water was used in a prayer and reflection session with a parish Seniors group, focusing mainly on water, its spirituality and the life experience of the members and also distributing spekboom cuttings. Our prayer moment

included prayers from the Season of Creation guidelines.

Where water flows, Lord, let everything live, trees for food and leaves for healing.

We give thanks, O Lord, for the gift of water, the veins of our common home, that sustains the cedar and the whale, the pasture and the city. We are grateful for the local waters that nourish our homelands and our fellow creatures. We give thanks that in your well-watered garden, every drop is a sacred testament to your love.

May God our Father who brought water from the rock sustain us in the desert. May Christ our Lord who is Living Water refresh us for the work of restoration. May the Holy Spirit carry us on currents of grace until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amen.

Pope Francis: *it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners in projects affecting their land. Land is not a commodity for them but a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space which maintains their identity and values. When they remain there their care is best. LS 146. Everything is connected. We human being are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth. LS 92*



ACTION: Research cooking and preserving practices as well as recipes using spekboom, *morogo* and other indigenous plants. Making jams, pickles, freezing and drying them can extend their use beyond the summer growing season. Research and apply the great variety of traditionally used health benefits, for old and young, rich and poor, nature-conscious, worldly wise and waterwise.

WATER WARRIORS ARE WATER WISE.

DOING YOUR BIT FOR CLIMATE CHANGE? !

Plant a SPEKBOOM cutting, good for our ecosystem.

- it is an indigenous, evergreen, easy to grow succulent.
- its flowers attract insects and bees for pollination
- an environmental miracle worker, extracts carbon dioxide, fights climate change and air pollution.
- it is water wise, tolerates drought and frost.
- is edible – but very sour!, high in basic nutrients & Vitamin C
Juice or chop to add to salads, even ice-cream and jam.
- Suck to quench thirst, soothe sunburn
- For medicinal purposes: antiseptic, skin ailments, chew for a sore throat & mouth infections.

Plus: #proudlysouthafrican.

Celebrate Spring and the Season of Creation. 17.09.2022

THE SEASON OF CREATION 2026 “Living Water”
Prayer and Reflection from Ecumenical Prayer service
& Marfam’s “Water Warriors are Water Wise”



Living Water
Season of Creation 2026

SEE..... This year’s **theme**, “Living Water”, set amid the exile and the losses of God’s people, explores the prophet Ezekiel’s vision (ch 47:9 and 12), of an image of living water flowing from God’s sanctuary *“Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows.* It reveals and symbolises divine healing, renewing land, water, biodiversity, and human responsibility towards all of creation, a powerful biblical vision of hope and ecological healing.

Consider some aspects: 1. The **word “Water”**, 2. The **image of Sister Water**, as described by St Francis in his canticle “Praise be to you O Lord, for Sister Water who is very useful and humble, and precious and chaste” and 3. The **experience of water** in our own lives. Just mentioning the word immediately causes a reaction, very often negative. Don’t we consider water as a commodity, something we’re owed, and don’t always get? We blame the government. They are responsible and we’re angry with them. It has even become an election issue to ask “Who will best be able to fix the problem?”

What has been our experience of water in our many different life situations? Do we recognise the complexity, for the authorities, of managing a massive water system to provide clean, healthy water to millions of citizens? Are they taking responsibility? Is it truly a right, is it a gift from God? We believers see that it is given to us to be stewards, caretakers of water for ourselves and all of creation. How responsible are we, and am I, in our own use of water? *Reflect and share.*

JUDGE: Prayer from Season of Creation. (Taken from the ecumenical prayer service guidelines.)

Holy God, whose Spirit hovered over the waters at the beginning, **we gather** as part of your community of all creation, thirsty for your grace.

We give thanks for the gift of water, the veins of our common home, that sustains the cedar and the whale, the pasture and the city. We are grateful for the local waters that nourish our homelands and our fellow creatures. We give thanks that in your well-watered garden, every drop is a sacred testament to your love.

Yet, **we confess** that we have treated this gift as a mere commodity.

We have choked the seas with our waste and watched the warming tides rise in judgment.

We lament the cracked earth of the drought-stricken and the salty tears of the climate refugee. Melt our frozen hearts, O God, and let the waters of repentance flow.

Lord of all Life, in your vision to the prophet Ezekiel you promised that wherever the river flows, everything shall live. Stir in us a calling to care for the waters — to protect the watershed, defend the rights of water, and honor the dignity of the thirsty.

May **your Word** be a spring within us, gushing forth for the healing of the nations. Where water flows, Lord, let everything live, trees for food and leaves for healing

May God our Father who brought water from the rock sustain us in the desert. May Christ our Lord who is Living Water refresh us for the work of restoration. May the Holy Spirit carry us on currents of grace until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Amen.

Relevant Scriptures from the Season of Creation: Ezekiel 47:9-12, Psalm 65: 5-13. Revelation 22:1-7, Gospel John: John 7:37-39.

ACT. What can I do to become a more effective **WATER WISE WATER WARRIOR**? **Reuse, reduce, recycle.**

Save, protect, clean up blocked drains and rivers, report leaks, don’t waste, use wisely at home, cut use of small plastic water bottles, have shorter showers, don’t leave taps running, water garden sparingly, use water-wise plants – see SPEKBOOM, don’t wash clothes unnecessarily. Pray – recognizing God’s gift and call to responsibility, consider needs of others, people, animals, plants.

