

HORTULANUS

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

JULY 2018



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Website: www.khsgardenclub.org.au

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

COMING EVENTS

- July 3** **JULY MEETING: Doug Purdy will tell us all about bees**
July 14/15 **The Camellia Research Society's Camelia Show, Ravenswood School, Gordon**
Sat. 1.30pm-4pm, Sun. 10am-4pm Entry \$7
- July 14/15** **Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. 10-4pm Enq. www.eryldene.org.au.**
Entry: \$12, Seniors \$10
- July 20-22** **Australian Orchid Conference—Show and Sales, Hawkesbury Indoor Stadium, 16 Stewart**
Street, South Windsor. Fri. and Sat. 9-4pm, Sun. 9-3pm. General admission: \$10.
- Aug 7** **AUGUST MEETING: George Hoad, President of Garden Clubs of Australia, will speak**
to us, topic to be announced.

Hi

It was a cold wet night for our June Meeting but it did not stop 73 enthusiastic and well rugged up gardeners coming along to enjoy themselves with other members and friends. The President opened the meeting, welcoming new members and visitors. A short amusing comment on her recent trip to the US followed.

MEMBER NEWS

Membership subscriptions are due on 1st July 2018 - \$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 Turramurra 2074. No direct debit, only cash or cheque please, and remember to include your completed subscription form.

Winsome Combe has been in Lady Davidson for quite a few weeks and looks like being there for a few more. We send her our very best wishes and hope to see her out and about again before too long. Jim Sweeting is home again, recovering from a nasty accident. Hopefully he too will be out and about again soon.

As we all know Ray Kench will be leaving us soon. Ray generously brought along some of his horticultural library as well as some garden tools, pesticides, fertiliser and fungicides to offer to members in return for a small donation. Any books left over were to go to Life Line the next day but there was not that much left by the end of the evening

Supper Volunteers: We have had four wonderful volunteers on supper duty for the last five months and are now looking to fill the roster for the period from July to December. We need two helpers each meeting to set up from about 7 pm and then to help serve the tea and coffee during the supper break. If you would like to be on the roster, please contact Christine Rethers on 9449 6245 or at the next meeting. We try to share this around the helpers so that you just volunteer the months that you are available.

OUTINGS

Canberra, Thursday 27 - Friday 28 September: this is 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. The cost will be \$405 per person twin-share with a single supplement of \$70 which covers your accommodation in the 4-star motel, all meals and morning teas plus all garden entries. The booking form is included with this month's Hortulanus.

Crookwell Garden Festival, Friday 9 to Sunday 11 November: This will be a 3-day/two night trip to visit 8 open gardens in the Crookwell area, including an Edna Walling garden. Also included will be visits to gardens on the way to Crookwell. We will be staying at the 4-star Goulburn Heritage Motor Inn for the two nights and travel will be provided by On Course Tours. More details will follow. For any early enquiries, please call Ted Shaw on 9979 3930.

SHOW BENCH

The azaleas are still looking good despite the rain. Roses however are coming to the end of their flowering season but there are still a few good ones blooming. Plectranthus are looking good. In the Vegie section things are going well with a large fine pumpkin on show. In the Decorative section the ladies excelled themselves with one exhibit showing what can be done with a stump. The Pictorial section gets better and better each meeting and was hard to judge. It was suggested that members take a look around their garden before coming to the meeting to see if there might be something tucked away that would look very nice on the Show Bench and if so bring it along.



The Show Bench Point Score Competition has finished for the year (July 2017 -June 2018) and the results are as follows:

1. Nita & Penny Whipp 2. Brenda Zimmerman 3. Smila Smithers 4. Aubrey Knowles 5. Ted & Nancy Shaw 6. Jim & Cynthia Brydie 7. Rosemary Baldwin 8. Ron & Christine Erratt 9. Doreen Clark 10. Kate Stanley

Section awards: Containers: Jim & Cynthia Brydie; **Crops:** Aubrey Knowles; **Cultural:** Nita & Penny Whipp; **Decorative:** Brenda Zimmerman; **Pictorial:** Ron & Christine Erratt. **Encouragement Award:** Fiona Arnott

The awards will be given out at the July meeting.

The new Show Bench Competition starts with the July meeting so please think about entering some exhibits now to get in at the start. Although we only give prize money to the top ten exhibitors, you just never know your luck and you may find yourself in that group this time next year.

RAFFLE

The very large schlumbergera (zygocactus) was donated by Ray Kench, thank you Ray. The hanging basket schlumbergera was purchased by your Society from Honeysuckle Gardens Nursery. The book on insects was donated by Anonymous, thank you Anonymous. These are all good prizes but you have to have a ticket to win one and \$2 will get you 3 tickets from the man at the door.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table was in full swing with lots of top quality plants on offer and all going far cheaper than they would in a nursery. Amongst the plants on offer were plectranthus, ipomoea (the sweet potato vine), coleus, begonias, hoya and justicia. These are all good healthy plants so go along and have a look. You don't have to buy but you could miss that plant you have been looking for and it all helps your Society.

MAIN SPEAKER



This was Bernard Chapman who has spoken to us before on several occasions, this time giving us his words of wisdom on shade plants for our gardens. These are plants that can cope with only 2-4 hours of sunlight a day. He pointed out that many of our gardens on Sydney's North Shore now had tall and mature trees that were planted when the suburbs were first laid out. Consequently these gardens had now become quite shady. The first thing to do when contemplating growing shade plants is to improve the soil by incorporating rich organic matter. Soils under trees are often dry and depleted of goodness so need to be boosted with compost and manures. When choosing plants for these shady areas, consider plants that can tolerate some root competition with the trees and which are drought tolerant. If the root competition is too great, planting into raised beds or even into large pots are a couple of the options available. We need to be aware that there are degrees of shade that can vary throughout the year. The sun is overhead most of the day in summer so under trees it will be very shady but in winter the sun is more at an angle so these same plants can get sun for quite a lot of the day. Plants under deciduous trees will likewise be affected by more sun in winter. However, as Bernard pointed out, there are a wide variety of plants that can cope with these conditions. Bernard divided his list of recommended plants into:

Perennials such as Azaleas, Begonias, Fuchsia, Hellebores, Plectranthus, Trachelospermum (star jasmine), Clivias;

Groundcovers such as the Aluminium plant, Tradescantias and various Ivies;

Trees such as Camellias, Murraya, grafted Maples;

Bulbs such as Snowflakes, Bluebells, Crinum;

Succulents such as Aonium, Agave, Crassula, Echeveria;

Annuals such as Ageratum, Pansies, Primulas;

Herbs: Mint

Drought tolerant plants: Cordylines, Duranta, Hypoestes aristata, Iresine, Lamium, Bergenia, Vinca.

Bernard urged us to also consider variegated plants and plants with white flowers to help lift and brighten shady areas.

In addition to his talk, Bernard had brought along to give away a number of cuttings of some of the plants he had spoken about and these were very quickly taken up by our members.

Main Speaker July: This will be Doug Purdy who will speak on bees and all aspects of caring for and raising them. Bees, as we all know, are an essential part of your garden to pollinate flowers, fruits and vegetables.

MEMBER SPEAKER

Christine Erratt, who has a great interest in Australian silverware and its history, gave a well-illustrated talk on the history and use of Australian flora on silverware. To illustrate her talk, she showed detailed photos of items from her own collection as well as from elsewhere. In addition, she had brought along some lovely pieces from her collection, some of which had been made by her husband, Ron. Even from very early days of settlement, silversmiths used examples of Australian flora to decorate various pieces including vases, bowls and dishes, and spoons. The amount of detail that was depicted was quite amazing. Research that she has recently undertaken revealed four contemporary silversmiths who use the symbol of a flower as part of their makers' marks.



Member Speaker July: No member speaker this month—we will be holding a Q & A session instead.

COMPOSTING

At this time of the year gutters, drains, paths and lawns are covered in dead leaves. What do you do with them? You can't burn them so put them into your compost heap. If you don't have one, make one in a corner of your garden and you will be doing your garden good and saving money in the long run. A simple one can be made by laying a number of cheap bricks or pavers to give you a hard working surface that suits your requirements and dump your leaves and other material onto it to make your compost heap. As the material will be exposed to the weather all the time, you will need a waterproof sheet to throw over it in wet weather. The leaves can be picked up with a blower vac or a lawn mower with the blades set high. These two machines will also chop up the leaves for you. Otherwise just rake them up. Dried leaves are almost pure carbon and in themselves not much use. To help break them down so they are available to be composted put all your kitchen vegetable and fruit scraps into the heap you are building. These scraps are loaded with moisture. However, don't put any meat scraps into the heap as they will stink and could attract vermin.

Sufficient moisture in the heap is essential to encourage the microorganisms to break down the material. Getting the balance right is important - no moisture, no work; too much moisture and the heap will smell. A handful of compost should feel nice and damp but not wet. Once you have mixed in all your dry leaves, lawn clippings, weeds and green leaf prunings you will probably find you need to add some water to get the heap to work properly. The easiest way to get water and air into the inside of the heap without a lot of hard work turning it over, is to make a several one metre lengths of 30mm PVC water pipe and cap one end. Put a 90 degree bend on the other end. Perforate the pipes with 8mm holes and push the pipes, bend up, into the heap. This will enable air and water to reach the inside of the heap. Water can be squirted into the pipe with a hose gun. In the hot weather keep an eye on the moisture content; you might have to add water more frequently. From time to time fill a watering can up with warm water that has had large dollop of molasses dissolved in it and pour it down the pipes. It will provide sugar to the microorganisms and speed up the composting process.

A new heap should operate in a temperature range of about 50-60 degrees centigrade for the first 10 days. This is quite hot at first but then the temperature will fall back to around 30-40 degrees. While the compost heap is very hot, the microorganisms stay on the periphery but as the temperature decreases, the microorganisms move in to work in the whole heap. This process can go on for 10-11 days before things settle down to around 35 degrees or just slightly warm. Finished and ready to use compost should have a pH that is neutral or slightly alkaline.



► Most if not all of your autumn flowering bulbs will be finished by now and the foliage will have died back. Don't remove the foliage until it is well and truly dried out and all the goodness gone back into the bulb. The dried out foliage can then be put in the compost bin to get the last bit of goodness out of it.

► We look like we might be going to have a cold dry winter so keep the water up to your azaleas. Water under the foliage NOT on it as cold wet foliage only encourages diseases. Just damp soil is the way to go. If the soil is too wet it will encourage root rot.

► If you live in an area where you get frosts such as down in a hollow, move your cold sensitive pot plants over to a warmer spot. Against a brick wall is a good place. The brick wall will act as a heat bank by absorbing heat during the day and releasing at night to keep your plants warm.

► If you have been unfortunate enough to have been caught by a frost and had some of your plants' foliage burned and turned black, you have don't remove the blackened leaves, rather wait till spring. By leaving them there they will offer some protection to the unaffected leaves.

► By now Crepe Myrtles will have finished flowering and are rapidly shedding their leaves. Now is a good time to prune them back. Cut them back to 3-4 cm above the place you last pruned them. If you cut where you cut last year you will start to develop a large ugly callus. Make your cuts on an angle so that water will run off otherwise you could get rot.

► Forget about pruning any spring flowering plants as you are likely to prune off flowering stems. Wait until after the plants have flowered.

► Many gardeners have considered using seaweed from the beach to organically boost their soil. This can be a good idea but there are several things to be considered. The first is that you must give any seaweed that you are going to use a real good flushing out with water to get rid of any salt and the fine white grains which are crushed sea shells. If you dig them in you could change the pH of your soil. It would be like adding a large dose of lime to your soil. If you intend to move a lot of sea weed off a beach, check with the Council as some have regulations preventing this. Small quantities are usually okay.

► Check the area around the base of your citrus trees and make sure it is draining well. The one thing citrus hate is cold wet feet as it often leads to root rot.

► Schlumbergera and Poinsettia have one requirement that is different from other plants, they need a certain amount of darkness if they are going to flower well, not sunlight like most other plants. When grown in the garden pick a spot where there is no street light or light coming from the house through a window pane or garden lights. If grown inside, pick a spot where they are not subject to electric lights going on and off. Schlumbergera affected by light will continue to grow well but will not flower at all well.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Question? I want to cover a fence between my neighbour and me and I am thinking of planting a Pyrostegia (Orange Trumpet vine). Will there be any problems with this vine?

Answer: The first thing to remember when planting near a fence is that the fence has a life of about 10 years and then you will have to replace it or do some major repairs. If

the Pyrostegia is growing on it, it will have to be removed or cut right back. Set a row of star pickets about half a metre away from the fence and string some wires through them for your Pyrostegia to grow on them. Pyrostegia are a fast growing, tough and low maintenance plants that can look spectacular when in full bloom.

Question? I have several pots of daffodils that will come into bloom very shortly. Can I bring them inside where I can see them?

Answer: Yes, daffodils about to flower can be brought inside. Find a cool place with plenty of light and leave them there until the flowers have finished and the foliage starts to dry out then they can go back outside. While inside keep the soil just damp not wet or you will rot the bulbs.

Question? We have a large climbing rose that has not been pruned for several years and it is starting to look rather untidy. How much can I prune off and still have a presentable plant?

Answer: To rejuvenate an old climbing rose take off about one third of the old branches. Cut to just above the old grafting union. Cut back all the small shoots, leaving a couple of buds on each shoot. The end result should be a frame work of main branches that will produce lots of young shoots for you. If you find you are left with a couple of long healthy whippy branches, don't cut them off as they will produce lots of flowers for you. Tie them as horizontally as possible to some form of support so that they produce many flowering stems. Left to grow vertically, they do not produce as many flowering branches.

Question? My Poinsettia has finished flowering. How far can I prune it back to tidy it up?

Answer: If it has finished flowering, cut it back by about two-thirds then mulch and water it well. Wear some eye protection, gloves and long sleeves as the sap can burn so be careful.

Question? What can I use to get rid of some white waxy-looking stuff that is forming on the main stems and branches of my roses?

Answer: This is white wax scale. Spray with your roses with either Pest Oil (mineral), Eco Oil or Eco Neem, both of which are organic.

Question? My Daphne is not looking very well at all this season. The foliage has become very thin and is not growing well, and there are very few flowers. It grew very well last year and is planted out in a bed with several other plants that are doing well.

Answer: This sounds like your Daphne is not getting enough light. Have a look at the plants alongside it and prune them back a bit to let more light in. A Daphne does not like full sunlight but good bright light in a shaded place is fine.



Camellias—Ikebana Style

Regards
Hugh