

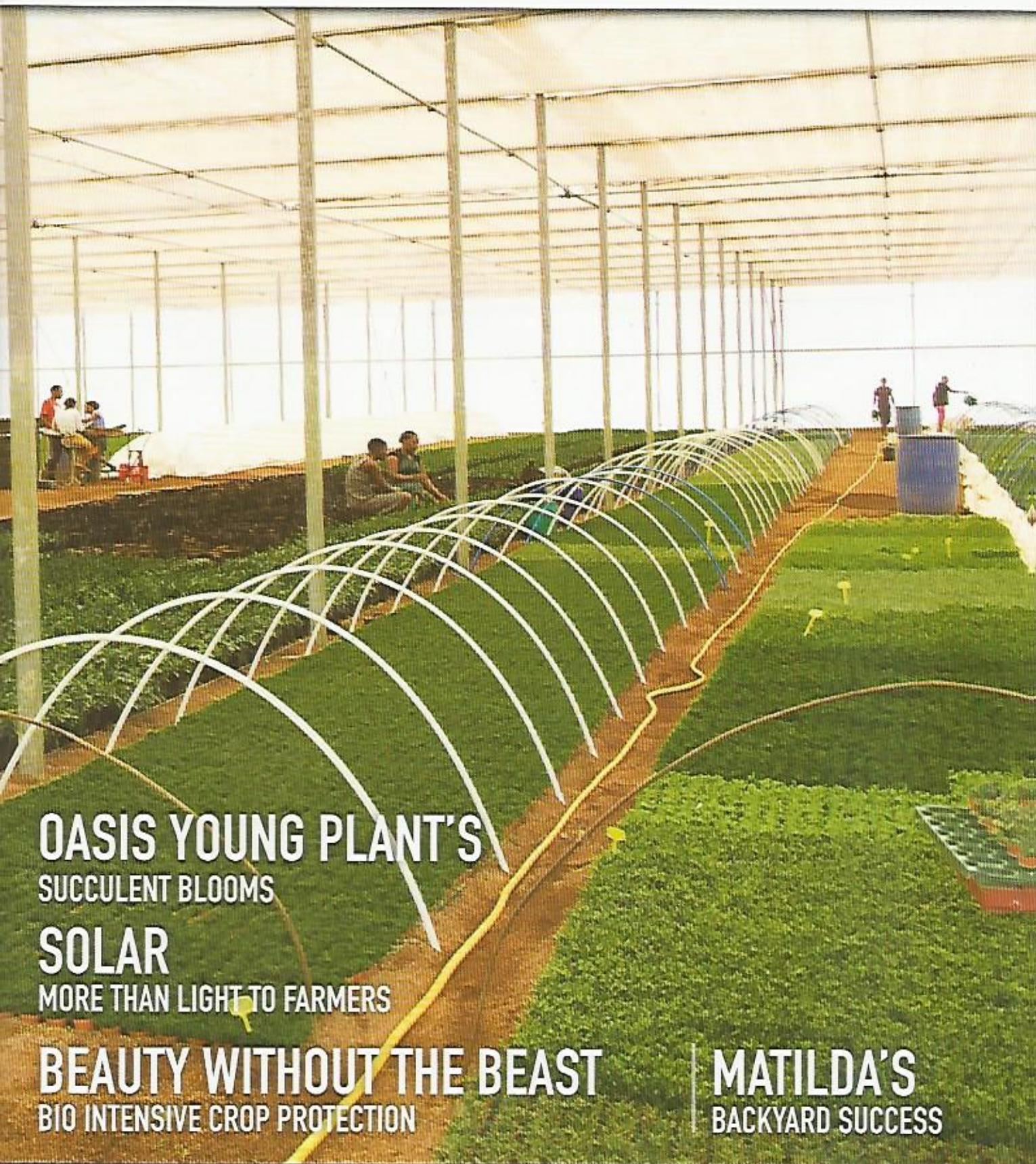
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IN TANZANIA

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OASIS YOUNG PLANT'S
SUCCULENT BLOOMS

SOLAR
MORE THAN LIGHT TO FARMERS

BEAUTY WITHOUT THE BEAST
BIO INTENSIVE CROP PROTECTION

MATILDA'S
BACKYARD SUCCESS



Cover Story

Succulent **BLOOMS**

By Sandra Kabongoyi



Christine Brandsma and Rene Kleinveld established the Oasis Young Plants greenhouses farm located near Moshi, Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania in 2008. Prior to that they first visited Ethiopia scouting for land to set up a flower farm. They were discouraged by the political state of the country then and the unsuitable weather conditions. A friend mentioned the possibility of Northern Tanzania and they planned a trip – they were charmed, it was the perfect fit they were looking for in terms of climate and logistics. And as they say, the rest is history.

It would take them 2 and half years before they found a proper piece of land. Some of the logistical attributes that made the location attractive were the vicinity of the Kilimanjaro International Airport, availability of labour that would greatly improve the quality of the cuttings due to singular placement method in bio gradable holders used by the employees rather than bundle placement as is the practice in Europe; and a great water supply source for the farm. The borehole that is the main source of water is 80 metres deep, with superb water quality almost comparable to rainwater and thus does not require purification before being used on the cuttings through a drip irrigation method.

Oasis young plants specializes in the production of cuttings of indoor plants with production cycles stretching from 6 months to 2 years, making them unique to other flower production cycles. The succulents including

Rhipsalis, Haworthia, Echeveria, Crassula and Peperomia that grow in deserts and the savannah are very low in water consumption – a unique selling point; have various beautiful shapes and brilliant colours and an unbeatable shelf life.

Whereas difficult to grow, and take a

long time to propagate and breed, Oasis young plants has successfully managed to be the only

propagators and breeder of about half of their variety products in the world.

The farm is comprised of 4 greenhouses, 2 of which cover one hectare each that were imported from Spain and another 2 at the back of the farm constructed with local materials and mainly steel, which combined, cover half a hectare. The latter constructions of the two locally made greenhouses were on a crash programme. The company had rented greenhouse space in Arusha that was being

demanded back fast before the full propagation of the succulents and before the Spanish imported ones were due. However, even with the well-established infrastructure, it is still insufficient in meeting their clients' demands. There is need to expand. "The demand is bigger than what we can supply," says Christine.

"This is because the products we have are very hard to propagate and we do not have a lot of competitors. Our happy clients are professional growers all around demanding for more."

They will thus take their prior experience of working with local materials to construct their first "Tanzanian made greenhouse" as Rene, the company's Managing Director, confidently puts it. The irrigation, netting and plastic will be imported but the rest of the materials are going to be locally sourced.

Oasis Young Plants Ltd. also propagates orchids. 2008 was the year the orchid market collapsed in Europe due to over production but this too did not deter them. They started small with approximately 200 plants in propagation even after being advised against it by a shareholder. There was an inquisitive local market that they tapped into in and around



Tanzania and it paid off. Whereas the concept of keeping orchids was entirely new, the Tanzanian women have taken it with pride and this has been a gratifying experience for the organization proprietors who have built relationships with these amazing women. These clients are a part of the minority 2 percent local market of their overall production, which leaves the rest 98 percent for export, mainly to Europe.

The organization has created employment for the surrounding community having started off with 80 employees, who have now doubled to 160. 70 percent of these are female and 30 male. This, they regard as their biggest achievement - the possibility to provide employment and be a part of household income generation of the surrounding community. They have also invested in creating conducive working environment for their employees. An example is the startup of a simple English and Maths one-hour programme in the evenings from 4.30pm, to better equip their employees with basic understanding of personal accounts and to be

contributing partners in the homework studies of their children. This they achieved through outsourcing of teachers from the neighbouring Weru Weru secondary school for the program run on the premises. The employees are also a part of sports teams for soccer and volleyball with encouraged participation as part of their recreational plan.

Oasis Young Plants Ltd. has put in place a strong social community responsibility programme on education and gives back to the community as much as possible through supporting construction of schools and a Church. They have also put up a day care school on the farm that accommodates twenty children aged between 2 and 6 years from 8 to 5pm during the week. This is to support the working mothers who cannot afford help and are unable to leave their little ones at home with no assistance. There are two teachers who recently got a 5-week training from a consultant brought in from Europe. The training gave an evident boost in quality and competence to the teachers who now better understand

the importance of the development of children at that level and were happy to show us around the school and the activities which the children are involved in.

The management of Oasis Young Plants Ltd. is thankful to the Tanzania Horticultural Association (TAHA), which has been of great help as advisors in the field of labour laws and government's legal regulations. They credit it as a source of information for numerous issues which has been indispensable to them especially as foreign investors during the almost 10 years they have been in operation. This has been parcel of their long-term sustainability in the business and has enabled a cordial relationship with the environment they operate in. However, with the ongoing unpredictable political situation regarding foreign investors, Christine and Rene are a bit skeptical about the future of the business. They are hopeful that things will get better and the investment climate more conducive for their continued successful operation in Tanzania.





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SALES OF ORCHIDS,

ANTHURIUM, BROMELIA & SUCCULENTS

IN EAST AFRICA

