

HORTULANUS

Official Publication of Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc.
OCTOBER 2017



President: Doreen Clark, 19 Parkwood Grove, Pymble 2073 (9498 1677)
Secretary: Christine Rethers, 1 Wolsten Ave, Turrumurra 2074 (9449 6245)
Treasurer: Robyn Brown (0408 295 601)

Website: www.khsgardenclub.org.au

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

COMING EVENTS

TRADING TABLE at the
October meeting (see below
for further details)

- Sept 30-Oct. 1 Clivia Show, Thornleigh Community Centre, Phyllis Ave (next to Bunnings)
- Sept 30-Oct 8 Leura Garden Festival. Open from 9.30 am to 4.30 pm. Enq. 0431 095 279
- Oct 3 OCTOBER MEETING: Mark Massey—Heirloom Fruit and Vegetables
- Oct 8 Maureene & Keith Smith's Plant Sale, 45 Parklands Ave, Lane Cove 10-3pm
- Oct 8 Members' Open Gardens Ramble (see below)
- Oct 12-15 Berry Gardens Festival Enq. www.berrygardens.org.au
- Oct 20-22 Galston Open Gardens 9.30-4.30pm 8 gardens for \$20 Enq. 9652 2394
- Oct 21/22 Bundanoon Garden Ramble, (8 gardens) Enq. www.bundanoongardenramble.org.au
- Oct 27-30 KHS Trip to the Bathurst Spring Spectacular (see below)
- Nov 4 African Violet & Gesneriad Show, Burwood RSL, 9 Shaftesbury Rd, Burwood

The Annual General Meeting of the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society was held at the St Ives Community Hall on 5 September 2017. The Minutes of the previous AGM, which were sent with the September newsletter, were approved. The Treasurer's Annual Report was also sent with September newsletter. The President advised that the Society was in a good financial position for the coming year and the Treasurer's Report was then accepted. Christine Rethers was reappointed as Public Officer. The President thanked the committee and thanked retiring committee member Sue Hill and retiring Treasurer, Peter Fisher. Peter Fisher offered to remain on the Committee. The Committee then stood down. Ray Kench took the chair and thanked the President who then stood down. He then called for nominations for the President's position. Doreen Clark was nominated and elected unopposed. The President resumed the chair and called for nominations for Officers and Committee. The remaining Committee offered themselves for re-election. A nomination was received for Robyn Brown to join the committee. The following were elected for 2017-18: Officers: President - Doreen Clark, Vice President - Ted Shaw, Secretary and Public Officer - Christine Rethers, Treasurer - Robyn Brown. Committee Members: Peter Fisher, Helen Gilkes, Penny Whipp and Hugh Myers.

Hi

It was a clear cold night for our Annual General Meeting with a chilly wind coming around the corner of the building. 68 well rugged up members came to enjoy themselves with their friends and hear how well their Society has done over the past 12 months.



After the AGM the President asked Hugh Myers to step forward. She then awarded him and his wife Gloria (who was not able to be present due to illness) the Ann Williams Clark Medallion for Outstanding Service to the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society. This medallion is given by the Garden Clubs of Australia to affiliated clubs so that they may recognise the many years of outstanding service a member has given to a club. Hugh and Gloria have been members for over 25 years and during this time both have made a huge contribution to the smooth running of club and of meetings in particular. A large bunch of flowers was also presented.

MEMBER NEWS

Members' Open Garden Ramble—Sunday, 8 October

The following members have kindly offered to open their gardens for us to visit. The gardens should be visited in the order indicated, starting at 1.30 pm:

1. Jan and Ken Heydon, 27A Pymble Avenue, Pymble
2. Nita and Penny Whipp, 51 Yarrarra Road, Pymble
3. Doreen Clark, 19 Parkwood Grove, Pymble

All three gardens are within fairly close. Please bring a plate for afternoon tea which will be held in the last garden. (not before 3pm).

Christmas Dinner—Friday, 24 November 2017 at the Terrey Hills Golf and Country Club, 116 Booralie Road, Terrey Hills, commencing at 6.30 pm. Cost—\$60 per person. This will be a very pleasant evening with fine food and good company. There will be drinks served on arrival followed by a two course dinner with wine included. Please let Penny Whipp know (9144 5101) if you would like to make up a table (8 people). A booking form is included with this newsletter.

Garden Clubs of Australia—2018 Calendar: The 2018 calendar is now available so if you would like to order one (or more), please let Penny Whipp know at the next meeting or by phoning her on 9144 5101. The cost is \$10 and Penny will be putting in our club order. For those who ordered at the last meeting, Penny hopes they will be ready to pick up at the October meeting. The calendar will be at the October meeting to view. If you want to order, please bring your money in an envelope with your name on it and give it to Penny at the meeting.

OUTINGS

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 cost of this trip is \$775 with a single supplement of \$165. Accommodation will be in a four-star motel. A booking form is included with this newsletter.

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.

Members send their best wishes to Cristina Scott who is home again after a short spell in hospital. We all hope she makes a good recovery and will be back at meetings again soon.

Maureene and Keith Smith's Huge Plant Sale—Sunday, 8 October, 10am-3pm at 45 Parkland Avenue, Lane Cove North. Raising funds for the National Breast Cancer Foundation. Not to be missed!

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TRADING TABLE

The Trading Table will be operating at the October meeting. Members may bring in plants to sell and 10% of the proceeds will go to the Society, with the rest to the member. Traders are reminded of the following requirements: only plants can be sold, all items should be in first class condition, pots should be clean with no soil, roots or stains on the outside of the pot. The plant must be disease-and insect-free with no damaged or dead leaves. Any weeds should be removed. The plant should be named and a paddle pop stick showing the owner's initials, the plant number and the price should be put in each pot. Paddle pop sticks will be available at the table. A book-keeping form, also available at the table, must be filled in. As the wonderful team who run the Garden Table will be looking after the Trading Table, **there will be no Garden Table for the October meeting only.** Plants will be checked in on arrival at a table outside the hall and the paper work will be signed off. The form to be completed is available with this newsletter—print out a copy, fill it in and bring it with you when you bring in the plants that you want to sell.

SHOW BENCH

Spring has arrived a bit early this year with many plants now in full bloom. Camellias are just about finished with not many on the bench. Jonquils are doing very well and the native flowers were really beautiful. Native orchids have put on an excellent show. Native orchids can be found growing wild in many places in the local bushland. The basket of violas was magnificent. In the Vegie section, the rhubarb competition looks like it has started again and there were some interesting exhibits in the 'Two to Tango' class in the Decorative section.

GARDEN TABLE

It was a full house on the Garden Table with lots of goodies on offer, all going cheap. A nice Clivea stood alongside a Billbergia bromeliad. Also on offer were Buddlea and Rhipsalis 'Drunkards Dream' cuttings. These get their name from the bottle-shaped foliage. A big box of Hippeastrum bulbs attracted attention as did the strangely-shaped Gloriosa lily tubers. These are just a few of what was on offer so why not go along and have a look. You don't have to buy but you might just find what you are looking for and it all helps your Society.

RAFFLE

There were some interesting prizes on offer to ticket buyers. The fine lavender 'Avonview' was purchased by your Society from Elegant Gardens Nursery. The Bromeliad book with all you need to know about Bromeliads was donated by Doreen Clark, thank you Doreen. The Lawn Repair Kit and a Buffalo Specific Spray-on Weed Killer were donated by Anonymous. These are all good prizes but you have to have a ticket from the man just inside the door and \$2 will get you 3 tickets so why not give it ago. All money goes to help your Society.

MAIN SPEAKER



Our main speaker was Sonia Cameron from Planters Patch Nursery. Sonia gave a well-illustrated and informative talk on the operation of Planters Patch Nursery and a brief but interesting insight as to how a wholesale nursery operates. Planters Patch is a modern on-line mail order nursery based in Arcadia NSW. The nursery specialises in high grade, new and old favourite perennials in 100mm pots. The plant orders are delivered in specially designed cartons throughout NSW, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. Covering 5 acres, the nursery has a huge hot house where young pot plants can be grown under controlled conditions using the latest techniques such as mechanical potting machines. Once the plants are established, they are moved outside into the open. Carefully located solar powered instruments report back to the office the local air temperature, humidity and moisture in the soil. This enables frosts and dry soil to be anticipated and the necessary steps to be taken to prevent them damaging the young plants. Plant tissue, from new cultivars being

grown overseas, are imported and grown under controlled conditions indoors and once established, are moved on down the production chain. This enables the nursery to keep abreast of current trends overseas. We were also shown plant trials covering acres of new flowering plants in Victoria. These trials are where plant breeders bring their new plants for inspection by wholesale nurseries. Here all the characteristics of the plant are listed on labels together with the breeder's name. If a wholesaler takes a plant then a royalty is payable to the breeder. Sonia brought a large quantity of small potted plants for sale to our members. Many of these plants were not readily available in retail nurseries and were happily purchased by members.

Main Speaker October: Mark Massey will speak on Heirloom Fruit and Vegetables—he has just attended a conference on this in America so his talk should be very interesting.

MEMBER SPEAKER: Due to the AGM there was no Member Speaker.

Member Speaker—October: The new owner of Parkers Nursery in Turrumurra, Honeysuckle Nursery, will speak on plans for his latest Honeysuckle Nursery. Honeysuckle Nurseries are a large retail nursery company with two other nurseries around Sydney suburbs.

GROWING VEGETABLE—GETTING STARTED

When setting up to grow vegetables, first decide where the bed is going to be. It should be in a well drained, sunny position. If it is in an elevated position this is so much the better for drainage. If not elevated, dig in enough soil so the bed is at least 10cm above the ground. Next check the pH of the soil. Testing kits are readily available at your garden centre. If you do this at the beginning, you can save yourself a lot of trouble later on. For a slightly acidic or neutral soil, pH 6.5 to 7 is what you are looking for. This is the point where most of the minerals in the soil are readily available to be taken up by your vegetables. If the soil is too acid it can be improved by raking in garden lime or dolomite at the rate of a handful per square metre. Don't use builders lime it will burn your plants. Also don't add either of these with Dynamic Lifter as they will react together and again burn your plants. Alkaline soil can be improved by watering in iron chelates at the manufacturer's recommended rate or raking in a handful of sulphur per square metre. Poor soil is always improved by the addition of lots of compost or well rotted cow manure. Whatever you use, wait for 2 weeks before planting the bed. If you are using pots or planter boxes for your vegetables, buy a potting mix that meets the Australian Standard, look for the red stripes on the bag. Cheap potting mix is generally too acidic for vegetables.

Decide whether you are going to use seeds or seedlings. Seeds are cheaper, but seedlings produce quicker results. Seeds can be sown directly in the ground or in trays until they become established as young seedlings, ready to be planted out. An ideal seed bed will be raised about 10cm and of finely-textured soil with all the stones and rubbish removed. It should have a level surface gently firmed down. You can create a furrow for your seeds by gently pressing down on a rake handle. Set the rows far enough apart so that you can get at any weeds that appear. Small seeds, such as lettuce, can be mixed with fine sand. This makes them easier to sow evenly. Peas and beans are probably the easiest to grow, but will benefit from soaking overnight before sowing. Put a pinch of Epsom salts in the water. Once they shoot they will need something to climb on. Brassicas, cabbage, Asian greens, radish are easily grown from seed. Large flat seeds like pumpkin, zucchini and cucumber should be sown on their sides. Root crops like carrot and beetroot should always be grown where they are to come to maturity as their delicate roots are easily damaged. When planting tomato or sweet corn seeds plant them in twos and as they grow get rid of the weaker plant. Sweet corn seed are sometimes coated with pesticide. Check the label and wear gloves. Watering is important, just damp is the way to go. To keep the soil moist, in windy or dry conditions, a thin layer of sugar cane mulch will help. Overcrowding causes stunted growth, so as your seedlings develop thin out when necessary.

If buying seedlings, don't buy the tallest plants, rather buy those that are large enough to handle, but not too big. These will generally establish more easily and grow faster. They are also less susceptible to transplant shock. Don't pull the seedlings out of the punnet, flex the sides of the punnet and they will drop out. To separate thickly sown seedlings, soak the punnet in water for 5 minutes. Give your seedlings a good start by planting in the cool of the morning on an overcast day. Either dip the seedling in seaweed solution before planting or water in with seaweed solution after to alleviate transplant shock. Keep the soil damp, but not wet. Normally seedlings are planted at the same depth as they were in the punnet. An exception is tomatoes. Plant these so that the bottom leaves lie on the ground. The part of the stem that is underground will form roots and give you a stronger plant. Sweet corn should be planted in a block, fairly close together so that when the wind blows they pollinate each other and improve your yield. They are also thirsty plants so keep the water up to them.

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



► Over winter most hedges go to sleep and require very little maintenance, but with the coming of spring and things starting to warm up, your hedge will wake up and start to put on new growth. When you come to tidying it up, prune the foliage so that the top section is a little further back than the bottom section. This will ensure that

the bottom section will get plenty of sunlight and the foliage will grow right down to the ground. If do this you won't be left with a bare section at the bottom.

► By now your winter flowering bulbs will have finished flowering and the foliage will have died back. When the foliage is completely dry cut the foliage off down near ground level and put it into the compost heap. Scatter some slow release bulb food over the bed and water in well. This will help replace the nutrients that were used up to give you that lovely show of flowers a month or so ago. Keep an eye on the bed in the coming months for weeds. It is a bare fertilised bed, just what weeds love.

► How did your lawn go over the winter? It should be starting to put on growth now so it is time to take a walk around and have a close look at it. Check for dead or bare spots, also look for those flat weeds that grow only a centimetre or so high but can spread out over quite large areas. They are usually easy to winkle out. If you find dead patches of grass, work them over with a rake as these are ideal places for weeds to take hold. Scatter some grass seed and fertiliser over the area and gently work a shallow layer of soil back over the seeds. Keep the area damp until the seeds germinate and start to put on some growth.

► Many of us have a very nice Crepe Myrtle growing in the yard. If so, it is time to take a look around the base of the trunk for sucker shoots. If you find any, get rid of them either by pulling them off or cutting them off with a pair of secateurs.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Question? I am setting up a native garden and would like to have some Flannel Flowers. Are they hard to grow?

Answer: Flannel Flowers are not particularly hard to grow but certain things should be born in mind such as the stems are a bit on the brittle side and the plants are shallow rooted. They are quite sensitive to root disturbance when transplanting into the ground so be careful. You will need a well-drained sunny or lightly shaded place that is out of the wind so the stems don't get broken. While they are shallow rooted, they can withstand long periods of warm dry weather. A sign that they are in need of water urgently is curling leaves. When watering is needed, don't wet the leaves or you could have fungal problems.



Question? Our Scarlet Runner beans produce lots of flowers, but very few beans. They get watered regularly and the plants look healthy enough, so what are we doing wrong?

Answer: Very likely it is the warmer Sydney climate. Scarlet Runners prefer a colder climate to produce a good crop of beans. Try spraying them with a bucket full of ice water late in the evening. This is an old trick and will convince your beans they are in a cold climate so hopefully they will go ahead and produce beans.

Regards
 Hugh

'Flowers from the Bush'