

HORTULANUS

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

MAY 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

- Apr 26-May 6 Botanica—Symbiosis: Lion Gate Lodge, Royal Botanic Gardens 10-4pm daily Entry free
Apr 29 Maureene and Keith Smith's Huge Plant Sale, 45 Parklands Ave, Lane Cove North from 10am
May 1 MAY 85th ANNIVERSARY MEETING
May 14-15 Eryldene House and Garden, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon 10-4pm entry \$8
May 18-20 Orchids Out West, Hawkesbury Racecourse, Clarendon 9-4pm Entry \$5
May 5 JUNE MEETING: Bernard Chapman will speak about Shade Plants

No Show Bench, No Garden Table, No Raffle
(Lucky Door prizes instead)

Happy 85th Anniversary to all members!

It is a tribute to the power of gardening that our club has been in continuous operation since 1933, first as the Wahroonga Horticultural Society and later, in 1946, as the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society every month for 85 years, a group of keen gardeners have met to exchange ideas and show their best plants. There was a 'near death' experience during 1942 when attendance dropped to about 30, the church store room was taken over for an air-raid shelter and the Autumn and Spring Flower Shows were cancelled. The committee held on however and re-established the Society as the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society in 1946.

By 1956, membership had reached the giddy heights of 536. It declined to 360 by 1961, probably because new garden clubs were being set up. Our present membership of 150 has been stable for some time and we share our enthusiasm for gardening with many local clubs.

At our May meeting, we will hear stories of former times and replicate some practices from the past.

KHS will provide a special supper and there will be worthwhile lucky door prizes in place of a raffle.

Some members will set up exhibition tables, which will be a demonstration of their horticultural and creative skills. You are each invited to bring up to three camellias which will be used to extend the decorations. There will, of course, be a celebration cake!

I hope we will have a record attendance.

Doreen Clark

Hi

It was a warm night for our April meeting but it was not without its hiccups. On arrival, members found the far end of the hall in semi-darkness due to Council contractors disconnecting the last two sets of lights for maintenance work. This made life difficult for the judges and exhibitors. However, the lectern, projector, tables and chairs were moved up to the stage end of the hall and in due course it was business as usual.

The President opened the meeting by welcoming 76 members and visitors. Members were reminded that as we will be celebrating the founding of our Society at the next meeting so several regular sections that are normally part of the evening's program will not take place – no Show Bench, Garden Table or Raffle (replaced by Lucky Door prizes so don't forget to pick up your ticket on the way in).

It was with regret that the President announced the departure later this year of Ray Kench. Ray is a long time member, a show Bench judge and our photographer. His knowledge of gardening is huge and he is always willing to help anyone.

The President then presented three photos and a report received from Stewart McPherson. Members will remember Stewart's recent presentation of Weird and Wonderful Plants. Stewart is searching for more unusual plants in various parts of the world and has sent us a some photos of his latest find. While in London he was told of the imminent flowering of an *Amorphophallus titanum* in Sumatra. So he immediately got on a plane and flew there via Singapore just in time to see it flower. From the



photos we could see that it stood as a pale creamy pointed column 1.83 metres high with a red skirt. Penny Whipp drew the attention of those members who intended to enter into the Garden Clubs of Australia Calendar Photographic Competition that dates have been changed. The new closing dates are Photographic Competition is 1 October 2018. Entries for the 2020 Calendar close on 15 February 2019.

MEMBER NEWS

A warm welcome to our newest members, Sue and Bob Ballinger, from the committee and all members. A very Happy 90th Birthday to Mickey Michalow, lovely to see her at the last meeting. Don't forget Maureen and Keith Smith's Huge Plant Sale on Sunday, 29 April at 45 Parkland Avenue, Lane Cove North from 10 am. You will be sure to find some interesting plants and the money collected goes to the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

Congratulations to members, Kate and Paul Stanley, who were instrumental in getting the inaugural UNSH (Upper North Shore and Hills Regional) Autumn Rose Show to fruition on 8th April in the Galston Community Centre. A number of members visited and were rewarded with a very lovely display.



Congratulations to all members of the Gordon Garden Club on the occasion of the Club's 40th Anniversary this month. This will be celebrated with an anniversary lunch at the Terrey Hills Golf and Country Club.

OUTINGS

Mt Wilson, Thursday, 24 April: we will have a report on this outing at the May meeting.

Canberra, Thursday 27 to 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.

Crookwell Garden Festival, Friday 9 to Sunday 11 November: This will be a 3-day/two night trip and include up to 10 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

With Ray leaving us, we will be short of Show Bench judges and would like to recruit one or two more potential judges from amongst our members. Training will be given to the new judges and they will need to serve a short apprenticeship. Please contact Christine Rethers if you would like to know more (Ph. 9449 6245).

The Show Bench while being a bit light on in the Vegie section, looked good with the Decorative section and the Photographic section particularly good. There were some lovely roses, looking even better than in the spring. The Sasanqua camellias were putting on an excellent show.

GARDEN TABLE

We had some interesting plants on offer and all going cheap. The purple bearded Iris was donated by Marie O'Loughlin and it stood alongside a box of Plectranthus cuttings together with some Ipomoea or Sweet Potatoes. Several books on a variety of gardening subjects were also on offer. Go along and have a look, you don't have to buy but you never know what you may find.

RAFFLE

We had several excellent prizes on offer for the raffle. The very colourful Coleus was purchased from Honesuckle Garden Nursery by your Society. A number of other prizes were donated by Anonymous, thank you Anonymous. These are excellent prizes and it only costs \$2 for 3 tickets and you never know your luck but no ticket, no chance to win.

MAIN SPEAKER APRIL



Our main speaker was Lorraine Emerson from Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens. Lorraine presented several slides and a talk on the huge green wall in the Calyx in the Botanic Gardens. The Calyx is the latest major addition to the Gardens. Opened in 2016, it is a glass building used for exhibitions which change from time to time. The major feature of the Calyx is the green wall. It is 6 metre high and 50 metres long on which designs are constructed with potted plants. The plants are watered and fed by a built-in watering system. During setting up, various patterns with coloured plants have been formed with the end result a beautiful colourful wall depicting the current theme. A close up photo showed how much work had gone into the planting of the wall. The current exhibition is called 'Pollination' and runs until the end of July this year.

Lorraine left several back issues of The Gardens, the Friends' magazine, for members who are interested in learning more about the Friends and the advantages of being a 'Friend'.

Main Speaker May: Doreen Clark will relate some happenings from the early days of the Society.

MEMBER SPEAKER APRIL

Doreen Clark and Nancy Shaw gave an excellent demonstration of how to prune and repot bromeliads. Doreen pointed out that when repotting bromeliads, be ruthless and don't try to save sick plants. Open up big clumps. This often requires the use of big clippers so don't go at it with a small pair as this does not work. Wear gloves as some bromeliads can have sharp edges or spikes that can irritate the skin. Tip the potted bromeliad upside down over a bucket or container and shake the plant out of its original container. Remove all old potting mix and soil. Check for and remove any old and dead roots. Get rid of the dead leaves. When repotting, use a medium sized top quality orchid bark mix, don't use soil. The bark mix will absorb water for later release to the plant while the mix will still be very free draining which is essential. Bromeliads do well in dappled shade with only a few varieties able to tolerate full sun.

Member Speaker May: No member speaker because of the 85th Anniversary celebrations.

GROWING BANKSIAS

We have all at some time or other paused to admire a Banksia bush in full flower, be it in a garden, in the bush or just in the street. With luck you might have seen *Banksia petiolaris* which sends its flowers up out of the ground up to 20 cm away from the shrub, or the giant *Banksia grandis*, a tree with cones up to 30cm high. There are 75 species of Banksia ranging from trees to ground covers and many hybrids. If you buy a hybrid make sure it is going to flower, some don't. Under the right conditions, Banksias will produce flowers 2-3 years after planting. They are an attractive long lived native, a low maintenance shrub or tree. Three of the best known and easy to grow Banksias are *B. ericifolia* 'Giant Candles', *B. marginata* and *B. spinulosa*. These particular Banksias have leathery leaves and cylindrical-like flowers ranging in colour from green through to cream and orange. They form relatively large shrubs. If you wish to attract native birds to your garden these are the shrubs for you.



Planting and Growing: Banksias require a very well-drained soil as they will not tolerate wet feet and can suffer from root rot quite quickly if the soil is left wet. While preferring full sun Banksia will tolerate shade for part of the day. Water regularly until the shrub is established and well on its way then ease right off with the water and only water when the soil has become dry a few centimetres down.

Fertilising: Banksias are not fertiliser hungry plants and are sensitive to most artificial fertilisers, particularly those that have any quantity of phosphorous in them. Banksias are one of those native shrubs that if it is growing well you can forget about fertilising it. Just keep the compost and leaf mould up to them by mulching around the plants with lots of well-rotted compost and leaf mould. Besides providing food, mulch and leaf mould will keep the roots cool in the hot weather.

Flowers: Banksias usually have a long flowering period and keep going through autumn and winter. The flowers make excellent cut flowers that last for a considerable period of time in a vase. Normally Banksias do not require pruning but taking cut flowers is a form of pruning that helps bring on more flowers. The old cones which carry the seeds can be left on the shrub or removed after about 6 months..

Diseases: Banksias are normally pretty good when it comes to diseases but caterpillars are attracted to them and will attack the leaves. Spraying with Dipel should fix that problem. Birds while visiting the flowers will also kill the caterpillars for you. Don't use a caterpillar killer insecticide that uses Spinosad as the active ingredient – Spinosad - will kill any bees that are about as well as the caterpillars.



▶ Winter is almost with us so it is time to take a good look around the garden and do some autumn cleaning up.

▶ Dahlias are well past their prime by now and the large leaves can be cut back to about 30cm above the ground. Should you not have any immediate use for that particular bed and the soil is

well drained, you don't have to lift the tubers. However should you wish to plant something else in that bed then the tubers should be lifted. First label the tubers before you lift them then you will know what they are next season. Lift the tubers with plenty of soil attached and park them in a shady out of the way place. Once the foliage has dried out, cut it off and clean the soil off. The tubers can then be stored on a tray in a cool dry place in your garden shed till next season.

▶ Autumn leaves will be everywhere now so gather them up and put them in the compost heap. Don't forget to damp them down with water when you do this otherwise they will take a lot longer to rot down. Rotting down can be speeded up by mixing a good dollop of molasses in warm water before you pour it onto the compost. Molasses is available in larger quantities from the horse feed store behind the Flower Market on Mona Vale Road.

▶ Leaves in the street gutter can be cleared with the lawn mower. Just be careful and don't rub the blade housing against the concrete kerb, the housing is aluminium and will wear out quickly. If you wish to protect this point of contact between the blade housing and the kerb, bend a bit of thin steel so that it conforms to the curve of the blade housing and bolt it on to the housing so it covers the point of contact. If you are picking up London Plane tree leaves be careful and wear gloves and long sleeves. These trees drop a lot of leaves and seed pods and the seed pods are covered with a fibre that can make you very itchy.

▶ As beautiful as the leaves are at this time of the year, don't even think of going near a Rhus tree as just by brushing against them can make you very sick.

▶ Many of us grow fruit trees such as apricots, peaches, cherries and other deciduous fruit. These fruit trees at this time of the year have lost most of their leaves and this in turn will enable you to have a close look inside the tree. Cut off any dead twigs or branches and check them for diseases or pests. Look closely for holes, large or very small, saw dust or frass (fibres) these are signs of disease or pests. Get rid of any old dead or dried out fruit into the rubbish bin not the compost bin. In short, take the op-

portunity to give the tree a good health check and it will pay dividends next season.

► May and June are the height of the camellia flowering season and whether they be Sasanqua, Japonica or Reticulata, they all have the same habit which is that the flowers are short lived and they drop the petals on the ground. The petals are slippery and if left on a pathway for any length of time can pose a hazard for people passing by. Make it a habit for a month or two while this is happening to clean up any dropped petals every day or so, they can go into the compost heap.

► Thinking about planting a Daphne? Now is the time to do it but be careful, don't plant it any deeper than it was in the pot. Daphne are subject to collar rot so good drainage is essential. Put a layer of pebbles around the trunk where it goes into the ground and this will help fight the collar rot. Plant in a shady place where it will get plenty of light but be out of the western and northern sun.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Question? Our lounge room is reasonably well lit with day light and we would like to grow a couple of Peace Lilies in pots in the room. How well do Peace Lilies perform inside?

Answer: Peace Lilies (*Spathiphyllum*) do very well in lower light and have the ability to extract chemicals like formaldehyde from the air, giving you a cleaner atmosphere.

Question? I want to plant some gladiolus bulbs again this year in the same bed that they were in last year but have been told by a friend not to plant gladiolus in the same bed two years running and that I should leave a space of two years before I replant into the same bed. Is this right?

Answer: Unfortunately your friend is right. Because of several diseases that can attack the corms in the ground it is good practice to leave a gap of a year or two before replanting gladiolus in the same spot. This helps avoid the build up of disease in the soil.

Question? We want to grow some Louisiana Iris in our backyard where we can see them from the kitchen. What sort of soil do we need to grow them in?

Answer: As the name implies these plants come from Louisiana, a state in the tropical part of the USA. They need soil that is damp all the time so keep the water up to them and a position in full sun.. As the flower stems are relatively tall and not particularly strong, the plants should be sheltered from the wind. Dig plenty of organic matter into the soil and this will help retain the moisture. After flowering, cut off the spent flower stems and any foliage that has died. You can expect flowers from spring to early summer with a full range of colours.

Question? We have a Finger Lime growing in our backyard and it is starting to produce fruit for the first time. How do I know when to pick the fruit? At the moment there is a yellowish tinge starting to appear on some of the fruit.

Answer: Those yellow tinged fruit will be the first to ripen, let them go fully yellow before picking ONE at first and try it. If it is bitter don't pick any more but let them go a bit longer then repeat the process. When they are sour and not bitter then you can pick them. Finger Lime won't ripen off the plant they have to ripen on the plant.

Question? What is the difference between a Snowflake and a Snowdrop? Which one should I grow in my garden in Sydney?

Answer: Snowdrops have four petals and flower in early spring. They require a long cold winter and a cool moist spring to flower. While they will usually flower the first year there is a good chance they won't flower again unless these cold conditions are met. Coastal NSW is not a place to grow Snowdrops. Snowflakes produce a small bell like flower with a green spot on it. They are a tough bulb that can be planted and almost forgotten about and they will pop up each year with a few extra new bulbs. They adapt well to whatever climate they are in be it warm or cold. However they don't like the tropics Snowflakes require very little in the way of fertiliser just dig in lots of compost and rotten manure before planting (the bulb should be about 5cm down) and another feed with the same once a year after the foliage has died back Don't cut the foliage off after the bulb has finished flowering but wait until the foliage has dried right out and all the goodness has gone back into the bulb.

Question? I have been given some Liliun bulbs by a friend that are all sizes. How do I know which ones are best to plant?

Answer: The medium sized bulbs would be the best to plant. Check each bulb for firmness and discard any that have soft spots or signs of rot. A good sign is the odd live root on the bulb. Plant them down twice the diameter of the bulb in well drained soil. They hate wet feet and will rot quickly in wet soil.



Regards
Hugh

'Easter Box'