

HORTULANUS

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

JUNE 2019



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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 1** Cactus & Succulent Society Show, Hawkesbury Racecourse, Clarendon 9-3.30 Entry: \$5
June 4 JUNE MEETING: Peter Rutherford: Recycling at Kimbriki
June 8/9 Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. 10-4pm Enq. www.eryldene.org.au
June 29/30 Mingara Orchid Fair, Mingara Recreation Club, Mingara Drive, Tumbi Umbi Sat. 9-5pm, Sun. 9-3pm
July 2 JULY MEETING: Mary Ann Napper—Megumi Bennett Biography and Bonsai Demonstration.
July 13/14 Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. 10-4pm Enq. www.eryldene.org.au
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

Hi

It was a cold and windy night with all the Hall's doors closed for our May meeting but it did not stop 66 well rugged up members and their friends from turning out to enjoy themselves and exchange notes with their friends. The President opened the meeting welcoming members and visitors. She congratulated Keith Smith on his record breaking sale of pot plants that raised \$13,774 for the National Breast Cancer Foundation. She also drew members' attention to a pile of very attractive cloth bags further along the table that were for sale at \$10 apiece with all the money going to the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

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. This is important as it is needed to check that we have your details correctly recorded.

A very warm welcome to our newest members, Mrs Mary-Louise McPherson and Mrs Valerie Bray.

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. A Times and Jobs Sheet will be on the table at the next meeting so you can register when you will be available to help and which job you would prefer. 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. Thank you for the great response. 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. Those confirmed travellers will receive an invoice for the remaining payment in mid-June. Any who are members of Qantas Frequent Flyer scheme may submit their membership number to be credited for these flights.

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

As usual the Show Bench was loaded with excellent exhibits. Camellias are coming into their own and put on a beautiful show. We are still seeing some very nice roses and gerberas were looking good. These are plants that you don't often see in gardens these days. Schlumbergera were still flowering strongly. An unusual Plumeria (frangipani) from Queensland looked splendid in its pot, its flower quite different from what is usually seen. Down in the Vegie section were some fine pumpkins on show. Autumn leaves look beautiful in the Decorative section. The Pictorial section had many fine photos. Exhibitors should remember that only exhibits that can't be brought to the hall can be shown in this section, they should be from the member's garden and should have been taken with a month of being exhibited.

RAFFLE

As usual we had excellent prizes on offer in the raffle. The fine New Guinea Impatiens was purchased by your Society from the Honeysuckle Nursery in Turramurra. The four books were all donated by Doreen Clark, thank you Doreen. These are all good prizes so step right up and give the man near the door \$2 for three chances to win one of them. No ticket, no chance and all the money goes to your Society.

GARDEN TABLE

As usual the Garden Table was loaded with top quality plants, all going cheap. A big basket of Rhipsalis stood alongside a Cerus coramandel cactus from South America. A blue iris sat beside a clump of Daylillies. Some Saxifraga and Hoya kept each other company. These and many other plants are all good healthy home grown plants that are selling for a lot less than you would pay for them in a garden centre. Go along and have a look, you don't have to buy but you never know what you will find.

MAIN SPEAKER MAY



Our Main Speaker was Stewart Macpherson, We have met Stewart several times before and as usual he gave an excellent talk, bringing us up-to-date with what he had been doing since he spoke to us last year. He has been working on his World's Most Spectacular Plants project which aims to get boxes of books for junior school students into 10,000 schools in the UK. The object of this endeavour is to show young people just how fascinating plants can be so that they will be encouraged to develop an interest in the wonders of the plant world. Stewart hopes to bring this project to Australia and is looking for a sponsor to get it off the ground next year. Along with the books, Stewart has also produced some wonderful YouTube film clips showing some of the unusual plants he has photographed in various parts of the world. These can be found on his website: www.spectacularplants.com. He plans to complete 14 of these films and episodes 1-4 are ready for viewing right now so do take a moment and have a look—you won't be disappointed. During his talk he showed us two of these which included

the world's smelliest plants as well as some of the tallest flowers and the most amazing carnivorous plants that trap insects and even small mammals. To get these amazing photos, Stewart travels to some of the most remote locations in the world and tackles seemingly impenetrable jungles. We look forward to hearing more of his adventures when he visits again, hopefully sometime next year.

Main Speaker June: This will be Peter Rutherford who will give a talk on Kimbriki Recycling Centre and how it is run. We all know Kimbriki as a place to get rid of rubbish but there is another side to its operation. Did you know, for instance, that it generates electricity from the rubbish. It should be interesting, so do come along.

MEMBER SPEAKER MAY

Our Member Speaker was Peter Fisher who spoke on 'Keeping a Garden Diary' and posed the question 'If you keep an ordinary diary, why don't you keep a Garden Diary to record what you are doing in your garden?'

Peter told the story of how after reading an article by Robin Powell, a well known horticultural journalist, on how she decided that she should start to keep a diary on the whys and wherefores and what she had done in her garden, he decided it would be good for his future gardening efforts that he keep an accurate up-to-date diary on his gardening efforts. This way he could get rid of all the odd notes and half-used note books in his shed. He had given his wife Sue, a Diggers Garden Club Diary in 2018. It was a rather big book and beside being a diary, it had pockets for storing notes, labels and half-used note books. Another potential diary was the Spirax A4 Subject Book which came in various sizes and included dividers. In trying to find suitable diaries, phone calls to various sources did not produce the desired result. A good example of the systematic use of garden diaries is Rick Shepard, Head Gardener of Retford Park. Rick uses a system of double diaries. One is his Planning Diary which covers day-to-day jobs etc. The second diary looks at the present and the past. It also includes notes on the weather together with notes on what is doing well and what is not.

Retford Park is in the Southern Highlands and is roughly 750m above sea level. For real encouragement to keep a diary, read a book called Cruden Farm Diaries. Cruden Farm was the family home of Dame Elizabeth Murdoch. Dymocks would have it or will get it in for you.

Member Speaker June: This will be Ian and Julie St Clair who will speak on 'Down Sizing'. Ian and Julie recently left a large house, swimming pool and a large carefully tended garden and moved into a much smaller property. This situation is close for a lot of us.

PLANT OF THE MONTH—POTATOES (a brief history) by Hugh Myers

Probably one of the most widely distributed vegetables in the world is the common potato that appears on your dinner plate almost every night. It has an interesting history and can be traced back to 2000 BC in Peru and Bolivia. It has since travelled widely and can now be found in 150 countries around the world. It was first introduced to the Canary Islands by the Spanish in 1567 and to Europe a short time later in 1570. The first recorded cultivation of potatoes in Europe was in 1573-1576 in Serrville in Spain. They then really started travelling when they went to Australia in 1770 with Captain Cook. In the 19th Century, cultivars were found in Chile which would stand up to the cold northern winters in Europe. They were promptly imported into those parts of Britain and Europe where the winters were very cold. It did not take long for these cold climate potatoes to cross back over the Atlantic to North America where they promptly became a major food crop. In the 19th century the potato was the major food crop in Ireland and the Irish became dependent on them as a main item in their diet. Unfortunately the potatoes were all the same variety and had no resistance to the potato blight disease which caused the potatoes to rot. Disaster struck in 1845 -1849 and the potato crops of those years were wiped out. Over a million people starved to death while a million and a half migrated to America in search of a better life. In recent times and much nearer home during WWII, potatoes became scarce on the mainland of Australia. Most of the mainland potatoes came from Tasmania and in the dark days of 1942 quite a few ships carrying potatoes were torpedoed in Bass Strait and off the east coast. Potatoes became scarce on the mainland and the government stepped in. The price was fixed at five pounds of potatoes for six pence and that included the dirt (they did not wash potatoes in those days). You were only allowed one lot of five pounds at any one time. It was not uncommon to see people form a queue outside the local produce store to get their potatoes. I can remember on more than one occasion running home to tell my mother that the local produce store had potatoes.



▶ At this time of the year camellias and azaleas are in full bloom and producing masses of flowers. Most of the flowers are short lived and soon drop their petals, quite often onto the path beside them. Make it a practice to regularly clean up these petals as they are very slippery and could cause an accident.

▶ Have you any deciduous trees or shrubs in your garden? If you have, now is the time to inspect them and get rid of any dead branches or twigs. If you have a shredder and the branches are not diseased or too big, put them through it and then put the shreadings into the compost heap. Should they be diseased, throw them into the garbage bin, not the compost.

▶ Have you thought of growing your own potatoes? They always give a generous crop. Plant into a well turned over bed with lots of compost added. Make sure it is free draining. Mix some dolomite and mineral rock into the soil. Keep the water up to them, just damp is the way to go. Once they have sprouted give them a drink of seaweed solution every two to three weeks. When selecting your seed potatoes, don't use the potatoes from the supermarket but get a bag of top quality seed potatoes from your garden centre as they have been checked for any diseases.

▶ If you are thinking of trying your hand at growing Rhubarb, now is the time to plant the rhubarb crowns in a bed that has had lots of OLD cow manure or OLD horse manure dug into it. Rhubarb crowns can be purchased from your local garden centre. If they don't have them, they will get them in for you.

▶ Did you plant some asparagus last year and now have asparagus spears starting to pop up? Don't harvest them this season but let them go till next season. This enables the asparagus crowns to become tough and well established, ensuring that you will have a regular supply of top quality spears for years to come.

▶ At this time of the year your veggie garden will be working hard. It is a good practice to feed most vegetables once a month with a liquid fertiliser high in phosphorous and potassium which encourages strong growth. Salad vegetables should be fed once every two weeks as they are fast growing. A monthly drink of seaweed solution would also be appreciated by all vegetables.

▶ Keep an eye on your lawn as although the grass might have slowed right down, many of the weeds like oxalis they are still going their merry way. Some weeds like Mullumbimby couch and onion weed are best dealt with by carefully

spraying with glysofate rather than digging them out. The root system in the case of Mullumbimby couch is very extensive. In the case of onion weed, there are many small bulbils attached to the main bulb and some will drop off for sure if you try to dig out the main plant. You may have to treat the area again next year if not all the bulbils are poisoned.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Question? I have been given some Cyclamen tubers. How far down in the ground should I plant them ?

Answer: When planting Cyclamen tubers always leave about half the tuber sticking out of the ground. If you bury the tuber completely there is a good chance that the foliage and flower stems will rot off at ground level. If you are

planting them in a pot, remember to put the pot in a saucer and water from below because of the possibility of rotting. Take the saucer away once the plant has taken up the water.

Question? Once they are planted how long do gladioli bulbs take to come into flower?

Answer: Usually gladioli bulbs take about 120 days (3-4 months) from planting to putting out flowers. In other words, if planted now you should get a good show of flowers early to mid spring, around the end of September and into October.

Question? I am having trouble with my Packham pear tree. It should produce large edible fruit but instead there are lots of small and almost inedible pears. Is there anything I can do about it?

Answer: Yes, get out your pruning equipment. Pear trees form so much fruiting wood that larger older trees become overloaded with small useless fruit. Go over your tree with the secateurs and thin out those small fruiting branches so that the fruiting branches you have left are about 15cm apart. In January get rid of those long upward reaching branches, cut them off at their base right on the branch they come from. Having less 'children' to feed, your tree should produce much larger fruit.

Question? Every winter my lemon tree gets black or grey scabby patches on its fruit. What can I do about it?

Answer: This is a disease called citrus scab. It is usually caused by growers not cleaning up the rubbish that accumulates under citrus trees. Get your rake out and clean up all the rubbish under your tree. Put the rubbish in the garbage bin not the compost heap. At the beginning of spring spray with copper oxychloride and add about 6 ml of Eco oil per litre of spray, well mixed in. Spray again in February. Don't forget to wash the fruit before you use it.

Question? I have a very nice geranium growing in a large pot but the leaves are being attacked by some sort of fungus. The leaves are mottled with small dark spots and are starting to fall off. What can I do?

Answer: This is Pelargonium Rust. When was the last time you took your clippers to your geranium? Cut out a lot of the foliage so that air can circulate through the plant. Get rid of the infected leaves into the garbage bin not the compost bin. Check all the good leaves, turn them over and have a look at the underside for orange or dark brown spots and get rid of those leaves also. With a bad infection, find a couple of clean cuttings and get rid of the rest of the plant.

Question? My bougainvillea is getting out of hand. When and how often can I prune it?

Answer: Bougainvillea can be pruned regularly from spring to early autumn. Do this after each flush of flowers. By doing this, you will encourage more flowering stems. Watch out for thorns, it is a long sleeves and gloves job. New thorns are soft but they can still bite. You could clip off the old hard thorns on the old wood if they are a bother

Question? When should I water my bougainvillea?

Answer: Always water early in the morning, never after about 11.00 am. One of the most common causes of leaf drop and bract drop in bougainvillea is cold wet feet. Bougainvilleas seem to be better able to deal with dry soil than they can with wet soil.



Foliage, Fruit and Driftwood

Regards
Hugh