

HORTULANUS

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

JUNE 2018



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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

June 5 JUNE MEETING: Bernard Chapman will speak on Shade Plants
June 9/10 Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. 10-4pm Enq. www.eryldene.org.au
June 23/24 Mingara Orchid Fair, Mingara Recreation Club, Mingara Drive, Tumbi Umbi Sat. 9-5pm, Sun. 9-3pm
July 3 JULY MEETING: DOUG Purdy will speak on bees.

Hi

The weather was fine for our 85th Anniversary and the hall opened early at 4.30pm to allow in a large group of enthusiastic gardeners and their helpers to start work on their five major floral exhibits and just as importantly to let the caterer in with his large trays of savouries. The Anniversary cake arrived later by special delivery. On arrival members were presented with a free Lucky Door prize ticket as they paused to admire the huge floral arrangement in a basket put together by Kate Stanley.

A memorabilia table was set up by Hugh Myers to show members a glimpse of our past. Two stern judges over-looked copies of paragraphs from some of the old Minute books that reflected the hard times of the depression years into which our Society was born and showed the ups and downs of its financial state. Those were the days when the five shilling membership fee (50cents) was a considerable sum of money. The Society's first Minute book was mounted and displayed some fine penmanship. A large silver cup was displayed. This was awarded to Frances McKinnon many years ago for her success as a Show Bench exhibitor. Frances, now in her 90's, is still a member but was unfortunately was not able to be present.

Our President, Doreen Clark, opened the 85th Anniversary meeting by welcoming all the members and guests and thanking all who had helped to make the evening a success. She pointed out that past meetings often included entertainment and that was to be the theme of this meeting, She then read out a letter from Stewart McPherson (who spoke to us in February) which brought us up to date with his recent travels in search of rare plants. His latest find was a very tall (and very smelly) *Amorphophallus* on the island of Sumatra.

The Secretary, Christine Rethers, followed by speaking about the lovely display tables. Cynthia and Jim Brydie had constructed a striking display of orchids, sarracenias, begonias, an unusual euphorbia, a pinguicula and some ferns. Along the same lines, Christine had put together a display of orchids and begonias. Those very talented ladies who frequently put outstanding exhibits in the Decorative section of the Show Bench, each had put together a table. Colleen Lukey's table featured a 'High Tea' and how 'delicious' everything looked. June Popplewell made a very interesting 'Succulent Quilt' and Brenda Zimmerman presented the 'Harvest' comprising some very large and different pumpkins and other fruits and vegetables.

Doreen then gave an interesting talk on the history of the Society from the very first meeting in May 1933 which was attended by 8 people (six men and two wives) up until the 1970's. The Society in those days was very male-oriented with women being relegated to their own classes on the Show Bench and only given duties such as catering. The first public meeting was in June 1933 and 68 people signed up as members. They came from all parts of the district from Killara on the North Shore Line to Pennant Hills. The Society at that time was known as the Wahroonga Horticultural Society and meetings took place in St John's church hall, Wahroonga. The monthly show bench (which we still have today) originated from this very first monthly meeting. However, the classes were somewhat different in that there were separate sections for Professional, Amateur and Novice exhibitors and the Schedule was a great deal more demanding – for example, Class 1 was for 18 cut blooms comprising 6 distinct sets of 3 blooms per vase!! This very first monthly meeting began with a musical item (piano, violin and cello). Then questions from the Question Box were answered by the Committee, the results of the show bench judging were given out and a further musical item closed the meeting. Haven't things changed!

The annual Spring and Autumn flower shows were a feature of the Society for many years. However, membership during the WWII years declined greatly and monthly meetings were curtailed for some of the time. It was at this time that the ladies finally became visible in the Society. After the war, the Society reconvened in 1946 and it then became known as the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society. During the post-war years, the Society really took off under



the leadership of the President, Justice Markell. At last the ladies were given their proper place in the Society and formed their own Ladies Committee – no longer were they merely relegated to catering duties. Membership continued to rise, it was 464 members in 1953 and peaked at 536 members in 1959. In 1969 the Committee consisted of 11 ladies and 11 men – equality at last! However, during the 1960's membership started to decline, no doubt due to the setting up of other gardening clubs in the area. In 1970 it was down to 191 members. Membership numbers have fluctuated from then until now between 110 and 150 which we have at present.

Doreen concluded her brief glimpse at the history of the Society by paying tribute to the many hundreds of people who kept the Society alive and (mostly) flourishing during the 85 years since its foundation.

The meeting continued with a joke from Doreen and then another very funny joke from our past president, Jim Sweeting. This was followed by the drawing of the Lucky Door prizes. The entertainment continued with a short video clip of a Golden Retriever 'pruning' a rose. The dog belonged to Peter Fisher's son and he proceeded to attack a bush rose and eat three-quarters of its leaves! This was of course followed by a Q & A session on pruning, conducted by Christine. Some interesting questions emerged which hopefully Christine was able to answer satisfactorily. Keeping to the entertainment theme of the evening, Ted Shaw showed a video of the "Naked Towel Dance" to everyone's great amusement.

The meeting concluded with an invitation to supper which was waiting for us on the long tables near the stage. After partaking of the delicious savouries, the Anniversary cake was produced, a very large Croquembouche, which was delicately served by Penny Whipp.

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.

A very warm welcome to our new member, Melissa Lahoud. Our best wishes for a speedy recovery go to Winsome Coombe who has had a period of time in hospital and rehab. We hope to see her up and about again very soon. Warm wishes also to Jim Sweeting who has had a period of time in hospital following an accident.

Maureene and Keith Smith's Huge Plant Sale at the end of April was a Huge! success, raising \$11,000 for the National Breast Cancer Foundation. What an effort! Well done and congratulations, Keith and Maureene. Well done also to all our members who supported the sale.

OUTINGS

Mt Wilson, Thursday, 24 April: We had 48 happy travellers with us on a really good day in the mountains. Not much autumn colour unfortunately (no doubt due to the unusually hot conditions, even in the mountains) but the gardens were lovely.

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 will be included with next month's Hortulanus. Expressions of interest can be given to Helen Gilkes at the next meeting or phone her on 9144 4826.

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.

RAFFLE

No raffle but some lovely Lucky Door prizes including a monster hamper donated by Organic Crop Protectants, a beautiful basket of flowers put together by Kate Stanley, a large chrysanthemum donated by Elegant Outdoors Nursery, a beautiful wall plaque donated by Penny and Nita Whipp and some chocolates and a book donated by Anonymous.

GARDEN TABLE AND SHOW BENCH

These will be back in operation for the June meeting so don't forget to check them out.

Main Speaker June This will be Bernard Chapman who will speak about shade plants.

Member Speaker June: Christine Erratt will speak on Flora on Australian Silver—a subject that probably most of us know very little about. Christine's talk should be very interesting.



THE AUTUMN GARDEN by Christine Rethers

Usually we regard autumn and winter in our Sydney gardens as a rest period for many of our flowering plants that have put heart and soul in giving us a wonderful display over spring and summer. However, there are a number of flowering plants that will quite cheerfully soldier on right into the coldest months of the year. Among these are some of the salvias and many lavenders



Salvia 'Winter Lipstick'

which will remain in flower right up to late June and July. The trick with these two genera is to give them a really good cut-back in January and then feed them up. They will come back into bloom quite quickly and continue blooming for several more months. There are in fact some winter-flowering salvias – a tall red-flowering one in my garden only starts flowering in May and continues on right through winter. It is probably a *Salvia karwinskii*-*involucrata* cross, maybe the one called 'Winter Lipstick' but I have had it for quite some time and its label has long since disappeared. Whatever it is, it is a beauty. I would put the tall yellow-flowering salvia, *Salvia madrensis*, in the same category, definitely worth growing but just needs to be at towards the back of a border as it too is quite tall.

Lavender, especially the French lavender (*Lavandula dentata*), will also continue blooming right through autumn and into winter. They need as much sun as you can give them and a small handful of dolomite once a year as they prefer an alkaline soil. Just remember to trim them back lightly a couple of times during the year to stop them from becoming leggy and woody.

Some other plants that will keep blooming right through autumn include the *Plectranthus* especially the lovely blue one, *Plectranthus Mona Lavender*. Penta are also generous with their flowers for most of autumn but will stop flowering once the very cold weather comes along. Some of the early-flowering narcissus such as 'Paper White' will provide a nice display during autumn.



Plectranthus Mona Lavender

It is worth giving these plants a try as apart from providing us with some welcome colour during the colder months, these plants also give our bees somewhere to forage for nectar and pollen.



► With the onset of the cold weather many plants, trees and shrubs go into hibernation for the next few months but this is not the case with many weeds such as *Oxalis* that just go on their merry way growing. *Oxalis* is too low to be cut with a mower so you have two choices. One is to spray with a Glyphosate (Zero) based weedicide or dig it out. If you decide to spray, fit a small

funnel over the spray nozzle to stop over-spray onto the lawns or other parts of the garden. If you choose to dig it out, use a long flat-bladed knife and go well down under the weed before you try to lift it and don't leave any bulbs.

► If you find a strange bulb with a nice little white flower in your garden, don't say to yourself "that's a nice flower I wonder where it came from" as it is probably onion weed and you should get rid of it promptly. First take off every flower before they go to seed. If you choose to spray it with a weedicide that will get rid of the plant and the mother bulb but not the young bulbils. Unfortunately, these will come up again next season. Watch for the young shoots and get rid of them as soon as they appear. Getting rid of onion weed is an ongoing battle that could take a couple of seasons to win. Digging onion weed out of the ground is a long slow job as you must get ALL of the bulbils. If you leave only one, you are back to square one next season.

► Mid to late winter is rose pruning time so check your secateurs and make sure they are nice and sharp. First reduce the height of your rose bush by about a third to a half all over. Get rid of any old dead growth by cutting it out at ground level. If it is too thick, use a pruning saw. Use your secateurs to cut off bits here and there to improve the shape of the bush. When pruning a rose, always cut to a node and use a sloping cut so that water won't accumulate on the stem when it rains and rot it.

Don't transfer any diseases from one rose to the other. Always clean your secateurs with bleach before moving on to the next plant.

All prunings and any rubbish under the rose should go into the RUBBISH BIN not the compost heap as they most likely carry scale and fungal diseases. Finally, spray the whole rose and the soil with lime sulphur or copper oxychloride which will help to control these problems.

► For those with potted plants, ease off with the watering. Just damp is what you want. If you keep up your summer watering you could rot your plants. Do a bit of maintenance on your pot plants. Tip them over on their side and check the drain holes and if they are blocked, winkle them clear. Poke a piece of wooden rod about the diameter of a pencil well up into the roots inside the pot and give it a good wriggle and this will greatly improve the drainage.

► Check the area around the bottom of your citrus trees for excess water or wetness. Maybe a collection of leaves is preventing all the rain water draining away. Give the area a good clean up so the excess water can drain away. If the soil becomes too wet, it could lead to rotting of the roots of your citrus.

► The next time you finish mowing and have a near empty fuel tank, turn your mower over on its side and inspect the blades. If they are badly worn, now is the time to change them. Blunt blades don't cut well but tear the grass which does not help regrowth at all. When was the last time you had a look at the spark plug? Give the mower a new one, it will make starting easier. Don't forget to take the old one with you when you go to buy the new one as there is a wide range of plugs available and getting the right one is important.

► Are you running a worm farm? Cut back on the amount of food scraps you are putting in the trays. The worms get a bit sluggish in the cold weather and don't eat as much. By putting too much into the trays you will attract vinegar flies and the scraps will

start to smell. The excess scraps can be put into a sealed compost bin and if it get too wet, add some more dry leaves. A compost heap that is too wet will smell and not produce good compost until it dries out sufficiently.

► Those little bindii weeds that you missed last time round are starting to grow so out with the hand weeding fork and start looking. Small or big bindii plants can be lifted out of the ground as a complete plant with a hand weeder at this time of the year. Just get them out before those little yellow flowers appear. If you wish to use a weedicide then one based on Glyphosate (Zero) will do the job. If you spray, be very careful you don't spray the grass. Painting it on with a small brush is safer but make sure you wear gloves.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Question? I have an offer of a dozen bags of horse manure from a friend. They are straight from the stable. I have heard that horse manure should not be used fresh on the garden. Why is this?

Answer: Fresh horse manure straight from the stable should not be used in the garden as it contains a high quantity of nutrients that the plants can't take up and it will kill them. Spread it out up the back where it can rot for 6 months and then it becomes quite a good fertiliser. While it is fresh keep it away from the house as it will attract flies for a while.

Question? I have a Port Wine magnolia that produces lots of beautiful flowers but they have no perfume. I always thought all magnolias had a perfume. What has gone wrong and what can I do about it?

Answer: Theoretically all magnolias are perfumed to a certain degree but every now and then you will get one that is not perfumed even though the flower is beautiful. It could just be in the genes. Give it a good feed of a fertiliser that has plenty of potassium in it and that could help.

Question? I have had a lot of trouble with my azaleas this year that really spoilt their show. The flower petals all turned brown and papery. I have been told this is petal blight. What can I do to stop it occurring again?

Answer: Petal blight is a fungus that you can get rid of. First, clean up all the rubbish and leaves under your azalea, get rid of any dead leaves from the plant and have a really good clean up. It is very easy to transfer the fungal infection from plant to plant. Put all rubbish and dead leaves in the rubbish bin not the compost heap. Be careful when watering to water the soil not the foliage and flowers. You can also spray your plant with the fungicide Zaleton or Mancozeb Plus.

Question? My cannas have been in the ground for five years and are starting to look very untidy. When can I lift them and tidy up the area?

Answer: Now is as good a time as any to get into them and clean up the place. Lift the whole clump then cut out the original and get rid of it as it has had its day. Before you replant, dig in lots of well-rotted cow manure and compost. Replant all those young plants as soon as the bed is ready and don't leave them lying around till the next week end. Once everything has been tidied up, water in well with a seaweed solution to help the young plants on their way. Keep an eye out for snails as they don't mind the cold weather and a young canna is always on the menu.. Scatter some snail bait that is based on either iron chelate or EDTA, not one based on metaldehyde. If eaten metaldehyde, can kill pets or at the very least make them very sick.

Question? Can I bring my cyclamen inside during the winter?

Answer: Yes, potted cyclamen can be brought inside during winter but they should be kept in a cool place away from any source of heat and after a few weeks they should be put back outside for a couple of weeks. When watering cyclamen be careful to only water the soil just around the outside where the roots are. Don't water onto the bulb as it could lead to the bulb rotting. When buying cyclamen bulbs, avoid any that look a bit on the dry side as these are usually old bulbs and will not flower very well.



Regards
Hugh