

HORTULANUS

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

DECEMBER 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

- Dec 6 2018 **DECEMBER MEETING: Bathurst Spring Spectacular**
- Feb 6 **FEBRUARY MEETING: Speaker: Stewart McPherson—
'The World's Most Spectacular Plants and How to Grow Them'**
- Mar 6 **MARCH MEETING: The Trading Table will operate**

**DON'T FORGET OUR
CHRISTMAS SUPPER!**
Tea, coffee, soft drink supplied
PLEASE BRING A PLATE!



Christmas message from the President

Best wishes for the Christmas season and for a happy and successful New Year. KHS has had a busy year, with an excellent show bench and well attended trips to the Central Coast, Leura and the Bathurst Garden Festival. We have been very pleased to welcome many new members who bring fresh ideas and additional helping hands. Sincere thanks to the many members who have contributed to the smooth running of our monthly meetings and to the committee for their tireless efforts. At our AGM, we gave special recognition for outstanding service over many years, to Hugh and Gloria Myers. They were awarded the Ann Clark Williams Medal, sponsored by Garden Clubs of Australia.

Next year we celebrate the 85th anniversary of the founding of KHS. There will be a party at our meeting on 1st May, so keep the date free. I will need to find a very good joke!

Doreen Clark



Hi

It was a fine night for our December meeting with 82 members and friends coming to enjoy themselves with their friends and other members. The President opened the meeting, welcoming all members. She then presented the 2016-17 Show Bench Encouragement Award to Evelyn Mason.

MEMBER NEWS Note: The Society does not have a meeting in January—the next meeting is on Tuesday, 6 February, 2018.

Garden Clubs of Australia Magazine 'Our Gardens': This coming year's subscription is now due for renewal. The cost is \$15 a year for four issues and they will be posted to you directly. If you wish to subscribe or to renew your existing subscription, we need to have your payment by 10th December. Please have your money ready at meeting or post or drop in your subscription to Penny Whipp at 51 Yarrara Road, Pymble 2073. Don't miss out on this very good offer. At the meeting Penny will have a box on the front table where you can put your subscription money, in an envelope please, with your name on the outside.

OUTINGS

Your Outings Committee will be busy over the Christmas break planning the Society's outings for 2018. We would welcome any ideas or suggestions from you. Please contact Ted Shaw at a meeting or phone him on 9979 3930.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table was loaded with lots of good healthy plants going dirt cheap. Some of the plants on offer were a fine well-advanced cactus, Pomedora tomato plants (you won't find these in your garden centre), begonias, native orchids, basil, succulents and jars of homemade marmalade donated by Yvonne Wilson from her recent fund-raising Marmalade Competition. **There will be NO Garden Table at the December meeting.**

TRADING TABLE

The Trading Table will operate at the March meeting so get busy potting up some plants to bring along. Don't forget that you get to price your plants and to take home the proceeds when they sell (less a modest 10% commission for your Society).

SHOW BENCH

A big thank you to all those exhibitors who helped to fill the Show Bench during the year with so many beautiful flowers and plants. This month the hippeastrums have put on a fine show alongside the big single bloom hydrangea. Two late-flowering Cymbidium orchids were on show which was unusual as most usually flower in August through to October. The rhubarb growers are still putting on a good show. Succulents are doing well with a fine lot of exhibits. **Please note: There will be a Show Bench at the December Meeting.**

RAFFLE

We had a fine collection of 12 prizes for the raffle so the chances of winning a prize were very good but you have to have a ticket. The heliotrope was purchased by your Society from Elegant Outdoors Nursery. The other 11 prizes included books, a calendar, a Sinningia (a Gesneriad), a shopping bag from WA and an interesting succulent were donated by our generous members and friend Anonymous. Thank you, one and all. The raffle prizes are always worth winning and all money goes to your Society. \$2 will get you 3 tickets from the person just inside the door.

MAIN SPEAKER NOVEMBER



Our main speaker was Ron Armstrong who gave a very practical talk and demonstration on growing African Violets and Streptocarpus.

Some of his points: Streptocarpus or Cape Primrose as they are sometimes called are native to South Africa and Madagascar They make excellent indoor house plants and prefer slightly cooler conditions than African violets. Temperatures in the range 10 -20 degrees suit them just fine. If winter temperatures go below 10 degrees, find a warmer spot for them. Streptocarpus come in a wide range of colours and are easy to hybridise. At the moment Ron is trying to grow a yellow-flowering Streptocarpus, a goal of many hybridisers world-wide but not yet achieved.

Streptocarpus can have leaves up to 40cm long and 12cm wide but they will not flower until their root system has filled the pot. They will then flower for 8 months of the year. Once the plant has finished flowering, it goes into a rest period over winter. Don't let them dry out, keep them just damp. If you are keeping your Strep-

tocarpus outside put them in dappled light as they are not happy in the sun. They do not need a lot of fertiliser, just a little liquid fertiliser from time to time.

African Violets: African violets are easy to grow, colourful plants that do well indoors. They come from Tanzania where they are found in cool shady cloud forests. Coming in a multitude of colours they will flower most of the year and prefer a temperature range of 25- 30 degrees. They are best suited to growing indoors in our climate. Because they have a small root system, start with a small pot and work your way up to the larger 100mm pots as the plant grows. In a young plant you can remove flowers to encourage the root system to grow. African violet soil mixes are available from most good garden centres and they should have a N-P-K of around 4.6-1.6-3.6 and a pH of 6-6.2. African violets do not like a lot of fertiliser but specially formulated liquid African violet fertilisers are the way to go. Use very little often. You can mix it in your regular watering water. Do not use strong fertilisers like Dynamic Lifter (chook poo) on top of the soil as it is too strong and will burn your plants.

African violets are easy to propagate from single leaf cuttings. Take a strong-looking leaf from near the centre of the plant and put it into a small pot with a mixture of 50% Vermiculite and 50% Perlite. Keep it just damp and it will strike in 3 to 6 months.

Wick watering is a common method of watering African violets. The two things to remember if wick watering is to be used. The first is that the potting mix must be light not heavy. The second is that the wick must be made from ARTIFICIAL fibre not natural fibres like wool or cotton as they will rot. The wick is led from inside the pot through the drain hole and into a container of water. Both the wick and the soil in the pot should be damp right from the beginning as this enables the capillary action to start straight away.

The best containers to start with for the water supply are probably the small transparent plastic take-away food boxes. The lid provides a flat surface to stand your pot on. Punch a hole in the lid and drop the wick through into the water in container. You can expect flowers in the first or second year.

Ron had a whole bench full of Streptocarpus and African Violet plants for sale and these excellent plants were eagerly snapped up by members

Main Speaker December: Photos from the Society's trip to the Bathurst Spring Spectacular and Mayfield.

MEMBER SPEAKER

Ray Kench presented an excellent set of photos of the Members Garden Ramble held in early October. We saw three beautiful gardens that showed just what enthusiastic gardeners can do.

A MOMENT IN OUR HISTORY

Have you ever wondered what we were all doing in the garden club 70 years ago? A page from the Minute book reveals that at our meeting on 1 December 1937 we were very concerned with Gladioli. In fact we were holding a 'Special Gladiolus Show'. At that time we were still called the Wahroonga Horticultural Society and we met in St John's Hall, Coonanbarra Road, Wahroonga with the meeting starting at 8pm. There were several sections for this show including classes for novice exhibitors and the Society's trophy valued at 10/6 (ten shillings and 6 pence) was awarded to the exhibitor of the champion gladiolus spike. The meeting was advertised as the 'December Monthly Meeting and Social' and it would appear that meetings at that time included a main speaker and were interspersed with short entertainment, either a musical item or a short talk by a member in order to give the main speaker a respite. The entertainment at one meeting included a piano solo, two songs and some bird and animal imitations!



▶ With the hot dry weather we have at this time of the year you could find that some of your plants are getting a severe unscheduled 'pruning'. This could be grasshoppers or locusts at work. They come in all sizes from less than 2cm up to the big ones that can be up to 4 or 5cm long. Get out early into the garden while it is cool as at

this time of the day they are sluggish and can be picked off by hand and squashed. If you are running a few chooks, feed them to the chooks - they love them. Should they keep coming back, you may have to use a spray such as a pyrethrum with some organic oil.

▶ Christmas is just up the road and outdoor entertaining is in full swing so there is nothing more distracting than a few mosquitoes buzzing around your guests. Do a check around the garden looking for empty pots, broken pieces of pottery or any other item that can hold some stagnant water. It does not have to be much but these are ideal breeding grounds for mosquito larvae. If you are going to buy one of the electronic bug zappers, be careful as most will not attract mosquitoes but do kill a lot of beneficial insects such the pollinators. Make sure that what you buy will attract mosquitoes and kill them.

▶ Many gardens have large lawns and not much shade at all on a good hot day. A stroll around the garden can get quite uncomfortable. You decide that you had better plant a couple of good shade shrubs or trees. Before you rush away and buy some shrubs, take a walk around the neighbourhood and see what other people have grown successfully in your area. Consider also what they are growing in the shady areas produced by these trees or shrubs. It could save you a lot of trouble. Pay attention to size of the tree or shrub and whether it will fit in your garden.

▶ Do you grow your own herbs to use in your cooking? Use the young new leaves and keep cutting the young new leaves as they hold the most flavour. Your plants will keep on replacing them. Keep the plants damp but not wet.

▶ Have an inspection of your indoor potted plants - are they looking a bit tired? All indoor potted plants should be put outside every couple of months for a month or so to perk them up. Put them in a sheltered well-lit area, not out in the blazing sun. While you are moving the pot, lay it over a bit and check the drain hole. If it is blocked, clear it with a spike or large screwdriver. While they are outside give the plants a gentle hose over to clear any accumulated dust off the foliage. The runoff will go into the soil of the pot. Keep the water up to all potted plants in the summer as they can dry out quite quickly in the hot weather.

▶ Have you got a Star Jasmine? Give it a good look over. Star Jasmine is a vigorous plant and if not kept under control can bob up in lots of places where it should not be. A runner 3 metres long is not unusual. If you are growing one as a hedge, look for runners down on the ground and cut off any runners that are doing their own thing. Cut the runners, don't try to snap them off or you will cut your fingers. They can also climb up downpipes and get into roof gutters so heads up and have a look. They are a fine tough plant with a very nice perfume but keep an eye on them.



Question? I have a native garden with a couple of nice bottle brushes. They have finished flowering and the seed pods have dried out. Can I cut these pods off as the bushes are looking rather untidy and I am not collecting seed.

Answer: Yes, you can cut them off and it would be good for the plants. Otherwise, over a long period of time they will dry out and fall off by themselves. Bottle brush

flower on the old wood.

Question? We have a shady patch in our back yard that we would like to brighten up. Have you any suggestions?

Answer: Give some Coleus a go. They have bright colourful foliage and mauve flowers. If you want to get the most out of the plant foliage, forego the flowers and nip the flower spikes off. The foliage will get brighter.

Question? I am having trouble with one of my Japanese maples. When it came back into leaf after the winter there were not many leaves and they were brown. What can I do about this? I love my maples.

Answer: It sounds like your maple has been under considerable stress as they are normally a quite hardy tree. Have you watered it regularly during the winter? They lose their leaves in the winter but still like to be watered. Did the water soak it or did it run off? Check your soil. Have a look around the trunk for borers. A dry brown powder will point to them. Give the tree a helping hand and give it a good drink of liquid seaweed followed by fertilising with a liquid fertiliser for trees and shrubs. On hot summer days you could cover it with a piece of shade cloth.

Question? What can I do to protect my lawn from army worm? It has just recovered from last year's attack.

Answer: The first thing is that army worm is a caterpillar not a worm. Probably the easiest way to kill them is to spray your lawn with either Dipel, Spinosad or a natural Pyrethrum spray. Dipel will only kill caterpillars not bees and lasts 3-4 days. Spinosad can kill bees.

Question? I have a small bed a metre by half a metre alongside of my drive that I would like to plant with some summer flowering bulbs in. I had in mind Zephyranthes. How would they go?

Answer: Zephyranthes or Autumn Crocus are quite easy to grow and are low maintenance. They do not need to be lifted every year, only when overcrowded. Autumn crocus come in several colours white, yellow and a deep pink. The foliage is grass like and tends to flop over. They flower late summer or early autumn. A heavy shower of rain can trigger flowering. Plant into soil that has had plenty of compost dug in, 5cm down with the pointy end up is the way to go. The soil should be damp not wet.

Question? I have noticed that magnesium appears regularly in articles on fertilisers. How does magnesium benefit my plants?

Answer: Magnesium is a key component in chlorophyll's ability to break down carbon dioxide to produce oxygen. It also helps the plant to take up phosphorus from the soil and build strong plants. A shortage of magnesium usually shows up as patchy yellowing of the leaves and brilliant colouring around the edges of the leaves. If you suspect that your plants are short of magnesium, water in or spray with Epsom salts at the rate of 1 heaped teaspoon of Epsom salts to 4.5 L of water. At this time of the year do your watering or spraying early in the morning or late in the afternoon. That way you won't burn your plants.

Question? I have a nice sunny spot about two metres wide and I am thinking about putting a couple of Canna Lilies in it. How big do they grow and do they like the sun?

Answer: It depends on which variety you buy. Cannas are long flowering and put on a very nice display. They come in red, yellow and orange colours. The normal varieties can grow anywhere between 60cm and 2 metres high and up to 2 metres wide, however there are dwarf varieties available. Check the label before you buy. Dig plenty of compost and well-rotted cow manure into the soil and keep it damp.



*Regevalds
Hugh*

Decorative: 'Blooming Lovely