

# HORTULANUS

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

President: Evelyn Mason, 7 Deakin Place, East Killara (0412 812 824)  
Secretary and Editor: Christine Rethers, 1 Wolsten Ave, Turramurra 2074 (9449 6245)  
Treasurer: Robyn Brown (0408 295 601)

Website: [www.khsgardenclub.org.au](http://www.khsgardenclub.org.au) Email: [khs.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:khs.secretary@gmail.com)



## SEPTEMBER 2024

### COMING EVENTS

- Until 7 Oct.** Boongala Native Garden & Nursery, 76 Pitt Town Rd, Kenthurst. Fri. - Mon. 10am-4pm  
**Sept. 7/8** Spring Clivia Show and Sales, Phyllis Ave, Thornleigh Sat. 9am-4pm, Sun. 9am- 3pm  
Entry: \$5
- Sept. 17** KHS Meeting and AGM - Speaker: Sandra Marker, her topic is Ikebana  
**Sept. 21/22** Plant Lovers Fair, Kariong. Sat. 8-4pm, Sun. 9-3pm. Further information:  
<https://www.plantloversfair.com.au/>
- Sept. 28/29** Bromeliad Society Spring Show and Sale, Federation Pavilion, Castle Hill Showground,  
Showground Road, Castle Hill. Sat. 9am-4pm, Sun. 10am-3pm.
- Oct. 1** KHS Meeting and Trading Table  
**Oct. 16** KHS Outing to Little Hartley (see below)

### President's Report

What a wonderful and inspiring selection of presenters we have had this past year; both member speakers and guest presenters. We welcomed back Dr John Siemon, Director of Horticulture & Living Collections, talking this time about the Botanic Gardens Living Collections and the anticipated issues resulting from climate change.

In addition, we were inspired by a varied selection of specialists covering topics from frogs to native bees, from orchids to camellia growing, from native plant propagation to bush fire prevention. A very big thank you to all the presenters who gave so generously of their time and knowledge.

Our outings took us on a one day trip to the beautiful Rydal Daffodil Festival, an overnight tour of the beautiful Berry Gardens Festival and a self-drive trip to Boongala Native Garden, Kenthurst, where we strolled through acres of native rainforest vegetation lovingly planted by the current owners of the site.

A garden stroll through Christine & Theo Rethers', Smila Smithers' and Alison Wood's gardens was topped off by a plant sale which weakened even the hardest 'no more plants, please' gardener!

Our wonderful members excelled themselves volunteering for the benefit of the entire society. A special thanks goes to all the volunteers and also the committee who meet regularly and strive to bring knowledge, friendship and joy to all our members.

New members joined throughout the year and we were delighted to welcome a number of visitors who came with family and friends. New members are always welcome, so please encourage others to come along and join us.

*Evelyn Mason, President.*

### MEMBER NEWS

It was another cool evening for our August meeting but despite this, 52 members and visitors ventured out to enjoy the activities. We were very pleased to find that our hall was at a very comfortable temperature throughout the evening.

**You will see from the above AGM notice that our September meeting is being held two weeks later than usual on Tuesday, 17 September. This is because the Council elections are being held at that time and the hall will be used for that purpose for the first two week in September.**

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We were saddened to hear that one of our long-time members, Laurie Logue, died recently at the grand age of 98. Laurie joined the Society in 1996 and he and his wife Joan, together with Jim and Betty Sweeting, organised the Society's trips and outings for many years. He was made a Life Member in 2010. Condolences were sent to the family and the Society was represented at his funeral.

We are looking for volunteers to help sell raffle tickets. Please let Robyn Brown know at the September meeting or phone her on 0408 295 601 if you would be able to help.

**Membership subscriptions were due on 1st July 2024** - \$25 for a single and \$35 for a double. Please complete the attached renewal form and return it with your payment (cash, cheque or direct debit) in an envelope with your name on it to Helen Gilkes at the next meeting or post it to Mrs Robyn Brown, P O Box 508, Forestville 2087. Please take a moment to fill in the subscription form as it is needed to check that we have your details correctly recorded.

**Please note that this will be your last Hortulanus if we do not receive your renewal. If you are not sure if you have paid, please send an email to our Membership Secretary, Robyn Brown, [medway2@bigpond.net.au](mailto:medway2@bigpond.net.au).**

## OUTINGS

The next outing of the year is to three lovely gardens at Little Hartley on Wednesday, 16th October 2024. The outing will include morning tea, lunch at one of the gardens and all garden entries and the cost will be \$130. A booking form is included with this newsletter. Helen Gilkes will be taking bookings at the September meeting or you can send her your booking form by mail. You can also book by phoning Helen on 9144 4826. Bookings close on Friday, 27 September 2024. These are three gardens that will be included in the Little Hartley Garden Festival the following weekend and we have been fortunate enough to secure our own private viewing just ahead of the weekend crowds.



A glimpse of the garden at Highfields

Plans are progressing well for the Society's four-day outing to the high country of North-east Victoria from 29th April to 2nd May 2025. We will be staying for two nights in Beechworth and one night in Tumut. If this year is anything to go by, the autumn colour in this area should be spectacular. We will keep you up-to-date and hope to have a booking form available in time for the October meeting.

## RAFFLE

There were three lovely native plants provided by the Society on the raffle table. The other raffle prizes were donated by members and included a lovely book on Camelias—thank you to all those anonymous members who bring along some very nice prizes.

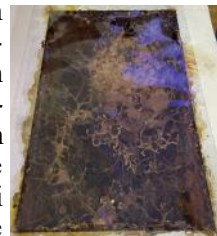
## GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table had a number of interesting items on offer including a basket full of *Hippeastrum* bulbs and some pots of interesting ground covers. Don't forget to check out the Garden Table each month for some real bargains.

## GUEST SPEAKER AUGUST



Our guest speaker was Allyson Apte, a local apiarist with a wide interest in and knowledge of the Australian native bees living in our local area. She pointed out first some interesting facts about bees: 90% of plants need bees for pollination; there are 25,000 different species world-wide; and 2,000 of these live in Australia, not all of which have been scientifically catalogued as yet. There are two distinct types of bees - solitary and social. Solitary bees tend to live in holes in the ground or in timber and these types comprise the majority of Australian bees. Social bees, on the other hand, live in colonies mostly in hollows in trees. A small number of bees are stingless, including the *Tetragonula carbonaria* bees that many people in our local area keep in specially-constructed hives in their gardens. Allyson brought in a hive of these bees with a Perspex lid so that we could see the bees working inside. Hives of the *Tetragonula carbonaria* bees can be obtained from Ku-ring-gai Council if you contact them and put your name on the waiting list. Once you have your hive, the council volunteers will come regularly to monitor your hive and split it if it is overcrowded. The overflow bees will then be put in a new hive where they soon choose a new queen bee and are then ready to go to a new recipient.



A view looking down into the hive

Among the solitary bees that we see in our local area are the Blue-banded bees (*Amegilla cingulata*). These are great pollinators and use buzz pollination. Research is going on to see if they can be used in commercial tomato, eggplant and kiwi fruit growing establishments. Other bees that will be familiar to many in our area are the Teddy bear bees (*Amegilla bombiformis*) and the Leaf-cutter bees (Genus *Megachile*). These bees will make their home in holes in the ground or in dead tree branches and will often make use of a 'bee hotel' if you put one in your garden. Bee hotels can be bought or homemade and instructions of how to do this are available on the Internet. It is not hard to do and worth the effort. Just put it in a quiet shady place, preferably up off the ground.

Natural predators of native bees include spiders, ants, wasps, mites, the robber fly and assassin bugs. However, the *Tetragonula carbonaria* is not affected by the Varroa mite which is causing so much havoc among the European bee population.

Allyson finished by showing us a range of bee products from her hives in Turramurra that were available to purchase. She urged us to make sure our gardens are bee-friendly by growing plenty of flowering plants, including vegetables. She stressed that our very future is linked to bees!



Blue banded bee



Teddy bear bee



Leaf-cutting bee



Moisturisers, beeswax and candles

**Main Speaker September:** This will be Sandra Marker who will speak about and demonstrate the art of Ikebana. She will donate one of her arrangements as a raffle prize.

## MEMBER SPEAKER JULY

Ted Shaw gave a quick presentation on the East Coast portion of the trip that he and Nancy took to the US and Canada last year. They had 3 days in New York before starting a 14-day coach tour that took them to Boston then into Canada to Quebec, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Niagara Falls, then back into the US to Lancaster, Washington DC and ending up back at New York. Highlights in New York included the World Trade Centre Memorial, the Statue of Liberty, and the Highline (a community garden on a disused elevated railway line). On their tour there were many highlights, the most memorable ones being Niagara Falls and sightseeing the famous historic sites in Washington DC.



New York Highline



World Trade Centre Memorial



The White House in Washington DC



Statue of Liberty

**Member speaker September:** We will not be having a member speaker this month because we are holding the Society's AGM.

## IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN SEPTEMBER by Christine Rethers

It is time now for our spring and summer vegetables. Pull out your winter vegetables as they finish up. These should go into your compost as they will provide excellent nutrients in due course when they have broken down to put back on your vegie garden.

Your focus will now be on getting in all your summer vegetables and you have a lot to choose from. If you haven't got your own seedlings coming along, it is best now to visit your garden centre and make your selection. Do be careful though when selecting seedlings not to pick the really advanced ones. They are the ones that are really tall and the containers already have roots poking through. I have learnt through bitter experience that these advanced seedlings are often a great disappointment as they will tend to simply go straight to seed when you put them in your vegie patch.

Some summer vegies can still be grown from seed. Bean seeds (whether bush beans or climbing beans) can be put individually into a punnet, watered once only and left in a shady spot until they come through. If you water too often the bean seeds will rot. Leave them to grow on in the punnet until they are about 6-8cm high and then plant them in the vegie patch, making sure you have already put in a trellis for them to grow on (in the case of climbing beans). Cucumbers also require a frame to grow on and can be started off in a punnet and left until they have a little bit of height before putting them in the garden. There is still time to plant seeds of eggplant, capsicum, sweet corn and zucchini - the weather has warmed up enough for them to germinate successfully.

One of the Golden Rules of growing in a vegie patch is 'Crop Rotation'. This means that you should not plant the same vegetable in the same place in the garden year after year. It is advisable to use a different place for at least three years before you come back to the original spot. Some vegetables, especially potatoes, tomatoes and other members of the Solanaceae family are especially vulnerable to diseases such as bacterial wilt, mosaic virus, Fusarium wilt and Anthracnose. If you only plant these vulnerable plants once in three years in the same bed, the soil has





the chance to rid itself of this problem.

If you buy seedling tomatoes, the advice is to plant out the little plants into individual small pots and grow them on until they are about 10-12cm high. They can then be put into the garden close to the stake they are going to be trained up. Plant them deep as roots will develop along the stem, giving you a nice sturdy plant. Don't forget to tie them to the stake as they grow as they will need this support as they flower and subsequently carry fruit.

Tomatoes at 2-3 weeks, then potted on at 4-5 weeks.

## YOUR SEPTEMBER GARDEN by Maureen Smith

It's the first month of spring which hopefully brings lots of activity to your garden or balcony. As your winter flowering bulbs die off, don't forget to give them a good feed to set them up for a great flowering season next year. Some people use a reliable controlled release fertiliser but we just water in some blood and bone. Speaking of bulbs, the bluebells have all popped out of the ground ready to flower later in the month. We plant bluebells under our spring and summer flowering salvias and when we cut them back hard in the winter the bluebell foliage covers the unsightly stumps until they start sprouting again.

A way to extend your gardening space, be it on the ground or on a balcony, is to use epiphytic plants. Many of these wonderful plants grow so well in the air. You can attach them to a tree, a fence or a backing board, in fact anywhere their roots can grab hold. They will need a bit of support until the roots do their job; lots of people use old pantihose but budding tape is very effective and quite inconspicuous.

The choice of plants is wide and varied. If you like flowers, the schlumbergeras and the epiphyllums like 'Queen of the Night' are a great choice. They come in a wide variety of whites, pinks and reds and flower in winter and spring. If you put them in a deciduous tree, it will protect them from the hot summer sun but give them plenty of light when they need it. The latter is true of most epiphytes. Birds Nest ferns, Soft Cane dendrobium and *Dendrobium kingianum* orchids, bromeliads such as the billbergias, *Aechmea gamosepala* and other bromeliads, all do well growing up at height but do need protection from the summer sun.

Although autumn is probably the best time to divide plants, you can also do it in spring if the clump has finished flowering. Division every so often is essential as with too much competition for water and nutrients, plants lose their vigour and don't look their best.

Lavenders and daisies can be planted now ready to brighten up your summer garden. There are so many varieties of both at the local nurseries that it is hard to make a choice.

Happy gardening!



*Aechmea gamosepala*



Soft Cane Dendrobium



Marguerite



Italian lavender



Bluebells

### Some handy hints .....

Free Fertiliser Powerhouse: Unleash the Hidden Potential of Your Kitchen Scraps

#### Banana Peel Fertiliser:

Banana peels are rich in potassium, which is essential for fruit development.

To prepare the Banana Peel Fertiliser, chop the banana peels into small pieces. You can then bury the pieces in the soil near the base of the plant or soak them in water for a few days to create a liquid fertiliser.

Applying Banana Peel Fertiliser: Use the banana peel pieces directly in the soil or pour the banana-infused water around the plants.



**Don't waste your banana peel!**