

HORTULANUS

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

JULY 2019



President: Doreen Clark, 19 Parkwood Grove, Pymble 2073 (9498 1677)
Secretary: Christine Rethers, 1 Wolsten Ave, Turramurra 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

- July 2** JULY MEETING: Mary Ann Napper—Megumi Bennett Biography and Bonsai Demonstration.
July 11-13 North Shore Orchid Society Show and Sales, Gordon Centre, Pacific Highway, Gordon
July 13/14 The Camellia Research Society's Camellia Show, Ravenswood School, Gordon Sat. 1.30pm-4.30pm, Sun. 10am-4pm Entry \$5
July 13/14 Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. 10-4pm Enq. www.eryldene.org.au. Entry: \$12, Seniors \$10
July 20 Bundanoon Garden Club Seminar, Soldiers' Memorial Hall, Bundanoon 9-3.30pm.
Speakers: Tino Carnavale, Meredith Kirton, Simon Rickard. Bookings: www.tribookings.com \$45
July 21 Bunnings Sausage Sizzle, Bunnings, Belrose—see separate notice below
Aug 6 AUGUST MEETING: Judy Horton—Lessons from Great Gardens

Hi

It was a cold wet and windy night for our June meeting but at least there was plenty of parking for a change. Despite the conditions, you can't keep a good gardener down and 54 well rugged up members and friends turned out to enjoy themselves with their fellow gardeners.

Our President opened the meeting, welcoming visitors and main speaker, Peter Rutherford. Members attention was drawn to our annual Bunnings Sausage Sizzle. It has come a bit early this year but you have to take the date that Bunnings allocate you (see below)

Members were reminded that Stage 1 water restrictions are now in force so you will need to adjust your watering schedule to suit. Hand held trigger hoses only can be used during specified hours. If you are using water tanks, make sure the tank strainer is clean and gutters that feed into the tanks are clean also. Water is starting to become a rather valuable item so don't waste it.

MEMBER NEWS

Membership subscriptions are due on 1st July 2019 - \$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. This is important as it is needed to check that we have your details correctly recorded.

Bunnings Sausage Sizzle: Your Society is looking for volunteers to help at our annual Bunnings Sausage Sizzle held at the Bunnings Belrose store on **Sunday, 21 July**. This is your Society's big fund raiser for the year. The shifts are for 2 hours duration while the Sizzle runs from 8.00am to 4.00pm. It is a far from boring job and indeed can be quite amusing at times. Volunteers are need for the 12-2 and the 2-4pm shifts so please put your name down at the next meeting or ring Doreen on 9498 1677. There are 6 helpers required for each shift so now is the time to step up and be counted. If you are recent member of the Society, this is a wonderful way to get in and meet other members.

OUTINGS

Toowoomba Trip (23-26 September): Travel and accommodation reservations have been confirmed for the 34 KHS members and friends who booked and paid a deposit for this trip by the close-off date. The confirmed travellers have now received their final invoice for the remaining payment which must be sent in by 10 July. Any who are members of the Qantas Frequent Flyer scheme should submit their membership number to be credited for the flights. If you have not booked but would like to be included on a waiting list in case someone is not able to come, please see Helen Gilkes at a meeting or phone her on 9144 4826.

Southern Highlands Trip—Thursday, 24 October 2019: The Society is booked in to visit Retford Park, Red Cow Farm and a visit to the new garden of Jeanne Villani in Bowral. Jeanne was formerly the owner of Waterfall Cottage in Bayview before 'retiring' and moving to the Southern Highlands. The cost will be \$70 which includes morning tea and all garden entries. Lunch will be BYO in Jeanne's garden but the Society will provide some nice slices for afters. Bookings for this outing will open at the August meeting but expressions of interest can be given to Helen Gilkes at a meeting or by phone (9144 4826).

SHOW BENCH

The Show Bench put on a very good display despite the current bad weather. Exhibitors in the photographic section are reminded that the subject of the photograph must not be able to be brought to the Show Bench because it is too big or is planted in the ground and the photo should have been taken within 1 month of the meeting. The Gerberas looked very nice, you don't see a large number of them these days. The Coleus looked beautiful while the nearby Bromeliad was quite unusual. Down in the Vegie section the pumpkins are still doing well. It was unusual to see an avocado on the bench. Avocado trees take quite a long time before they produce fruit. The fruit section was doing well with a number of delicious-looking oranges, lemons and grapefruit on show.

The Show Bench Point Score Competition has finished for the year (July 2018 -June 2019) and the results are as follows:

1. Aubrey Knowles 2. Ted and Nancy Shaw 3. Nita and Penny Whipp 4. Brenda Zimmerman 5. Doreen Clark 6. Sue and Bob Ballinger 7. Smila Smithers 8. Evelyn Mason 9. Cynthia and Jim Brydie 10. Christine and Ron Erratt.

Encouragement Award: Jill and Peter Whitney.

Section awards: Containers: Doreen Clark; **Crops:** Aubrey Knowles; **Cultural:** Nita & Penny Whipp; **Decorative:** Brenda Zimmerman; **Pictorial:** Aubrey Knowles. **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

We had some beautiful prizes on offer in the raffle. The fine paper daisy, *Xerochrysum bracteatum*, with its bright yellow flowers was purchased by your Society from the Elegant Outdoors Nursery in Turramurra. The two books 'Gardens of Spain' and 'Around the World in 80 Gardens' were donated by Doreen Clark, thank you Doreen. The fine succulent was donated by Julie St Clair, thank you Julie. The excellent *Schlumbergera* was donated by the well known Anonymous, thank you Anonymous. These are all good prizes but you can't win one unless you have a ticket. Two dollars will get you three tickets from the man near the door and all money goes to your Society.

GARDEN TABLE

As usual the Garden Table was loaded with lots of fine healthy plants all going for much less than you would pay in your local garden centre. Some examples—*Bergenia ciliata*, *Tulbaghia violacea*, *Plectranthus* and *Alpina nutans* stems and many more. These are all good plants so why not go along and have a look. You don't have to buy but then again you won't know what you missed unless you go and have a look. The ladies are happy to help you.

MAIN SPEAKER JUNE



Our main speaker was Peter Rutherford who presented an excellent talk. We were shown a series of aerial photos that showed just how big Kimbriki has become over its 50-60 years of operation. Amongst the new facilities was a billion litre lined tank set in the ground to catch the water that is leaching from the surrounding rotting vegetation dumps. Left to its own devices the water would turn acid and contaminate the area. A leachate and aerating plant have been set up and the resulting water is pumped up to the Terry Hills sewage system for disposal. An experimental electrical power plant has been set up to run on the methane gas that is created by all the rotting vegetation. This required an 80 metre length of pipe to be driven into the rotting vegetation heap to tap the gas. We were shown a concrete recycling plant capable of processing 100,000 tons of scrap concrete from demolished buildings sites. The crushed concrete is then sold as gravel. Roof tiles are treated the same way and can be dumped free of charge as can electronic waste. Tyres can be recycled in various ways such as making new tyres or fuel. The second hand shop makes up to \$20,000 a month in profit. The aim of Kimbriki is to minimise land fill. At the moment much of Sydney's waste is transported by rail to the Woodlawn Mine, an old open cut mine down between Goulbourn and Queanbeyan. Here a methane collection system is being continuously installed as the hole gradually fills up and the gas is used to generate electricity. The Eco House was built at Kimbriki with the aim of showing people how to recycle. It is here that Peter teaches school children gardening and recycling. Peter completed his talk with an unusual drum and music recital that will be remembered for quite a while by those who heard it.

Main Speaker July: This will be Mary Ann Napper. Mary Ann has written a biography of Megumi Bennett and her life and times. Many of us will remember Megumi Bennett and her bonsai nursery and the classes in bonsai she ran. The nursery was behind where the Buddha's Belly Restaurant now trades on Mona Vale Road. Megumi Bennet will be with her and will give a bonsai demonstration.

MEMBER SPEAKER JUNE

Our member speaker was Ian St Clair. Ian gave an interesting talk on the problems associated with 'Downsizing'. This occurs when you move from a house you have lived in for 40 years, the kids have long since gone and the house is far too large for two people. Ian recently moved from a large house complete with a lovely garden, swimming pool and all mod cons to a much smaller house on a block of only 400sq metres. He spoke of the emotional upheavals that occur when you have to dispose of dozens of items that have been old friends for many years and carried many memories. Ian outlined the decisions that have to be made such as whether to buy the new place first, whether this is the right time to sell, whether the property market is rising or falling and so on. He gave details of the things to be discussed with the solicitor, such as his fees, and likewise with the real estate agent. Ian outlined the problems of decluttering and suggested that hiring a skip to get rid of as much stuff as possible was the way to go. It is then an idea to check with Life Line as to what will they take. It is important to inform the Water Board, Post Office, gas company and the Council that you are leaving this address. Be aware of all the conditions that apply to your new property. If you wish to take favourite plants with you, pot them up well before your moving date so they don't suffer too much from the move. Ian closed his discussion with a question and answer session.

Member Speaker July: Daniel Low, President of the Camellia Research Society, will talk briefly about the upcoming Camellia Show at Ravenswood on 13/14 July.

GROWING PLANTS FROM SEED

Spring is a couple of months down the track and it is an ideal time to think about sowing seeds in your garden, be it for vegetables or flowers. The days will start to get longer and things will start to warm up. When you are in your garden centre are you starting to pause at the seed rack and a little voice inside you says "that would look nice alongside the path"? Unless they are rare, seeds are a cheap way of getting a plant collection going. Just check that the planting instructions and a use by date are on the back of the packet. If the use by date is past, then reject the packet as many seeds like grass seeds are only viable for a short time. In a way, each seed is like a packet that has a complete plant inside it plus enough food to feed the young plant till it is big enough make its own food through the interaction of sunlight, air, soil and water. Seed will remain dormant until the right conditions arrive. Only then will the seed break its case, allowing water and oxygen to start the germination process. Different seeds require different triggers. Some like it hot, some like it cold. Moisture is another requirement. For example, beans and sweet peas seeds will germinate far more easily if they are soaked in water for 24 hours before planting. The growing medium should be a mix of good quality potting mix and home grown compost, 50/50 usually works well. If you don't want to make your own soil mix, bags of seed raising mix are available at your garden centre. Spread your mix in shallow trays and sow your seeds on top, then gently sieve a thin layer of fine compost over them. Keep the mix damp but not wet. Some seeds such as carrots and radish are best sown directly into the area where the plants will grow. Seed packets usually have instructions on the back that will tell you how far down the seeds should go into the ground. A rough rule of thumb is that the bigger the seed the further down into the soil you plant it. As some of the seeds are almost like dust, a folded slip of paper can be used to distribute the fine seed along a groove in the soil. You can then use a small piece of wood to close the groove. Follow this up with a very light watering to get the seeds to germinate. Remember, moisture is essential for germination. Once your seeds have germinated, ease off with the watering as with too much water your seeds will rot. Some of the problems with growing plants from seeds include failure to germinate. Fine seeds need to be kept damp to get them to germinate whereas large seeds like beans and peas should be left to almost dry out between waterings. Another problem is planting the seeds too deep so check the packet to make sure of the correct depth. Sometimes seedlings suddenly disappear so check for slugs and snails. They leave silvery trails, in which case scatter some snail bait based on ETDA or iron chelate not one based on metaldehyde. Occasionally seedlings collapse overnight and look as though they have been cut off. This is the cutworm (the caterpillar of a night-flying moth) at work. Make collars from empty containers (yoghurt containers work well) and use them to make a 'fence' around your seedlings. Some seedlings go long and skinny. This is usually caused by lack of sunlight. If they are in containers, move them to a sunnier position. If they are in the ground, see if you can prune off some nearby foliage to let in more light. More problems: The seeds come up well but rot before maturing. You could be dealing with one of the soil-borne fungal diseases like damping off. Check your drainage to see if it is working. Ease off on your watering so that the soil is just damp not wet. Water in the morning and improve the air circulation. The seeds matured and are established but have made very little progress and have turned yellow. Spread some general purpose slow release fertiliser around your seedlings as they have probably run short of food. Alternatively water once a week with half-strength general purpose liquid fertiliser.

Warning: Don't bring in seeds from overseas. They might be an ordinary plant in their homeland but they could turn into a pest in Australia. Apart from that, there is a very heavy fine if you get caught. It's just not worth it.

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



► Even though we are in the middle of winter there is quite a lot we can do in the garden. Many plants and shrubs can be pruned now. With wisterias, the long canes can be cut back to flower spurs. Roses also can be cut back but in the Sydney area it is best to wait until mid-July. However, don't cut back climbing roses as they should be done after

flowering. If you have some grape vines, take the clippers to them and give them a good tidy up so they are ready for the new spring growth. Your chrysanthemums will have finished flowering and can be given a good cut back now. If you are growing a crepe myrtle as a shrub and not as a tall bush, give it a tidy up with the clippers.

- ▶ Give any roses that have been pruned recently a good spray with lime sulphur and while you are at it, give the soil underneath the bush a good spray. This will help stop fungi growing and damaging your plants.
- ▶ Clivia are starting to develop their flowers and snails and slugs love them. Scatter some snail bait that is based on either ETDA or iron chelate around your plants to kill them. Don't use one that is based on metaldehyde. It can kill pets and make children very sick.
- ▶ If you have not already done it, move any pot plants that are sitting out in the open to a warmer place like alongside a brick wall that gets the sun in the winter. The wall will act like a heat bank and keep your plants warm overnight. Frost tender plants can be moved inside. They will need a brightly lit place away from cold draughts and where they won't be dried out by warm air from a heater or air conditioner. Check them for moisture content every three or four days as they dry out fairly quickly indoors. Poke your finger into the soil to check. Damp not wet is what you want. Too wet and the roots will rot.
- ▶ Do you have a large crepe myrtle that you cut back every year. Don't cut back to the same place each year. You will form an ugly-looking callus at that point. Move 3 or 4 cm up the branch. Crepe myrtle can become very large over a long period so if you wish to cut back to reduce its overall size, go back to your original cuts and cut under the first pruning cut and start all over again. All cuts should be made at an angle so that water will run off and the stump does not start to rot.
- ▶ Your poinsettia should have finished flowering by now so it is time to prune it back to about a metre high. Be careful with that white sap, it can be very nasty, so wear long sleeves, gloves and goggles. The cuttings can go into the compost but don't shred them or they will stick all over the inside of your shredder. Cut them up with a pair of clippers or a small lopper.



Question? I have set up a large pot with several cacti in it. Now the cold weather is with us, should I continue to water them?
Answer: Your cacti should still be watered but with a much longer period between waterings. Space out your waterings to a monthly or six weekly intervals. The soil should be almost dry during the cold months. Start to water them regularly at the end of October.

Question? I need to move a couple of Azaleas. They are not big plants but have been in the bed for several years. Is it alright to move them now in the cooler weather?
Answer: Yes, azaleas can be moved now. The first step is to have the new location all set to receive them. Dig the new holes before you lift them. The less time out of the ground the better. Azaleas are shallow rooted so take your spade and following the drip line, push it as deep under the root ball as you can and lift the plant out of the ground. Transfer it to its new home straight away. Firm the soil down and give it a really good drink of seaweed solution.

Question? Can I grow lilliums in a pot on a first floor balcony?
Answer: Yes, lilliums will be quite happy there but there are a couple of things to watch out for. Be sure they are sheltered from the wind and strong sunlight. Find a position where they get sunlight for only a couple of hours a day. The potting mix in the pot should lean a bit towards the acid side. Keep the soil damp but not wet. Put a layer of gravel in the bottom of the pot to improve drainage. A tray under the pot might save making a mess when you water.

Question? I have a pot of daffodils inside on my kitchen window sill. They are finished now so can I put them outside in a sunny place.
Answer: Yes, they can go outside to a sunny place but keep on watering them and feeding them until the foliage dies right back and dries up when it can then be removed and dropped in the compost bin. During the following months keep the soil just damp.



**Decorative:
Bark, Twigs and Flowers**

*Regards
Hugh*