

Early Morning
with
Bunny Wailer

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Dedication

to the
Society of Economic Botany
and the
International Society for Ethnobiology
for their 2020 conference in Jamaica.

I see you Bunny Wailer, waking on your farm in Portland, before the rest of the world rises.

Washing a lime, you then cut it in two; slicing one half, placing the slices into a mug, adding cold water and squeezing juice from the uncut half into the water. Taking the mug, you sit outside, where the early morning sun can bathe you. Thoughts of the upcoming tour; embryo of a song; financial juggling; the struggles of farming. Still, you give thanks for the lime water drink - a tonic to start the day with - and the panorama blessing your eyes.

Tell me great elder, how are you dealing with the citrus greening? Are you part of the recent initiatives in the use of parasitic wasps? Wasps that feed on the insects that carry the disease. An inter-agency endeavour, between the Jamaican government, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation and other agencies. How are you dealing with the disease? I've recently found out that my father, who gardens in the Mo Bay region, is struggling with it: his trees of grapefruit, lime and ortanique are dying. What citrus fruit do you grow?

Talking of ortanique, when Ras Tafari made that monumental visit to your homeland in 1966, the Jamaican government gave him an ortanique, as a national gift: of a citrus fruit, first born and bred in Jamaica. A gift from the land, to a man who farmed the land. As well as coffee, lentils and other produce, on his farm in Ethiopia, Ras Tafari grew citrus. Ras Tafari, who in the fifties, initiated Arbor Day, encouraging Ethiopians to plant trees - and founded the first agricultural colleges, one of which is now the internationally celebrated Haramaya University.

I've never seen your farm, but I know you are surrounded by green – of the plants and of the hills - that the sky is blue and maybe there is a little river nearby. I think that as you sat there, in the early morning or the late evening – possibly in the aroma of citrus - that there sometimes came the seed that blossomed, giving us the beautiful flowers, such as "Fig Tree" and "Dreamland."

Did you ever try a salad of grapefruit, orange and pineapple? Was all the content grown on your farm?

I think back to your younger days great elder, to your time of enforced farming, for possession of a plant. I know that pumpkin and callaloo is grown there, so in an area well known for citrus cultivation, what members of the *Rutaceae* family, were grown in Tamarind Prison Farm.

Did Bob and Peter have their favoured citrus intake? Did Peter like Ugli juice? Did Bob prefer his lemon drink hot? When by the river, or at the beach, did the original Wailers enjoy "bush tea," of the leaves of lime, lemongrass and soursop?

Here comes a grand daughter of yours, bringing you a cut grapefruit with a drizzle of honey, so I will leave you now great elder, to enjoy family time. I hope your citrus trees continue to grow and benefit all, as your music has done over the years. Let the fruit and the man, continue to bless us.

Sources

The Gleaner

The Anglo-Ethiopian Society