

HORTULANUS

Official Publication of Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc.

APRIL 2017

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MEETINGS COMMENCE AT 7.30PM
ST IVES COMMUNITY HALL, MEMORIAL AVE, ST IVES

COMING EVENTS

Mar 31/Apr 1 International Orchid Fair, Castle Hill Showground, Castle Hill
April 4 APRIL MEETING: Bernard Chapman—Learn about Pruning
April 8/9 Collectors' Plant Fair at Hawkesbury Racecourse, Clarendon
April 27 KHS Outing to the Central Coast (see below for further details)
May 2 MAY MEETING: Robyn Bible will speak on Geraniums and bring plants for sale
May 6-28 Botanica Art Exhibition, Royal Botanic Gardens, Lion Gate Lodge 10-4pm daily
May 26-28 Orchids Out West, Hawkesbury Racecourse, Clarendon

It was a rather wet and cool night for our March meeting but you can't keep a good gardener down. Some 81 members and visitors turned out to enjoy themselves with friends.

The President opened the meeting by noting the complete change in weather and hoped that not too many of our members have been impacted by the recent heavy rain and hail. She welcomed our new members, Julie Gilbert, Annette Payne and Fiona and Glen Corfield and presented them with a history of the Society and a commemorative Society pen.

MEMBERS NEWS

Keith and Maureen Smith will be holding their Hugh Plant Sale on Sunday, 9 April from 10 am. The sale will be at 45 Parklands Avenue, Lane Cove North. All proceeds go to the National Breast Cancer Foundation. They are always on the lookout for any excess ceramic pots or dishes you wish to dispose of, so just bring them along to the next meeting and Keith will be happy to relieve you of them.

Our best wishes go to Jim Sweeting who has had a period of hospitalisation recently but is now on the road to recovery. We hope to see him up and about again very soon.

OUTINGS

Thursday, 27 April 2017 – Central Coast Trip We will visit four contrasting gardens. First, at Peats Ridge, is Elaine and Ian Slade's garden, where we will have morning tea. Adjacent is Living Edge Nursery (source of many unusual plants) and its surrounding garden. We will visit the garden and sales area. After lunch we will travel to landscaper Peter Nixon's unusual garden at Forresters Beach. Finally we will visit the beautifully-landscaped garden of Paradox Horticulture at Glenning Valley where we will see (and possibly buy) sun-loving bromeliads and succulents. The cost is \$65, which covers coach travel, garden entries, morning tea and lunch. This trip is nearly full so please get your booking to Helen quickly if you would like to go.

Wednesday, 27 September - Leura

On this outing we will be visiting four gardens in the Leura area. We will have a guide with us from the Leura Garden Club and the home owners will be on hand to answer any questions we may have. None of these gardens will be in the Leura Gardens Festival which will be held the following week and we will be the only group at the time of our visit. The cost of this trip is \$70 which will include garden entries and morning tea. Time will be given to visit Leura village for browsing the shops and lunch.

Friday, 27 October – Monday, 30 October

This four day/three night trip will be to Bathurst for the Bathurst Spring Spectacular. We will visit two lovely gardens on the way there, (Wild Meadows and Hillandale), have two days to look at the Bathurst gardens and then will return via Mayfield Garden on the Monday. The pricing of this trip is not yet complete but should be available shortly. Accommodation will be in a four-star motel.

For each of these trips we will be travelling in the safe and comfortable coaches provided by On Course tours.

All enquiries and bookings should be directed to Ms Helen Gilkes, 20a Normurra Avenue, North Turrumurra - phone 9144 4826.

SHOW BENCH

In spite of the rain we had some lovely exhibits on the show bench. There were some nice roses for a change and fuchsias were still abundant. Nerines, Lycoris and belladonna lilies made an appearance this month but the dahlia class only had one exhibit unlike other years when the dahlia classes were full – we can blame the weather. In the

native class there were some very fine grevilleas. The exhibits in the Decorative class were particularly striking, especially the Purple Patch section.

GARDEN TABLE

There was no Garden Table at the March meeting as the Trading Table was in operation.

TRADING TABLE

The Trading Tables were loaded with first class plants such as Oncidium orchids, hippeastrum, tillandsias and Sarracenia pitcher plants, most of which were going for under \$10. If you did not buy anything, you could have missed a bargain. A big thank you to the enthusiastic ladies who ran it and to those who brought plants along.

RAFFLE

We had an excellent collection of prizes on offer. The Encyclopedia of Native Australian Plants was donated by that well known person, Anonymous, thank you Anonymous. The two Dendrobium kingianum 'Bungan Castle' orchids were donated by Jim Brydie, thank you Jim. The hibiscus 'Cashmere Wind' was purchased by your Society from Elegant Outdoors Nursery. The Globba winitii 'Dancing Ladies' which hails from Thailand was donated by Anonymous, thank you Anonymous. The \$20 voucher was donated by Bunnings. These are all good prizes but you have to have a ticket to win one of them. \$2 will get you 3 tickets from the man just inside the door and the money helps your Society.

MAIN SPEAKER



Our main speaker was Jim Brydie from the Ku-ring-gai Orchid Society. Jim gave an illustrated and informative talk on growing the well known native orchid, Dendrobium kingianum. D kingianum can be found growing wild in the coastal ranges from just above Newcastle and Gloucester Tops to as far north as the ranges behind Bundaberg in Queensland. They are epiphytic and grow on sandstone rock faces or on rocks amongst the mosses and leaf litter, generally in light shady areas. Gradually piles of dead leaves and rubbish accumulate at the foot of the rocks and when the baby plants, called keikis, fall off the mother plant, they drop into the debris, take root and start to grow.

D kingianum flowers come in a range of colours from white, pink and purple/red. There are also speckled forms. Sometimes the flower stems have drooping inflorescences. However, in orchid competitions a vertical spike is preferred. Five or six flowers per spike are normal. Many famous hybrids have been created by crossing D kingianum with other dendrobiums such as D speciosum (the rock lily). When these hybrids are grown in cultivation they can grow into very big plants. One such orchid, D kingianum 'Bungan Castle', grew to such a size that it required two men to lift it.

D. kingianum in cultivation grows best in a pot using orchid bark and given the right conditions of bright light and regular watering, will grow happily in a shade house, under a tree or attached to a rock. When in flower they can be brought inside for a short time.

D kingianum should be repotted every 2-3 years. Orchid Care Services make a bagged mix that is first class and worth looking for. Repotting should be done after flowering and before new growth has started to appear. To remove from the pot, soak the pot in a bucket of water for an hour, remove from the water and turn upside down and give the rim of the pot a few hard taps and the plant should fall out. If you are using plastic pots, squeeze the pot in several places first to loosen the plant. Clean off all the old mix and trim off any dead roots. Don't over-pot, i.e. put into a pot larger than the rootball. The surface of the roots should be level with the rim of the pot and the root base about half way down. New plants should be staked until they get a firm grip inside the pot and have stabilised. To protect them from snails, pots should be kept on a bench not on the ground.

D kingianum flowers in the spring and the potting mix should be kept moist but not wet. As the potting mix contains no nutrition, the plant should be fertilised every 2 weeks with a weak liquid fertiliser. They should receive filtered light for about 12 hours a day. If grown in a sunny area, use 50-70% shade cloth. The Dendrobium beetle is a major pest, attacking both the leaves and stems. A small light orange to brown beetle with two black spots, it is about 1.5cm long. They move about in pairs and are prevalent from October to about May and will attack young growth. They lay their eggs in a line near where a leaf joins the stem. The young grubs burrow into the stem where they are protected from spray pesticides. When disturbed the adult beetles will drop to the ground so put something underneath to catch them so you can despatch them.

Main Speaker April

Bernard Chapman will give a talk on the three Ws of pruning. **Why** prune, **When** to prune, **Where** to prune. Come along and get top advice on pruning from an expert.

MEMBER SPEAKER

Our member speaker was Alice Miller who gave a well-illustrated talk on the famous gardens 'Longwood' at Kennett Square in Pennsylvania, USA. In 1700 George Peirce, a Quaker farmer, purchased 407 acres of land from the government and established a good working farm together with a 15 acre arboretum filled with a wide range of trees from many countries. Later generations of the family decided to sell the property and in 1906 Pierre du Pont purchased it. It has grown from the original 407 acres and with almost continuous development, now covers 1050 acres. Pierre du Pont died in 1954 and left the gardens to the public. It is now run as a business, Longwood Gardens Inc. with a budget of US\$50,000,000 and over a 1000 employees.

A series of photos showing the development of Longwood from 1906 to the present day were shown. They included the first 600ft garden flower walk built in 1906, the magnificent conservatory that is heated during the winter and has a world famous pipe organ in an adjoining theatre. A water garden with 9 fountains was completed in 1927. Because of its location, Longwood are gardens with four distinct seasons. In the autumn full of colour with dogwoods, maples, oaks and poplars putting on a magnificent display. Winters can be severe but still beautiful with lots of snow decorating the trees. Come spring, large areas of freesias, daffodils, tulips and many others types of bulbs put on their best show. When summer arrives the garden beds present magnificent shows of summer flowers, both from the USA and other parts of the world.

Longwood's already beautiful water gardens and fountains were extended to include a new water garden installed in front of the Conservatory with a fountain that shoots 10,000 gallons of water 130 feet into the air. The fountain is illuminated with hundreds of coloured lights. This fountain was originally intended to entertain the du Pont family, but now has become a part of the regular Christmas Eve show, open to the public. This show has more than 400,000 lights and over 300,000 people come to see it.

With the death of Pierre du Pont in 1954, Longwood Inc is now run by five business men and an experienced horticultural director. Many changes have been made, including new gardens and training schools for both professional and amateur gardeners with a coveted Masters degree available to professionals. The open air theatre is now used a great deal. A Desert House was also established. Photos were shown of a relatively new addition, the Azalea House with snow covered shrubs outside. Longwood is constantly evolving so if you are in the area, it should not be missed.

Member Speaker April:

Christine Rethers will talk on growing orchids in your garden. Christine is an experienced orchid grower so bring your questions and problems along and get some answers from one who knows.

FEATURE PLANT: PHALAENOPSIS ORCHID—Moth Orchids



Phalaenopsis are a group of plants that grow in shady, humid conditions throughout the Asian tropics. They have become one of the most popular house plants in Australia and many other countries and are imported in large numbers, mainly from Taiwan, for sale in supermarkets. They are relatively easy to grow and flower if their requirements are met.

Temperature and Atmosphere Requirements: Phalaenopsis enjoy relatively stable temperatures. A minimum temperature of 15°C and a maximum of 30°C are optimal, however plants will tolerate temperatures of up to 5° more extreme for short periods. In the Sydney area they can be grown outdoors in a light but shady area during summer but will need to come inside during winter. Their requirements fall almost perfectly within the comfort zone we enjoy inside the house. However, they also require medium to high humidity and this can be achieved by placing the pot in a saucer filled with gravel into which water is put. The base

of the plant should be above the level of the water but the plant will receive humidity as the water in the gravel evaporates. Alternatively, light misting once a day will achieve the same result.

Light: Phalaenopsis must be protected from direct, unfiltered sunlight but do need a bright location. Indoors, a brightly lit room out of direct sun is most suitable.

Watering and Fertilising: One of the secrets of growing these plants is to keep the roots just damp which means that the compost should be allowed to nearly dry out before watering again. After watering, check to see if water is lying in the crown of the plant and if it is, dry this off as this is where rot can set in. Fertilise with a soluble orchid fertiliser either at **quarter** strength every watering or **half** strength every second watering. A complete fertiliser low in nitrogen is ideal and can be used all year round.

Potting: Keep the plant in as small a pot as is possible, a few roots growing out of the pot is quite normal and not necessarily a reason to put the plant in a bigger pot. Use a coarse, free draining material such as orchid pine bark (medium size) – Debcos have a range and they can be found at most good nurseries. Don't use Cymbidium Mix as this is too dense. Repotting every couple of years is a good way to go as pine bark will start to deteriorate after this.

Pests and Diseases: Apart from crown rot, Phalaenopsis can be affected by mealy bugs that appear as small, furry white insects, usually under the leaves. They can be sprayed with a pyrethrum spray or Confidor which can have a small amount of Eco Oil or Pest Oil mixed with it. Alternatively, they can be dabbed with a cotton bud dipped in equal parts of methylated spirits and water.

Flowers on Phalaenopsis can last up to 12 weeks. When the flowers have died, cut the flower stem off between the third and fourth node from the base. The old stem will often then shoot and flower for a second time. Plants can flower twice a year and will also produce new flower stems as they grow and mature.

HUGH'S CORNER
WHAT SHOULD I
BE DOING IN
MY GARDEN?



► If you are going to grow tulips then now is the time to look for space in your refrigerator to store your bulbs for about 6 weeks. Tulips hail from the high mountains bordering on Turkey and Iran and it is ingrained in them to expect winter to be cold.

► Keep an eye on your Hibiscus and regularly deadhead them to induce them to put out more flowers.

► Have you ever considered growing potatoes? All you need is an old rubbish bin with some drainage holes in the bottom. Fill it up with a mixture of good soil, compost and cow manure. Push a couple of good potatoes about 10cm

deep into the mixture and keep it damp not wet. Once the foliage has died back you can harvest your crop and get a pleasant surprise at the same time.

▶ Have a look around at your shrubs and check that their shape is not getting out of hand. Vigorously growing shrubs should be given a regular light tip prune to maintain their shape. Don't let them get away from you or it could become a major job. Salvia can be pruned to maintain their shape. Densely branched Salvias can be trimmed back by half. If you have salvia with tall canes, remove about half of them by cutting back to ground level. This will also improve air circulation and discourage fungal attack. Cut the rest of the canes back by about one third.

▶ When planting bulbs the general rule of thumb is to plant the bulb at a depth twice the size of the bulb with the pointy end up. The exception to this rule is ranunculus. The corm should be planted with the legs or claws pointing down.

▶ Watch for White Fly - they are tiny little white flies with a wing span of about 3mm. They are sap suckers and can kill a plant very easily. Hang a bright yellow board covered with a layer of grease near your plants and it will attract and kill the White Fly. Spray under the leaves thoroughly with either Pest Oil (mineral) or Eco Oil (organic).

▶ Watch how much light your pot plants are receiving. From now on, the amount of sunlight available will start to decrease and you might have to move your pots to get more sunlight and keep them happy.

▶ Have you got Heliconia or Ginger Plants growing in your garden? It is time to cut back the old foliage and give them a feed of a small amount of Blood and Bone. Water in well and spread a good layer of mulch over the top soil to help retain moisture in the coming dry periods.



Question: What makes my cucumbers go bitter? They look healthy enough.

Answer: The usual reason cucumbers go bitter is hot and dry weather and we have had a lot of that over the Christmas and New Year period. It would pay you to put a covering of 50% shade cloth over them for a while until

things cool off. Keep the water up to them, organise a regular watering program so the soil is damp but not wet.

Question: Are Huntsman spiders poisonous? I have a big one living in my garden..

Answer: No, as big and fearsome as they look they are not poisonous. Leave him be as he is doing a good job catching pests in your garden.

Question: My frangipani is getting a lot of yellow spots on the underside of the leaves and the leaves do not look really happy at all. What is this and what should I do about it?

Answer: This is Coleosporium plumeria or Frangipani rust and it is a fungus. The yellow spots are maturing spores or pustules that release spores as a powder that falls on the leaves below and infects them. The infected leaves then fall early. Remove the infected leaves and put them into the garbage bin not the compost heap. Spray under and over the leaves with Mancozeb Plus. Frangipani rust is not fatal to the plant but it does make a mess of it. Once you have cleaned up your plant, keep an eye on it and at the first sign of re-infection spray again with fungicide.

Question: I want to hide a paling fence and am considering planting a Stephanotis. How big do they grow?

Answer: Planted in the ground and under the right conditions, Stephanotis can grow to as much as 5 metres tall and a couple of metres wide. They prefer either light shade or a warm position where they will get only early morning sun. If planted in full sun the flowers will get burnt. The white flowers appear between November and April. Do not overwater, just damp is the way to go. Too much water and they can drop dead on you. Stephanotis will need some support so some wires on the fence that you can attach your plant to would work well.

Question: We have a large Radiata pine growing in the back yard. Is it possible to grow anything underneath it?

Answer: Very little will grow under a pine tree, firstly because the roots of the pine tree will grab all the nutrients in the soil and your plants will starve. Secondly when the pine tree sheds its needles they make the soil very acid and most plants don't like very acid soil. Try using large pots or tubs as this will defeat the roots but you will still have to clean the pine needles away.



'Purple Patch'

*Regards
Hugh*