

HORTULANUS

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

JULY 2017



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Website: www.khsgardenclub.org.au

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

COMING EVENTS

- June 24 –25 Camilla Ark Showcase, Eden Gardens. Enq. Kate Stanley 9653 2202**
June 30 Lane Cove National Park Bushwalk with Dr Peter Weston, 9.30-4.30 Enq. 9231 8182 (Royal Botanic Gdns)
July 4: JULY MEETING: Linda Claydon will speak on How to construct Hanging Baskets
July 8 Eryldene Historic House and Garden open to the public
July 8 Camellia Show, Ravenswood School Killara 1.30pm to 4.30pm

Hi

It was a wet, cold windy night for our June meeting, but it did not stop 52 keen, well rugged up gardeners and four visitors from coming along to the Hall to enjoy themselves with their friends.

The President opened the Meeting, welcoming four new members; Jenny Percy, Pamela Stewart and Anne and Geoff Hunter.

MEMBERS NEWS

Members were reminded that subscriptions of \$25 single and \$35 double are now due. A membership form complete with payment instructions was supplied with last month's Hortulanus.

Bunnings Sausage Sizzle. It comes but once year, and is a big fund raiser. We need volunteers to help run it. Starting at 8.00am it runs until 3-30 pm. The shifts are for two hours only and are good fun with a lot of banter with the customers. If you feel you can spare 2 hours for your Society on Sunday the 27th of August please contact Doreen Clark, either at the next meeting or by phone 9498 1677

OUTINGS

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, but not lunch. Time will be given to visit Leura village for browsing the shops and lunch. The booking form is included with this newsletter.

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 and Gairloch 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 both 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 Turramurra - phone 9144 4826.

GARDEN TABLE

There were lots of goodies on sale, all in good condition and ready to be planted. Yellow Clivia seedlings, going for 20 cents a piece were a bargain. The lemonade fruit were ripe and would have cost you a lot more in the supermarket. Schlumbergera, begonias and succulents were on offer as well. Next time you have a potting up session, do a couple of extras for your Society. It all helps.

SHOW BENCH

The camellias put on a spectacular display and are certainly having a good season. The first of the jonquils appeared on the bench. The *pyncostachys urticifolia* (blue sage), with its iridescent blue flowers, is well worth seeking out. Schlumbergera are doing well and the orchids as usual were beautiful. The one fine pumpkin looked a bit lonely. In the Decorative section a lot of work went into the excellent exhibits.

Exhibitors were reminded that judging starts 15 minutes before the meeting commences and that any exhibit placed on the Showbench after judging has started cannot be judged, no matter how good it is. A few minutes before judging is to start a last minute warning is announced. Once judging commences, members should leave the Showbench to make room for the judges.

The Showbench exhibitors point score winners will be announced at the next meeting with the top point scorer becoming the custodian of the Clark Shield for 12 months. The new benching year begins this month, so get ready to show us your best plants. We are hoping that all members will take part this year.

Our Showbench photographer, and always ready to help member, Ray Kench was recently mentioned in the North Shore Times for creating a beautiful garden in a neglected corner of his road in Wahroonga. Ray made a special contribution to the June meeting, leading the judging team as well as doing the photography and exhibiting items from his own lovely garden.

RAFFLE

We had a fine collection of prizes on offer for the Raffle. The *Euphorbia wulfenii* 'Silver Swan' was purchased from Parkers Nursery by your Society. Anonymous must be clearing his library, we had five excellent gardening books on offer as prizes. Thank you Anonymous. The lovely schlumbergera was donated by our most distant member, Sonia Shipley. Thank you Sonia. The two small potted plants (identified as *mimulus* by Clare Bell) were purchased by your Society from Parkers Nursery. The \$20 voucher came from Bunnings, thank you Bunnings. The fine fuchsia, the Buffalo Spray and the collection of label tags were also donated by Anonymous. Thank you Anonymous. This is a top of the line collection of prizes so help keep the man at the door busy, and your Society happy, and give him \$2 for 3 tickets and one of the prizes could be yours.



MAIN SPEAKER

Our Main Speaker was Dr Peter Weston, a botanist and Honorary Research Fellow at the Royal Botanic Garden in Sydney. He also leads botanical tours to the eastern cape of South Africa, the subject of his talk.

Peter opened his well illustrated talk with a series of maps that outlined the geological, botanical and rainfall distribution of the Eastern Cape. The Eastern Cape runs roughly from Cape Town in the south to Durban in the north. Inland it is bounded by the Drakensberg Mountains in the north and the Great Karoo and Table Mountain in the south. A slide showed the curious dolerite formations on the mountainous ridges. Beyond the coastal mountains the country slowly gets drier and eventually becomes the Great Karoo, a vast semi desert area that receives almost no rain during the dry season. A visit was made to the Addo National Park, here elephants have been re-introduced and wander freely. Lions have also been re-introduced to control increasing numbers of Great Kudu, a large antelope. The Great Kudu can have horns to two metres in length. A baboon sat quietly in the bush, munching away at the vegetation. A lucky slide showed a leopard on the prowl at night. Here amongst the shrubbery could be found portulaca, plumbago and rock sparaxis, plants familiar to Australian gardeners, growing wild. The view down into Featherstone Kloof, (a gorge or cleft) showed a large open sloping area dotted with the well known cape chestnut tree and covered with a weed, locally called the "Australian weed." Among the bushes podocarpus of many varieties grew. The native orchid *cyrtorchis arcuata* presented beautiful white five petal flowers. Acacia karoo growing up near the 2000 metre mark of the ranges was an interesting plant with nice flowers, but also needle sharp spikes, up to a metre and a half in length. A visit was made to the Sneeuwberg Range in the west of the region here, at 2000metres and bordering on the dry Great Karoo, could be seen more plants quite familiar to Australian gardeners. Plants such as *nemesia*, *kniphofia*, *crassula* and *aloe* growing quite happily alongside local plants like *haemanthus humilis* and *cyrtanthus* both of which have fine flowers and a large bulb. Growing at 2000 metres these plants have to be hardy enough to withstand temperatures close to or below freezing in the cold season and temperatures in the high thirties in the hot dry season.

This was an interesting presentation that took members into country that we would not normally get to see.

Main Speaker July: Our main speaker for July will be Linda Claydon. Linda will speak on Hanging Baskets. Linda was a gold medal winner at Chelsea in the Hanging Basket section. She also recently judged our Hanging Basket competition at Bunnings. Come along and learn the How, When and Wherefore of Hanging Baskets from an expert.

Member Speaker July: Ted Shaw, Doreen Clark and Richard Cusden will talk on "Ageing gracefully in your garden".

FEATURE PLANT Snowdrops and Snowflakes, What is the difference?

Many gardeners are a bit puzzled by these two similar plants. The bulbs look very much the same and even the names are close. However, despite these similarities they are not from the same family and their growing conditions are not the same. The following information should help.

The Snowflake or *Leucojum* family consists of 11 species and comes from central Europe and the Mediterranean area. The flowers of snowflakes are simple white bell like flowers composed of 6 uniform segments. Snowflakes can



be divided into two groups, those that originated in Central Europe, which flower during winter to early spring and the Mediterranean types which flower later in spring. Snowflakes in the central European group grow very well in shady areas with heavy soil and plenty of moisture retained in the soil. The late spring flowerers usually do best in well drained soils in full sun or part shade.

Probably the most common of the snowflakes is the summer snowflake, the name is a misnomer as it can flower in mid winter in Australia. This snowflake comes from central and southern Europe. The flowers are small white round bells with a dash of green at the tip of each petal segment. It is a tough bulb and will multiply in almost any garden where the soil is on the moist side in mid winter. When used in a border it will move into any vacant space, however it should not be used in a border that has other delicate plants in it. It will overpower them.

Snowdrops (*Galanthus*). Snowdrops are a genus of 12 plants that resemble each other very closely and an expert is needed to tell them apart. Generally the 3 outer segments of the flower are enlarged to form the characteristic wings of the flower. These outer petals are pure white. Snowdrops are mainly woodland plants and are native to central



Europe and through the northern Mediterranean to Turkey and Iran. Like most bulbs that have adapted to cool climates, this genus performs best in the cooler regions of Australia and consequently does not perform well in the low coastal regions of NSW and South Australia. It will grow well from Melbourne south into Tasmania. However, they do well in the high country of NSW and Victoria where it can get very cold at times. The ideal place to plant is on a south facing slope under a deciduous tree, where they can flower and make their growth in the sun or semi shade.

Even though the foliage of both snowflake and snowdrop dies off after flowering, the bulb is never entirely dormant. As these bulbs prefer a moist cool soil throughout the summer a thick layer of compost, mulch or straw on top of the bed will help prevent a sudden rise in soil temperature during the hot weather.

When the leaves start to die back bulbs can be left or lifted and replanted. When replanted, pointy end up, they should be covered with 10-12cm of soil. If you are going to purchase potted snowdrops or bulbs it is well to remember that snowdrop bulbs do not like to dry out, so it is quickly into the place where they are to grow. Don't leave them laying around on top of the soil for a day or two. Growing snowdrops/snowflakes from seed is a rather long slow process. It could be up to 4 years before you see flowers.

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



► Now the cool weather is with us why not consider trying your hand at growing peas. They are easy enough to grow and taste a lot nicer than shop bought ones. Peas will grow almost anywhere in Australia during the cooler weather. Temperatures over 25°C will affect the flowers. In the Syd-

ney area peas can be planted from March to August. Find a well drained sunny place where the soil leans towards alkaline, peas do not like acid soils. Dig in lots of compost and cow manure. The chemical fertilisers can come later when everything is established. Climbing peas are the most prolific pea producers. Depending on the particular pea you have planted, up to 5kg of peas per metre of bed can be produced. Climbing peas will need something to climb on. You can use either stakes with wires or wire netting strung between them, or if near a fence use the fence rails with wire netting tacked to it.

Peas take 6-12 weeks to produce a crop. Keep the water up to them, down around the roots not the foliage. If you water the foliage it will produce the ideal conditions for powdery mildew. Snow peas should be picked as soon as the pea in the pod starts to form. Other peas are ready as soon as the pea seed is fully formed. By regularly harvesting peas, every few days, you will encourage more flowers and more peas. Pick your pea pods from the bottom up. The bottom peas are more mature. Don't forget to check the foliage for hidden pea pods. Peas taste best when picked and used straight away, however they can be stored for about a week.

► If you have laid down a thick layer of mulch on your garden beds in the last month or two just keep an eye on it. With all the rain we have had over the last couple of months and water evaporation rates falling off due to the cool weather, it could go soggy on you and become very acid. If it shows signs of going soggy and compacted break it up with a rake, or hand fork, so the air can get into it and dry it out a bit.

► Have you got a small sunny space that you are not sure what to do with. Give some leeks, chives, spring onions or even some garlic a go. They all taste better than those that come from the supermarket and are easy to grow. Two

weeks before you are ready to plant give the site a good turning over, breaking up any lumps and add lots of well rotted cow manure and compost. Mix in a handful of dolomite per square metre, and rake in well. Water your plants in well with a seaweed extract to reduce transplant shock. Feed the plants every three weeks with a liquid fruit and flower fertiliser

► Now that your Sasanqua camellias have finished flowering have an inspection of the foliage, you are looking for dull brown bands down the mid rib. This is the camellia tea mite at work. Pull the damaged leaves off and dispose of them in the rubbish bin. Spray under and over the foliage with an organic pest oil. Fertilise and water in well. Camellias are shallow rooted so put a layer of mulch around the shrub. Don't go up against the trunk with the mulch, stop about 10cm away.

► Do you fancy a potted fern inside the house say in front of that big window that looks out into the garden? Consider a maidenhair fern (*Adiantum aethopicum*) they are hard to beat with their fresh green foliage. Use a good quality potting mix, good drainage and an east facing window where it won't get burnt by the afternoon sun, but will get good light. These are the main requirements for a healthy plant. They dislike hot air from heaters and air conditioners and can dry out quite quickly. The moisture problem can be overcome by standing the pot in a tray of wet sand. They can be fertilised during spring, summer and autumn with a slow release organic fertiliser. A drink of seaweed extract once a month will be appreciated by them.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Question? I have to re pot a large plant shortly, as I will be using a lot of fresh potting mix I thought to mix some Phostrogen fertiliser in the potting mix to give it a boost. Is this ok?

Answer Better you don't. No doubt you will prune off a lot of the excess young roots before you put your plant into the new pot and the plant in turn will produce more young tender roots. There is a good chance that the Phostrogen in the soil could burn the young roots. If you wish to boost the potting mix add some well rotted cow manure or blood and bone. Don't use chicken poo based fertilisers like Dynamic Lifter in fresh potting mix it can be pretty savage on young roots. A scattering of a general purpose, 6 month slow release fertiliser on the surface of the potting mix will help the plant re-establish itself. Give the pot a good drink of seaweed extract every couple of weeks, for a couple of months, to help your plant along.

Question? My sasanqua camellia is producing a number of relatively large "fruit" after flowering should I leave them there or cut them off?

Answer Quite a few flowering shrubs produce fruit after flowering. Apart from camellias, hibiscus, wisteria and frangipani can produce fruit after flowering. If you leave them on you will be able to collect some seed. However, if you are not planning to propagate more plants I would cut them off. It won't hurt your plant.

Question? When can I move a large hydrangea? It is in the ground.

Answer Winter is the best time to transplant hydrangea. First give it a good hard prune and take as much of the root ball as you can. Get rid of any dead roots and before planting fill the new hole up with seaweed extract a couple of times and let it drain. You will probably need a hole about 30cm deep.

Question? Why have some of my eggplant fruit gone yellow, they taste bitter and are not very nice to eat?

Answer Eggplant fruit usually turn yellow and bitter when they have been left too long on the plant and get too old to eat. Keep an eye on your "fruit" and when they are purple and have stopped swelling they are at their peak and you have about a week to pick them. After that they will start to turn yellow and go bitter.

Question? We have had our daphne in a pot for a number of years and it has always flowered well, but this year it looks quite sick with lots of leaves turning yellow, curling up and falling off. It has not put on any new growth either. Would repotting it do any good?

Answer I think your daphne has been attacked by a virus and there is no cure for it. There are about a dozen different viruses that attack daphne. Pull it out and send it to the tip, don't put it in your compost heap or green waste. The soil can be spread out thinly and left in the sun to sterilise it. If you intend to use the pot again give it a good wash out with Clorox or something similar.

Question? My neighbour has offered me some cuttings from his frangipani. He says I can put them straight in the ground is this right?

Answer No, if you plant them straight into the ground then the raw cut end of the cutting is open to attack by soil borne diseases. Find a shady spot and lay the cuttings out on the ground for a couple of weeks. This will give the cut section time to callous over and seal the end of the cutting, and then you can plant the cuttings straight into the ground.

Regards
Hugh