

HORTULANUS

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

JUNE 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 6 **JUNE MEETING: Dr Peter Weston will speak on Planting Hunting and Collecting in the Eastern Cape**
June 10/11 **Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. 10-4pm Enq. www.eryldene.org.au**
June 24/25 **Mingara Orchid Fair, Mingara Recreation Club, Mingara Drive, Tumbi Umbi Sat. 9-5pm, Sun. 9-3pm**
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**

Hi
It was a cool and rather windy night with a reminder in it that winter is not too far away. Some 60 well rugged up members and visitors turned out to enjoy themselves and compare notes with their friends. The President opened the meeting, welcoming our latest new member, Jenny Watsford and presenting her with her badge, the Society's history and pen. This was followed by a description of the Society's recent trip to the Peats Ridge – Gosford area and what to do with 46 people in your garden and no transport!

MEMBERS NEWS

Membership subscriptions are due on 1st July 2017. \$25 for a single and \$35 for a double. Please fill in the subscription form which is included with this newsletter, making sure that you include your email address. Your subscription can be handed in at a meeting or mailed to Helen Gilkes, 20A Normurra Avenue, North Turrumurra 2074. No direct debit, only cash or cheque, please, and remember to include your completed subscription form.

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Richard (Dick) Hughes. Dick was a Life member of the Society as well as being on the committee for many years. He was responsible for sending out the Hortulanus and kept a very close eye on the running of the Society. Sincere condolences to Margaret and the rest of the family. A card has been sent from the Society. Cheri Robinson has been in hospital recently and we send her our best wishes and hope she is now well on the way to recovery. Best wishes also go to Joan Logue who recently broke her arm. Hearty congratulations go to Jim Sweeting who celebrated his 90th birthday in May. Jim is a life member and twice held the position of President.

A warm welcome from the committee and all members to Jocelyn Hackett and Jenny Watsford who recently joined the Society.

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.

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 Turrumurra - phone 9144 4826.

GARDEN TABLE

The garden table had some interesting plants on offer at very good prices. There were a variety of begonias, one of them B. Green Goddess, a blue ginger and a bag of Cyrtanthus (Ifafa) bulbs waiting for someone to plant them.

There were a number of other plants as well, so go along and see what is on offer. You don't have to buy but it is a cheap way to stock up your garden with good plants.

SHOW BENCH

All classes of camellias were displaying well and the roses put on a last show before winter. The Show Bench had several fine examples of salvia. These are not hard to grow and very rewarding. The Vegie section had some nice chokos and a good sized pumpkin. Unfortunately there were few exhibits in the Decorative and Photo sections this month. Exhibitors are reminded to put the name of the exhibit (if known) on the label as well as their own name.

RAFFLE

As usual we had an excellent collection of prizes. Clerodendrum nutans 'Nodding Cleo' was purchased from Elegant Outdoors by your Society. The schlumbergera and the two bottles of weedkiller were donated by Ray Kench. Thank you Ray. The Fothergill seeds and the Salvia leucantha came from our old friend, Anonymous. The \$20.00 gift voucher came from Bunnings. All good prizes, so step right up and give the man by the door \$2.00 for 3 tickets and you never know your luck.

MAIN SPEAKER Our main speaker was Robin Bible who spoke on growing and propagating pelargoniums and geraniums. Robin has been growing these for over 40 years and has a 4 acre nursery in North Richmond where she grows a wide range. Robin first explained that one way to tell the difference between pelargoniums and geraniums was by their seeds. Geraniums have seedpods with curls that act like a catapult and fling the seeds away from the parent plant. Pelargonium seed pods have a feathered end that enables them to float away to find another spot to grow.



Terms such as zonal, regal and ivy are often used to describe pelargoniums. Zonal are those that have a zone of colour through the middle of their leaves. Regal are a strong upright bushy type, generally flowering abundantly. Ivy have a trailing habit as their name suggests. Geraniums are sometimes referred as hardy geraniums or cranesbill.

Both pelargoniums and geraniums can take a fair bit of heat from the sun but they can be easily damaged by frost. If this is expected move your potted plants close to a brick wall or undercover to protect them. Heat can cause flowers to fade and cold can change the leaf colour. Both types have a wide range of flower colour and size and there would be a geranium or pelargonium for most situations. Geraniums can provide good ground cover or act as border plants. They need deep, well drained soil. The ivy pelargonium is excellent in containers or baskets while the taller varieties can be used as standards or up against a fence. They are not self attaching so will need some form of loose tie.

The latest time to prune is the end of January or beginning of February. Always use very sharp tools, a single edge razor or sharp knife on soft stems and sharp secateurs on the harder, mature stems. Cuts can be sealed with methylated spirits. Prune to an outward facing bud to encourage outward branching. Zonals can be cut back quite hard, to four or five nodes above ground level. Regals should be progressively pruned, one third at a time. Cut one third of the plant back into the reddish-brown wood, between the mature brown wood and the green stems. Wait a couple of weeks until the stems start to shoot before doing the next third. Similarly for the last third. Pruning the whole plant at once risks shock and the loss of the plant. This is particularly important for plants 3 or more years old.

The best time to take cuttings is autumn, when the summer humidity has gone and before the cold weather arrives. Tip cuttings usually consist of the top 10cm of the stem and may contain 3 or 4 nodes. Remove all but the last couple of leaves. A stem cutting can be taken from below where the tip cutting was taken down to just below a node. To ensure you put a stem cutting in the right way up, do a horizontal cut at the base and a slanting one at the top. Seal the ends with methylated spirits. They can be struck in many mediums, wet coarse river sand is an easy one.

Both pelargoniums and geraniums are subject to pests and diseases. Caterpillars can be controlled with Dipel. Fungi can be treated with Mancozeb Plus. Rust-affected leaves should be removed and the plant sprayed with wetttable sulphur. At the end of her talk Robin had lots of plants for sale that were eagerly snapped up by members.

Main Speaker June: Dr Peter Weston will speak on plant hunting and collecting in the Eastern Cape of South Africa.



MEMBER SPEAKER

Rosemary Baldwin presented a well illustrated talk on how her much loved garden has grown over the last 50 years. Starting with a just finished house and a concrete mixer for laying a driveway, we watched the garden grow from almost nothing to a beautiful, mature garden today where a fully grown Gingko tree is putting on its autumn colours, whilst nearby a large star jasmine grows beside two fine bougainvillea. Begonias grow alongside a helichrysum hedge. Hanging baskets hang from wherever there is a spot. A contrived web of fishing line protects them from the possums. A 2 metre long, 40 year old hoyia is still regularly producing flowers. A rockery has been built under-

neath a large magnolia tree, while in a shady spot an enormous staghorn happily thrives. This is how a well looked after and much loved garden can reward you

Member Speaker June: Ray Kench will give a Power Point presentation of the Society's trip to the Central Coast in April.

FEATURE PLANT: Fuchsia

The discovery of South America in the 15th century and its colonisation by the Portuguese and Spanish navigators was inevitably followed by the arrival of missionaries and led to the discovery of many new plants and their introduction to European horticulture. It was one of these missionaries, Father Plumier, who discovered the fuchsia. He named it after a German botanist, Dr Charles Fuchs, whose writings he had studied. General cultivation of fuchsia



did not take off till the late 17th century when a British nurseryman, James Lee, began cultivating and selling them at very high prices. This was the era of the great estates and most had large glass houses. It became a status symbol to have a collection of rare plants and amongst these were fuchsia. The great estates gradually declined until WW1 virtually killed the international trade in exotic plants, including fuchsia. Interest in fuchsia gradually picked up after WW1 and in 1929 the American Fuchsia Society was formed. With the advent of WW2 fuchsia again declined, but interest picked up again after the war. British growers concentrated on cultivating hardy bush type fuchsia that stood up to the harsh British winters while the American growers leant more towards the flamboyant basket varieties with their large blooms.

Buying fuchsia: Look for healthy evergreen leaves right down to soil level. Don't buy plants that are shedding yellow leaves as this could indicate that the plant has had insufficient light to maintain its canopy, poor air circulation or that the plant has been left to dry out.

Fuchsia need good air circulation, shade and sufficient water. They do not like hot moist conditions or air conditioners. To keep a fuchsia happy during the hot weather they should be grown where they are sheltered from hot winds such as in front of an appropriate facing paling fence. If necessary keep some shade cloth handy for very hot days. Always watch the water and check the soil moisture regularly. Most fuchsia will stand up to 40°C provided the night is cool. However, if the night is hot you will have a very unhappy plant.

In areas where the temperature varies over a wide range, fuchsia should be grown as an annual and enjoyed while it is in flower. Most fuchsia will adapt to reduced light conditions, even so, sufficient light of the right kind is also necessary. Two or three days inside the house is the limit, then it should go outside again.

Taking cuttings: Cuttings can be taken in the cool of the day in autumn (March/April) if a shade house is available, otherwise leave it till spring. Tip cuttings are the best, so select relatively new growth with green stems not brown. A green stem points to a good sap flow. Fat healthy cuttings will strike readily. The stem length between leaves should be short as this will produce a short sturdy plant with leaves down to ground level. The potting mix should be 2/3 coarse sand and 1/3 peat to hold water. Make sure the drainage holes are clear. After a few weeks the cutting's end will callous over and roots will have formed. Once the roots have formed, the cutting can be carefully lifted and moved to its potting-on place. Plants raised in a shade house should be eased out into the brighter outdoors gradually otherwise the leaves will burn. **Watering:** Keep the soil just damp not wet. **Pests and Problems:** Flower drop is usually caused by not enough light or rapid drying out. Leaf drop can be caused by not enough light, drying out, or over watering. It often happens when the weather gets too hot. Scorch marks are often caused by improper use of chemical sprays. Check the instructions. Leaves turning red is usually a reaction to cold weather. Rusty red round patches is usually a fungal attack by one of the rusts. Rust is common in warm humid weather. Remove the affected leaves and spray with a good fungicide. If late in the flowering season, prune the plant. Dusty red on the underside of the leaf is Red Spider or Two-spotted mite. Prune the plant. Cuttings dying can be caused by too much water or grey mould. Remove all damaged plant material and spray with a good fungicide.

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



► Bindii are starting to appear in the lawn and though at the moment the burrs have not appeared they will be along for sure. The next time you are walking around your lawn with the sun on your back take a hand weeding fork along with you and keep an eye out for patches of flat bright green weeds in your lawn. Bindii grow very close to the

ground and usually the lawn mower will pass over it without cutting it. As the soil is nice and damp at this time of the year it should be easy to winkle out in one piece. By catching it early, the weed will be relatively small and the gap left in your lawn will soon be covered with grass. Should you decide to go down the chemical weedicide track, the weedicide used in Bindii killers is Bromoxynil. It is a very powerful chemical and it should be treated with the utmost respect so make sure you use non-porous gloves, eye protection and long sleeves.

► If you have potted Daphne they will be soon coming into bloom. It is time to move the pots out to where they will get the morning sun during the coming cold weather. They will reward you with more flowers and that lovely perfume.

► It is time to move any of your potted indoor plants away from the general vicinity of heaters. Apart from the heat, the dry air will dry out the soil in your pots. Find a well lit place near a window that will stay cool but not freezing.

► Cyclamen love the cold so it is time to find a spot on a window sill or better still move them right outside and they will reward you with a lot of beautiful flowers. Keep the soil just damp not wet.

► Let potted succulents and cacti dry out as they will go to sleep over winter. Cold wet soil will rot their roots. Keep an eye on outside potted cacti and succulents, they can be attacked by snails and slugs as the cold does not seem to worry these pests.

- ▶ Now that deciduous trees have finished dropping their leaves it is time to check your gutters and leaf traps to make sure they are clean. Water tank owners should have a look in the inlet filter of the tank. Leaves left in the filter will gradually disintegrate into particles that pass through the filter into the tank. This is not good so keep the filter clean. In the long term accumulated debris in your tank may make the water lean to the acid side of its pH.
- ▶ One for the grape growers - it is time to prune your grape vines. By now all of the leaves will have fallen off and the vines have gone dormant for the winter. Clean up the dead leaves and prunings, if left on the ground they will only provide a winter home for all sorts of pests and diseases. Put them in the compost heap, come spring they will all be nicely composted and ready for use. After pruning when everything is nice and open, spray the grape vine with wettable sulphur. This will take care of any fungi or pest that may attack your grape vine during the winter.
- ▶ Have a check of your compost heap, has it gone dry? If it has then it is not working. Water it and turn it over so that it is nice and damp but not soggy. While you are about it, water in a couple of watering cans of water that has had half a teacup of molasses mixed into it. Hot water will dissolve the molasses quicker. This mixture will increase the rate of decomposition and you will have a nice lot of compost ready for spring plantings.



Question? I would like to plant a couple of scented roses in my front garden, could you suggest a couple of well tried and proven roses that would be readily available in my local garden centre?

Answer: The following three roses have stood the test of time and popularity and would certainly be available from your local garden centre. **Mr Lincoln:** This rose grows to

about 1.8 metres. It is a large, dark red, richly scented hybrid tea rose with long stems so if you wish to cut some flowers for indoors you can. **Double Delight:** Growing to about 1.5 metres, it has large, high centred, creamy flowers with red edges. It has a strong spicy scent. **Just Joey:** This rose grows to about 1.3 metres and has strongly perfumed, double flowers that are apricot in colour. Unlike some roses, these will all repeat flower in the same season.

Question? Is it okay to add a general purpose high nitrogen fertiliser to a garden bed after I have already added builders lime?

Answer : No! Do not add a high nitrogen fertiliser to a bed that has just had slaked or builders lime added to it. The lime and the fertiliser will try to neutralise each other and you finish up worse off than when you started. The builders lime will change the pH of the soil much quicker than dolomite or agricultural lime whereas gypsum, another form of calcium used to break up clay, will not alter the pH of the soil. The old rule of thumb was that you lime in autumn and fertilise in the spring. Don't forget to water the lime in well.

Question? I have access to a lot of pigeon droppings. Can I use them as a fertiliser?

Answer: Pigeon droppings are like chicken poo in that they are high in nitrogen and like fresh chicken poo should be set aside and left to rot for 5-6 months after which they will make an excellent fertiliser. If used even relatively fresh, they will burn the roots of your plants.

Question? Last year my silver beet had very large white middle ribs and very little green foliage so they were not much use as a vegetables. How can I stop this happening again this year?

Answer: These are the signs of a potassium deficiency in the soil. Scatter about 4 dessert spoonfuls of sulphate of potash over each square metre of garden bed that you intend to use this year and water in well.

Question? We have a camellia hedge that has not been pruned for the last few years and now it is getting thin and starting to topple over at the top. When can I prune it?

Answer: Hedges, no matter what they are, should be pruned little and often. If they have become tall and skinny and started to topple over, they will be shading the lower part of the bush and it will not flower very well. Clipping hedges regularly will make them bushier. You should cut the hedge back by about one third. Clipping back now will cost you some flowers, but in the long run you will have a much healthier plant with more flowers. Don't forget to do the ends of the hedge. Next year, prune as soon as the bush has finished flowering, with another light prune in the late spring or early summer.



Weeds, Seeds and
Leaves

Regards
Hugh