

# HORTULANUS

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

MAY 2019



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Website: [www.khsgardenclub.org.au](http://www.khsgardenclub.org.au)

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

## COMING EVENTS

- May 7      **MAY MEETING: Stewart McPherson—'Plant Hunting with a Camera'**  
May 11-12   **Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St. Gordon. Mother's Day celebratory teas (bookings: 9498 2271)**  
May 17-19   **Orchids Out West—Displays and Sales, Hawkesbury Racecourse, Clarendon. 9-4pm Entry \$5**  
June 4      **JUNE MEETING: Peter Rutherford—'Environmental Recycling at Kimbriki'**

Hi

It was a cold wet night for our April Meeting but it did not stop 74 enthusiastic and well rugged up gardeners and friends turning out to enjoy themselves.

Our President opened the meeting and welcomed our new member, Mrs Carolyn Chown—we hope you will enjoy your membership.

## MEMBER NEWS

**Stop press news:** Congratulations to Maureene and Keith Smith on raising a record amount of \$13,774 for the National Breast Cancer Foundation from their Huge Plant Sale on Sunday. To date, Maureene estimates that they have raised just under \$100,000 from their plant sales for the Breast Cancer Appeal.

In response to a request from Garden Clubs of Australia, members were surveyed at the April meeting. The following is a summary of the 62 members surveyed: most of the members surveyed were female (50:12), most were 70+ years of age (46), most have over 20 years gardening experience (55), of the members surveyed 25 members have small residential gardens, 27 have large residential gardens, 5 have acreage gardens, 8 have indoors/balcony gardens.

A new projector has been purchased by your Society and it was used for the first time at the meeting. The results were most pleasing with the hoped-for greater clarity and better colour being achieved.

## OUTINGS

**Toowoomba Trip (23-26 September):** Travel and accommodation reservations have been confirmed for the 33 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.

**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. 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).

## GARDEN TABLE

As usual the garden table was loaded with good healthy plants, all going cheap. Did you go along and have a look? You never know what you will find and all proceeds go to your Society. There were good healthy Phlox, Stapelia and some beautiful begonias as well as a large number of other potted up plants. For the studios, there were four good books on growing native plants.

## SHOW BENCH

Camellia sasanqua are starting to come into their own with a wide range of beautiful flowers exhibited on the Show Bench. This is probably the last time we will see roses on the Show Bench as they are now moving into their winter

dormancy period. Dahlias are also retreating into winter dormancy so just let them die back naturally and don't be in too much of a hurry to cut them back. Hibiscus are still doing well with some fine exhibits on display. Azaleas bloom well in the autumn with often less petal blight than spring blooms. The Cut Flower section looked very nice. In the orchid class was the rare and very unusual *Habenaria medusa* orchid. Further along a lovely native *Dendrobium bigibbum* put on a fine show. The Vegie section was a bit light on. However, another grower has entered the pumpkin-growing field and this time it is a lady. So watch out, gentlemen! A lot of thought went into the Decorative Section, keep up the good work.

## RAFFLE

The fine *Pieris* 'Temple Bells' was purchased by your Society from the Elegant Outdoors Nursery in Turrumurra. The lovely yellow Rex begonia was donated by Christine Rethers, thank you Christine. While there were only a few prizes this month, they were all first class so step up and give \$2 to the man at the door and he will give you three tickets - you never know your luck.

## MAIN SPEAKER APRIL



Kate Stanley presented a finely detailed demonstration and talk on 'Exhibiting Roses' and how to prepare a rose for presentation on a competitive show bench. Kate is chairperson and show secretary of the Upper North Shore and Hills Regional branch of the NSW Rose Society. Kate opened her talk by handing out pamphlets on the Spring Rose Show to be held at the Galston Community Centre on the 10 November 2019 and invited our members to exhibit. There will be special classes for non-members of the Rose Society. Kate proceeded to demonstrate how to select a rose for exhibition. This also included conforming to the rules and where to cut and trim to improve the appearance of your rose.

Some of Kate's points: Cut your rose early in the day and put it in the refrigerator before the competition.

She then demonstrated how to present an exhibition rose which should be on a single stem with no side shoots.

David Austin roses are in a class of their own even though they come from the hybrid tea family. Remove all signs of disease.

Kate then went on to talk about other types of roses including the Banksia rose which should be pruned after spring flowering, not in winter. Rugosa roses are shown in both modern classes and old rose classes.

Kate then ran a Q & A session using a selection of numbered questions which she had put on the back wall.

The questions involved various topics including **pruning**. Established roses should be pruned at the beginning of winter.

**Fertilising:** While lots of chemicals were used in the past on roses and are still available, the Rose Society supports Neutrog and their range of organic fertilisers. During the growing season, roses should be fed regularly.

Once the cold weather sets in roses go dormant and do not need to be fed. **Soil:** While roses are fairly tolerant of soil composition, they do much better if you improve the soil by adding lots of compost and well rotted cow manure followed by a good layer of mulch. The organic matter enables the soil to hold more water and breaks up any clay. It will also help bind a sandy soil. By fertilising at the end of winter, you will replace all the goodness used in the summer to produce those beautiful flowers. **Watering:** During the winter 15 litres once a week is usually sufficient. This should be increased to 2-3 times a week in the hot summer weather.

**Dos and Don'ts:** When starting out with roses, choose the tough hardy ones that are easy to grow such as Kardinal, a lovely red rose. You can branch out into the more delicate ones later. Do clean your tools once you have finished working. Do not put all your rubbish in the garbage bin not the compost. Wait until July to start planting. Do start watering early in the morning when the hot dry weather arrives. Don't plant near a tree as it will soak up all your water. Don't water on a hot afternoon. Don't water on the leaves, water down at ground level to avoid fungal infections. Don't try to grow a climbing rose in a pot.

**Main Speaker May:** This will be Stewart McPherson who will talk to us about 'Plant Hunting with a Camera'. Stewart has spoken to us about his adventures on several occasions and this promises to be another one of his very interesting talks. What an energetic and enthusiastic young man he is!

## MEMBER SPEAKER APRIL

Our Member Speaker was Susie Sharp. Susie presented a fine set of photos showing how sheer determination wins when it comes to establishing a large country garden in a fairly remote area where there is no town water passing the front gate and the water comes from either a tank, a dam you made yourself or from a bore. Susie's first property was just such a property. We were shown an aerial view of the property in good times when all was green and there were many good healthy trees on the property and in the garden. The property was run as a sheep station with Kelpies used to muster the sheep. Over the years a large garden of various drought-tolerant trees and shrubs was established plus a large vegie garden. At a Red Cross show held in the nearest town, Cowra, Susie took out a first and second prize in the classes entered.

Time moved on and Susie moved on to another property, this time a 12 acre property purchased in 2013. This property had access to town water, however tank water was also collected. The tank itself was put in the ground. Because of

the summer heat, Susie had a shade house built to protect some of her flowers. A dam was dug in one of the paddocks and soon filled up. Susie's outdoor garden took off. In 2017 there was a series of very bad frosts that did a lot of damage. Although many of the plants recovered, the recent drought year has been very bad and many plants like Crepe Myrtle have either died or been badly damaged. The dam has almost dried up and gardening has become almost a battle for survival.

**Member Speaker May:** This will be Peter Fisher who will speak to us about 'Keeping a Garden Diary'.

## **CARE OF BEGONIAS (continued from April)**

Begonias are a fairly tough plant but like all plants, they have their enemies. Certain caterpillars will come along and chew the leaves but this can be taken care of by spraying over and under the leaves with Dipel. This is based on a specific bacterium which is ingested when the caterpillar eats the leaf. The caterpillar then stops feeding and will die after a day or two. It is safe to use where bees are present.

**Diseases:** Begonias are not troubled by many diseases. However, it is a good practice to keep some space between plants to allow good air circulation. This will discourage most fungal diseases. Watering early in the day to give the plants a chance to dry before nightfall is also recommended to cut down the chance of fungi. Should your plants get a fungal infection like powdery mildew, you can use Triforene or Mancozeb Plus as a spray. Clearing away decaying leaves and any debris will also help. Lack of good air flow and overwatering will promote rot which can set in on the stem, root or rhizome. Rhizomatous begonias are particularly prone to this problem. Plants caught early enough can be treated with a good fungicide but those badly attacked should be removed and destroyed, preferably in the garbage bin not the compost. If you want to reuse the pot that the affected plant was in, give it a good scrub and use some disinfectant to clean it. Make sure you wash your hands well also before touching any other plants or you will help spread the problem.

**Repotting Begonias:** Begonias do not like to be over-potted so as the plant fills up its pot so just move it on to a pot one size larger. A begonia in a pot too large for it will sulk and can often get root rot from the extra moisture in the pot.

**Twelve months in the life of a Begonia:** Begonias start to wake up from their winter dormancy early in September. Buds will appear on the rhizomatous begonias, followed by leaves in October. It's time to give them a light feed using a slow-release general purpose fertiliser. Any plants that did not do well over winter can be put in a tray with a mix of peat moss and sharp sand and kept just damp. November is the time to do any repotting before the hot weather comes. Cane begonias can be tidied up with the clippers. Get rid of any dried up canes and take out at ground level any of the really thick old canes that are past their best. This is a good time to divide up any of the very large rhizomatous begonias. Generally, begonias don't mind being crowded but it can get to the stage where the pot looks very untidy. If you wish to plant by seed, make sure you keep the seed in the refrigerator. Any repotting should be done now. Keep up the water and fertiliser going into summer, the soil should be just damp. Begonias will be quite happy and grow well up to about the end of March into April. They will then start to slow down their growth as the cooler weather comes and by June they will be just about dormant and ready for winter. This is when delicate plants should be moved to a warm spot. There is really not much more you can do for them over winter until the whole cycle starts again in spring. Just keep an eye out for snails and slugs as they don't mind a nice juicy begonia. If your plants are being attacked put out some snail killer pellets but make sure you use the ETDA or iron-based one, not the one based on metaldehyde which can make pets and children very sick if eaten.



► Do you grow fruit trees that belong in the Prunus family like plums, cherries, peaches and nectarines? It is time to check your trees for any mummified fruit and get rid of them into the garbage bin not the compost heap. Mummified fruit is usually a sign of Brown Rot. Look also for any fruit that is laying on the ground. Brown Rot is a fungal

disease and to protect your trees and shrubs, spray them with Bordeaux mixture just before the buds begin to open. To keep control of Brown Rot through the fruiting season, spray late when the flowers are in full bloom and when the petals start to fall off. Then spray again four weeks before you pick the fruit and one last spray with a fungicide like Triforine two weeks before you pick it. Don't forget to wash the fruit before you eat it. If you are growing peaches keep an eye out for Leaf Cork as this will kill leaves and, no leaves, no fruit. Spray with copper oxychloride early in bud swell.

► Dahlias are past their prime now so if you wish, you can cut them back to about 30cm above the ground. If your soil is well drained you can leave the tubers in the ground. Should you decide to lift them, leave plenty of soil around the tuber and park them in an out-of-the-way place in your garden till the foliage dries out. Once this has happened, cut off the tubers and give them a good brush, then store them in a cool dry place in your shed till the next planting season. Get rid of the dead foliage into the compost heap.

► Most of us pick up the dead leaves of autumn with the lawn mower or a blower vac and it is into the compost heap they go. If the leaves are from deciduous trees or shrubs then that big pile of leaves you put into the compost heap will shrink to about one third in a week or two. A full heap works a lot better than a half empty one so put more 'fuel' into the heap. Paper from your computer shredder can go in. When adding water, mix a large dollop of molasses diluted in warm water and feed the bacteria that is breaking down the vegetation. The heap should be turned over every week or two.

► Thinking of planting your Daphne out of its pot and into the ground? Daphne require similar conditions to azaleas and camellias. Remember not to plant your Daphne any deeper than it was in the pot. Daphne can be susceptible to collar rot and for the same reason don't let mulch build up against the trunk of the plant. The soil should lean towards the acid side and be well drained.

► Have you been growing dahlias and have a fine show of flowers? If you keep dead heading them, they will promptly produce some more flowers for you. This process can go on for quite a long time before the cold weather comes along and your plant decides it has had enough and starts to die down.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



**Question?** I like to grow my own beans but of late I do not seem to be getting as many beans as I should. Should I add lime or dolomite to the soil to liven things up a bit?  
**Answer:** Beans are legumes and need a soil that is around 6.5 on the pH scale. Use dolomite rather than lime as it is not so harsh. Dig some in before your next crop.

**Question?** I have my first crop of Broccoli coming along. When should I pick it?

**Answer:** I have found that when the heads reach about three-quarters grown, they seem to be quite tender. Don't wait until they flower or are fully grown as they tend to get a bit tough.

**Question?** Can I grow Azaleas in full sun? I have been told I shouldn't.

**Answer:** A while ago that would have been true but due to a lot of work by hybridisers, many azaleas can now take full sun. Read the label on the azalea that takes your fancy. It should tell you what the growing conditions are for that particular plant.

**Question?** The leaves of one of my camellias are going brown down the centre of the leaf while the rest of the leaf is green. What is going on and what can I do about it?

**Answer:** Your leaves are being attacked by one of the many mites that are about at this time of the year. It does not matter what sort of mite it is, the treatment is the same. Spray underneath and on top of the leaves with a miticide, Mavrik is a good one and it does not kill bees. Give it a spray as soon as you see it happening and follow up with another spray when the new growth appears. A fortnightly spray with a seaweed solution would be much appreciated by your camellias.

**Question?** Where should I plant my new camellia, in full sun or full shade or in-between

**Answer:** The label on your plant should tell you where to plant it. Camellias differ from azaleas as none of them like early morning sun. The colour of the flower can be a good guide to the light requirements. If the flower is pink or white, they prefer full shade, the dark reds will usually tolerate the afternoon sun. All the rest will usually stand the mid-day sun. Bear in mind that camellias are shallow rooted and can dry out with too much sun.

**Question?** I have a good Tibouchina 'Alstonville'. It is a big healthy shrub that was getting a bit out of hand so I gave it a prune. This year I did not get any flowers so what went wrong?

**Answer:** Most likely you pruned it at the wrong time of the year and cut off the flowering wood. Just leave it for now and let it grow. It will flower next year. Next time, wait until it has finished flowering, then prune it.

**Question?** Why won't my Clivia bloom? I water them regularly and they look okay. I have spread a good layer of compost around them but still no flowers. What can I do?

**Answer:** Clivea like a diet that is high in phosphorous. You can give it a feed of superphosphate but a good drink of Thrive fertiliser will do just as well.

**Question?** I have access to a large quantity of horse manure at a stable. When can I use it on my garden?

**Answer:** Fresh horse manure can be quite harmful if used in the garden. Find an out-of-the-way place at the back of your garden and spread it out, exposed to the weather, for five or six months. By then it becomes a useful organic fertiliser. Don't forget to ask the owner if a herbicide has been used on the pasture. It does not harm the horse but is not neutralized by passage through the animal and could kill any plants you spread it round.



Regards  
Hugh

Decorative: 'Roses Only'