

# HORTULANUS

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

**FEBRUARY 2018**

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

## COMING EVENTS

- Feb 6**      **FEBRUARY MEETING: Speaker: Stewart McPherson—  
'The World's Most Spectacular Plants and How to Grow Them'**
- Mar 6**      **MARCH MEETING: Steve Falcioni of OCP will speak about  
what is meant by 'organic' and Beneficial Insects**
- Apr 7/8**     **Collectors Plant Fair, Hawkesbury Racecourse, Clarendon**
- Apr 8**      **Maureene and Keith Smith's Huge Plant Sale in aid of the National Breast Foundation,  
45 Parklands Avenue, Lane Cove North from 10am**

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

Hi!

It was a fine warm night for our last meeting of the year when 66 members turned out to enjoy themselves and exchange Christmas good wishes with friends and fellow gardeners.

The President opened the meeting by drawing the Lucky Door prize winners. Many of the prizes were donated by members. The Fuchsias 'Frosted Flame' and 'Pinto de Blue' were donated by Ray Kench, thank you Ray. The basket of succulents and the fine bromeliad were donated by our President, thank you Doreen. The soaker hose was donated by the well known Anonymous, thank you Anonymous. The two boxes of chocolates were donated by your Society. All good prizes and at no cost, but you had to be there to win one.

At the conclusion of the Bathurst/Mayfield Garden photo presentation, members were invited to enjoy the delicious supper laid out on three tables in front of the stage. Many thanks to all who brought along those plates of goodies.

## MEMBER NEWS

This year, on Tuesday 1 May, we will celebrate the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our club with a party for members and their guests. A special supper will be provided and our usual Show Bench will be replaced by a display of some of the Society's memorabilia and several floral table-top displays put together by members. There are many opportunities for members to join the organising group and contribute to a successful event. Doreen Clark is compiling the volunteering list so give her your name and be a helper. Save this date and invite your friends and family to celebrate with us.

Congratulations are due to long-time member, Yvonne Wilson, for her appointment as Australia Day ambassador to the Walcha community (between Tamworth and Armidale). Yvonne (professionally known as Dr Yvonne McMaster) is a now-retired palliative care specialist who has been working tirelessly to improve palliative care in the state and especially in country areas, where it is sadly often underfunded and under-resourced. Yvonne says she is really looking forward to meeting up again with the many people in the Walcha area she has come to know on her journeys around the state.

Keith Smith, he of the Huge Plant Sale, is putting out a plea for 140mm pots that you may have lying around. Just bring them along to a meeting and he will happily take them off your hands.

## OUTINGS

This year the Society will run three outings. The first will be on Thursday, 24 April when we will travel to Mt Wilson to see the autumn colour in three of the best gardens—Bebeah, Nooroo and Windyridge. We have booked the Village Hall for our lunch break in case of rainy weather. To keep the cost as low as possible, we are not providing lunch. However the Society will provide tea, coffee and some slices for afters. The cost therefore will be \$65 per person and a booking form is included with this newsletter. Please see Helen Gilkes at the meeting if you would like to book a place. Payment is due no later than our meeting on 3 April. We will take only a maximum of 45 people so get your booking in early so as not to miss out.

In late September, we have organised a one night/two day trip. On the first day, we travel to Canberra to visit Tulip

Tops, a garden with spectacular plantings of tulips in a delightful garden setting. On the way, we visit Perennial Hill, a wonderful garden developed by Julie and Craig Hulbert where many kinds of plants are displayed in 'garden rooms' to great advantage. Many of these plants can be purchased in their on-site nursery. Overnight we will be accommodated in Queanbeyan. The following morning, we will be hosted by the Canberra Horticultural Society (founded 1929) as we visit several of their members' gardens. On the return journey, we will have lunch at Goulburn and visit the historic Riversdale garden. A great trip seeing new things in familiar territory. Further details will be available shortly.

Our third trip this year will be to the Crookwell Garden Festival. This will be a 3-day trip, from Friday 9th to Sunday 11th November. We will be staying at the Goulburn Heritage Motor Inn for the two nights, and travelling to Crookwell on the Saturday and Sunday where there will be ten stunning gardens open for us to visit, including an Edna Walling garden. More details will follow. For any early enquiries, please call Ted Shaw on 9979 3930.

## GARDEN TABLE

There was no garden table at the December meeting, but it will be operating as usual again at the February meeting.

## TRADING TABLE

**The Trading Table will be operating at the March 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. 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—just print a copy, fill it in and bring it with your plants that you want to sell. As the wonderful team who run the Garden Table will be looking after the Trading Table, **there will be no Garden Table for the March meeting only.**

## SHOW BENCH

The Decorative section featured some interesting and well put together exhibits. A lovely *Arisaema candidissimum* was an unusual addition. Hydrangeas are still going quite well despite the current run of very hot weather. Vegies were also a feature and all looked good enough to eat. Dahlias made an appearance for the first time this season. An unusual *Stapelia* was in flower, but should have carried a warning not to sniff the most unusual flowers—very stinky!

## RAFFLE

There was no raffle at the December meeting; instead a number of lucky door prizes were provided by members and you Society that were eagerly snapped up.

**MAIN SPEAKER DECEMBER** There was no main speaker as we had the Christmas supper.



'Reflections'

**Main Speaker February:** Our main speaker for February will be Stewart McPherson. Stewart will give an illustrated talk on some of the weird and wonderful plants of the world. Members may remember Stewart's last two talks on plant hunting in Venezuela and on carnivorous plants from around the world.

## MEMBER SPEAKER DECEMBER

Christine Rethers presented a fine series of photos of the Society's recent trip to the Bathurst and Oberon area. The first garden visited was Wild Meadow at Little Hartley. This garden is only six years old but already has many cold climate plants quite well established. A large white *Cistus* was covered in flowers with many happy bees. The next stop was at Yetholme and the Hillandale garden. This is a large garden and features a lake which reflects the tall trees around it. The 100m herbaceous border featured many interesting plants, including different varieties of *Euphorbia*. The in-between spaces are filled with ground covers such as *Violas* and *Solomon's Seal*. The next day we were joined by Peter Harvey from the Bathurst Gardeners club, who guided us round the many town and country gardens we were to see over the two days of the Bathurst Spring Spectacular. About half of the gardens were large country gardens which entailed some travelling, but well worth the effort. It was lovely to see some of the countryside and several gardens had spectacular views. Peter took us to his own garden and that of his father, (both town gardens), both of which featured *Clematis*. On the Monday we visited Gairloch, a fairly new garden on two town blocks in Oberon. It has been extensively landscaped with many features including a croquet lawn, a chess board, and a number of metal sculptures, all in a setting of many interesting plantings. The Japanese maples were outstanding. The last stop was at Mayfield, a huge garden and commercial farm that is still under development. A visit was made to the private chapel on the hill, which was especially built for the marriage of the owner's daughter. The many

Beeches and Maples area feature and the Rhododendrons and Azaleas were in full flower. On the walk down from the chapel we passed a number of streams and lakes, large and small, as well as a grotto with a waterfall. It is six years since the Society's last visit to Mayfield and the development of the plantings and landscaping was most noticeable.



**Member Speaker February:** Ron Erratt will give a presentation on "Destination Japan and its flowers and gardens".

## NEW PRODUCT

A new product called Biochar has come on the market. Manufactured in Tasmania, it comes in several different forms such as compost, a potting mix or just plain Biochar for you to experiment with.

Biochar is a special form of activated charcoal made by cooking woody material in an oven that is closed to the outside atmosphere. The end result is a highly porous and honeycomb-like charcoal, not the solid block of carbon you get when the wood is just burnt. The highly porous charcoal will soak up and store water and most liquid fertilisers, later releasing them back into the soil to be used by the plants. If you are having soil problems then this could be worth a trial run.



► Things are pretty hot in the garden at this time of the year and some plants are very unhappy. Take a walk around the garden and have a close inspection of your plants and shrubs. Are some of the pot plants too close to a brick wall? Remember that a brick wall will act as a heat bank and your pots will be subject to heat long after the sun has set. Consider moving them to a cooler spot. An

alternative is to set some hooks in the wall and hang some shade cloth off them to cover the plants. A couple of lengths of string tied on the hooks will enable you to tie the shade cloth back if some rain comes along.

► If you are running an irrigation system set the timer so that it comes on early in the morning and cuts out by about 9.30am, or alternatively cuts in about 6.30pm. Watering during the day on a hot day can result in leaf burn as those droplets of water become tiny magnifying glasses. Also, a lot of the water will just evaporate.

► For those who grow cacti outside, remember that even though cacti usually come from a hot dry climate they still need to be watered regularly during the hot weather. Keep a close eye on them, particularly if they are in unglazed earthenware pots as these can heat up quite quickly. White pots will reflect a lot of the heat and stay cooler.

► To keep the roots of plants cool in an exposed bed, water it well, using some Soil Wetta if necessary, to get the water to go well into the soil. Once you are sure the water has gone well down, spread a good layer of sugar cane mulch over the soil and this will help retain the moisture in the soil and keep the roots cool. It will also rot down over time and make good compost.

► At this time of the year the hot humid weather encourages most of those nasty insects and diseases that attack roses. With plants like roses, which have been 'crossed' so many times with other roses, a lot of the natural disease and pest resistance has been bred out of them. Think about giving companion planting a go. Companion planting consists of growing plants that the 'enemy' dislikes in close proximity to the plant you wish to protect. In the case of roses, the companion plants could be chives or garlic. Both these herbs can be harvested from time to time.

► Take some time and inspect your roses. Cut the dead flower heads back to a nice healthy bud. Sprinkle a handful of rose fertiliser around the root area and water in well. All being well, you should get an excellent flush of flowers in the autumn. Clean up any dead leaves and rubbish lying under the rose bushes as they only harbour pests and fungi.

► Have you got some tall bearded iris in your garden? Have a think, when was the last time you broke up the rhizome clumps and got rid of any dead rhizomes and rubbish. If the answer is three or more years, now is the time to

work them up again. Break up the clumps into individual rhizomes and get rid of the old dead centre rhizome. The green leaves of healthy plants should be trimmed to a pointed fan shape. After working the soil up with plenty of compost and manure, plant the rhizomes with the top of the rhizome just on the surface of the soil. Water in well and put some sugar cane mulch over them to keep them cool for the remaining hot weather. Once they are on their way, in March, the mulch can be left to rot away to feed the plant.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



**Question?** A section of my garden has been invaded by a creeping weed and no matter how often I pull out the runners, they come back stronger. It has dark green, alternate palmate leaves that are about 4cm apart. The small bright blue flower has three petals.

**Answer** You have been invaded by the native Wandering Jew, *Commelina cyanea*. The other weed called Wandering Jew is *Tradescantia albiflora* which has invaded from South America. It has leaves that are a lighter green, thinner runners and a small white flower. To get rid of the native Wandering Jew will take time. Glyphosate (Zero) does not seem to do a permanent job and it keeps coming back. Careful digging, although taking time, seems to be the most permanent way. Trace the runners back to the 'mother plant' where they all originate and carefully dig it out. You may have to go down 5-6cm but take care not to break any roots or stems as bits will snap off and any pieces left behind will shoot. It could take a couple of seasons to be finally rid of the plant. Dispose of the plant in the rubbish bin.

**Question?** I have a grass-like weed that keeps popping up in my garden beds. It has long very narrow leaves that are alternate on the stems. The stem or stalk can grow to about a metre high. It has many seed shoots with lots of very small seeds.

**Answer** This sounds like Bermuda Grass. The easiest way to get rid of this weed is to pull it out before it goes to seed. Don't worry about spraying the weed as it is not deeply rooted and large plants will come out relatively easily. Once you have done this, watch for any small young plants coming up and pull them out before they set seed. From then on run regular checks. It might take a couple of seasons to clear your garden permanently but be persistent. Dispose of any plants in the rubbish bin not the compost heap, as any seeds left on the plants might strike.

**Question?** We have just moved into a house and the backyard is just lawn and gets a lot of sun for most of the day. At this time of the year it is quite hot. Can you suggest some shrubs that will take full sun and will break up the hot summer atmosphere when I walk out of the back door?

**Answer** Hibiscus, Oleander, Abelia and Tibouchina can all withstand a hot summer sun and not burn. However, you will still have to water them. The thing you have to remember about Oleander is that the leaves are poisonous if eaten, so keep the pets and kids away from it. Hibiscus planted now will still have plenty of time to put on growth before the cold weather sets in. Tibouchina can grow into a small tree. T Alstonville is the most common Tibouchina and is readily available.

**Question?** My Cyclamen are giving me trouble. I am growing them in pots underneath a large shrub where they receive plenty of light, but not a great deal of direct sunlight. They are carefully watered but this year a lot of the stems have rotted off and the plants look miserable. What can I do about it?

**Answer** Your Cyclamen have been attacked by a fungus so try spraying the stems and leaves with Mancozeb Plus (a chemical) or Eco fungicide. By mixing some Eco Oil with the mix, the fungicide will stick more firmly to the plants and be more effective.

Regards  
Hugh

Christmas 2017—members enjoying the Christmas supper

