

HORTULANUS

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

NOVEMBER 2018



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

Oct 27/28	Bundanoon Garden Ramble, (8 gardens) Enq. www.bundanoongardenramble.org.au
Oct 27	African Violet & Gesneriad Show, Burwood RSL, 9 Shaftesbury Rd, Burwood 10-4pm
Oct 27/28	Bathurst Spring Spectacular 9.30-5pm Enq. 0427 470 135
Oct 27/28	Bromeliad Fair, Concord Senior Citizens Centre, 9-11 Wellbank Street, Concord Sat. 10-4pm, Sunday 9-12noon
Nov 3	Cottage Garden Ramble: Fund raising Morning Tea at Christine Rethers' home (see below)
Nov 6	NOVEMBER MEETING: Doug Purdie will tell us all about bees
Nov 9-11	KHS Trip to Bundanoon and Crookwell
Nov 10	Cactus & Succulent Society of NSW Show, Eden Gardens, Macquarie Park 8am-3.30pm
Nov 23	KHS Christmas Dinner at Terrey Hills Golf and Country Club (see below)
Dec 2	Bunnings Sausage Sizzle (see below)
Dec 4	DECEMBER MEETING and Christmas Supper

Hi

It was a cool evening with no rain for our October meeting when 83 members and friends came along to enjoy themselves and exchange notes.

Our President opened the meeting and welcomed members and visitors. She then presented our three new members, Len Riordan, Meg Rowley-Bates and Kay Carter, with their badges and a history of the Society.

MEMBERS' NEWS

The Cottage Garden Club will be holding a garden ramble from 10-12 noon in the Turramurra area on 3 November with morning tea being served at Christine Rethers' home. This is a fund-raising event for the Society and volunteers are needed to help with the morning tea. Donations of cakes, slices, biscuits and savories would be greatly appreciated. Please deliver to 1 Wolsten Avenue, Turramurra before 9.30 am on the day or the day before. Please let Christine know if you are able to help (9449 6245 or khs.secretary@gmail.com).

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, 2 December**. 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 not a 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.

Christmas Dinner—Friday, 23 November 2018 at the Terrey Hills Golf and Country Club, 116 Booralie Road, Terrey Hills, commencing at 6.30 pm. Cost—\$60 per person. This will be a very pleasant evening with fine food and good company. There will be drinks served on arrival followed by a two course dinner with wine included. This year we will be able to select our meal ahead of time from a choice of two main courses and two desserts. Please let Helen Gilkes know (9144 4826) if you would like to come or make up a table (8 people). A booking form is included with this newsletter.

Garden Clubs of Australia Magazine 'Our Gardens': This coming year's subscription is now due for renewal. The cost is \$15 a year for four issues and they will be posted to you directly. If you wish to subscribe or to renew your existing subscription, we need to have your payment by the November meeting. Please have your money ready at the meeting or post or drop in your subscription to Penny Whipp at 51 Yarrara Road, Pymble 2073. Don't miss out on this very good offer. At the meeting Penny will have a box on the front table where you can put your subscription money, in an envelope please, with your name on the outside.

Garden Clubs of Australia—2019 Calendar: The 2018 calendar is now available so if you would like to order one (or more), please let Penny Whipp know at the next meeting or by phoning her on 9144 5101. The cost is \$10 and Penny will be putting in our club order. They will be ready to pick up at the December meeting. The sample calendar will be at the November meeting to view. If you want to order, please bring your money in an envelope with your name on it and give it to Penny at the next meeting.

Maureene and Keith Smith's Huge Plant Sale was held on Sunday, 8 October and raised \$11,342.90 for the National Breast Cancer Foundation. What a great effort and sincere congratulations!

Baa Baa Brew Fundraiser assisting the Australian Farming Community

With all the recent talk of the terrible conditions facing the farming community the Committee thought it would be terrific if we as gardeners could make a contribution, if only in a small way, to supporting our farmers.

One of our members, Rhoda Fowler who has been doing a wonderful job assisting the Society with its publicity, recently introduced Doreen and Penny to an organic fertiliser called Baa Baa Brew.

Baa Baa Brew comes straight from a sheep grazing property in central New South Wales which produces wool. When the sheep come in to the sheds to be shorn, the manure they leave behind falls through the flooring and sits under the shearing shed, protected from the weather. After being aged for a number of years it is bagged up in biodegradable muslin bags to be used to make manure tea which may be used as a soil drench or foliar spray.

Once the Baa Baa Brew teabag has been exhausted for making liquid fertiliser it can then be added bag and all to the compost heap to work as a compost accelerator or buried in the garden close to one of your favourite plants to give them a kick along.

Your Committee intends to order a supply of Baa Baa Brew teabags and sell them as a fundraiser at our November meeting. Each bag will sell for \$4.00 and all funds raised will be donated to the Red Cross. Funds donated to the Red Cross are being used to provide short term financial relief to drought affected rural communities.

As gardeners we know only too well how drought adversely affects our gardening efforts. It would be wonderful to think we could support our country cousins and help our gardens at the same time! With Christmas not far away think of the reaction of your gardening friends if they were to find Baa Baa Brew in their Christmas stocking. Please come to our November meeting ready to support our efforts to raise much needed funds for the rural community.

You can find out all about Baa Baa Brew and its suggested uses at the website www.baabaabrew.com.au.

OUTINGS

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 three gardens in Bundanoon 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. The cost will be \$580 with a single supplement of \$110. A booking form is attached to this newsletter. There is still room for one or two more people.

For further information, please call Ted Shaw on 9979 3930. *All enquiries and bookings should be directed to Ms Helen Gilkes, 20a Normurra Avenue, North Turrumurra - phone 9144 4826.*

SHOW BENCH

The Show Bench was loaded with many fine exhibits. The camellias were good but were probably the last camellias we will see till next season. The Iris were beautiful standing alongside some lovely roses. There was a selection of native orchids that were doing well. Some of these native orchids can be found in our local national parks. Fuchsia are doing well at the moment but if you have some, remember to keep the water up to them in the warmer months. The top crop looked interesting but unusually there was no spinach. The Decorative section was lovely with a lot of thought and work put in to the exhibits. The Pictorial section was excellent and very hard to judge.

TRADING TABLE

The three tables were loaded with an excellent collection of top quality plants, all going at very competitive prices. Amongst the plants on offer were Stokesia, Kangaroo Paws, Ifafa Lillies, mini Hibiscus, Hydrangeas, Salvia, Dendrobium orchids and an unusual Ivy Geranium. These are all good top of the range plants and a very good buy. The grower takes home the price of the plant less a small commission to the Society. The next Trading Table will be at the March 2019 meeting so this gives you plenty of time to grow some plants to sell - so step up and give it a go.

RAFFLE

There were three prizes this month - the Heuchera 'Sweet Tart' was purchased by your Society from the Honeysuckle Nursery, Turrumurra. The two Clivea were donated by Peter Hey from his collection. Thank you, Peter. These are all good prizes but you must give the man at the door \$2 for three tickets to win one and it all helps your Society.

MAIN SPEAKER

Our main speaker was Peter Hey, a grower of Clivia and other South African plants, who gave a detailed and well-illustrated talk on hybridising Clivia and the search for new colours. Peter took an early interest in plants and at one stage had his own wholesale nursery. Here are some of Peter's points. If you wish to try your hand at hybridisation then be prepared to spend a lot of time and patience on innovation and research. It is not something that can be done in 12 months. When hybridising, good and accurate records. You may need to look back over several generations.



You cannot breed some Clivia with others if the chromosome count is different. When preparing a plant for pollination, feed it with a good root stimulant such as Seamungus or Charlie Carp. Plant size matters so don't try to cross a small plant with a large one. The traditional pollination method is to use a pair of tweezers and a small fine brush to transfer the pollen from one plant to the other. It is a slow process. However, pollen can be collected and saved in the refrigerator where it will remain viable for 6 to 7 years. Here accurate record-keeping is essential. Responding to questions, Peter noted that yellow leaves usually means that the plant is doing poorly so apply a good fertiliser. When growing Clivia seeds, use sphagnum moss not peat moss. Clivia are native to South Africa. They do best when grown in the shade under a tree, not out in the full sun. Peter had lots of fine healthy Clivia going cheap and these were quickly snapped up by members. He also donated a couple to the raffle.

Main Speaker—November: This will be Doug Purdie who will speak on bees. We all know how important bees are to our garden so come along and learn a bit more about them from an expert.

MEMBER SPEAKER

Our member speaker was Keith Smith. Keith, as we all know, grows plants to raise funds for the Breast Cancer Foundation. He propagates most of the plants that he and Maureene sell and uses lots of propagating mix that he makes up himself. After much trial and error, he decided to use perlite as the main ingredient in his mix. Keith gave us a very interesting talk on what perlite is and how to use it. To make perlite, a volcanic glass with a high water content is heated to a high temperature. The water turns to steam, causing the perlite to expand and become very porous. Perlite is graded by numbers with the highest number being the coarsest. P400 is best for propagating with either as 100% perlite or as 10% perlite and 90% top grade potting mix. When used in the garden both perlite does a good job of aerating the soil. When using perlite, use a dust mask as it is full of very fine particles. When lifting plants that have grown in Perlite, leave any perlite that is adhering to the roots in place, don't clean it off. Perlite is relatively cheap and a 100 litre bag will cost \$30 and a 5 litre bag about \$9.

Member Speaker—November: There will be a presentation of the Society's trip to Canberra, prepared by Bob Ballinger.

FEATURE ARTICLE—TILLANDSIA



Tillandsia belong to the Bromeliad family and have adapted to a wide range of conditions from hot dry deserts to tropical rain forests and because they have no roots, they have the unusual ability to capture their water and nutrients from the air using the small scales on their leaf surface. Most Tillandsias grow in the range of 3cm to 20cm, with a maturity range of from 5 years to 20 years from seed. Flowering takes place over a couple of months and can produce up to 20 flowers depending on the variety. There are over 600 hundred species

Tillandsia are tolerant of a wide range of conditions and can be grown in most parts of Australia. A rough guide is that if the leaves are bright and shiny, the plant will take full sun. If the plant tends towards a dull grey or green, then it only needs part sun. The ideal environment for home growers is outdoors and in a partly shaded position. If grown inside, Tillandsia need a brightly lit position, preferably near a window that is not subject to the fierce summer heat

Planting Out: Having no ground roots, Tillandsias can be attached to almost anything using plastic covered wire, fishing line, hot melt glues, nails and nontoxic glues like PVA. If a glue gives off a strong smell, do not use it as the Tillandsia leaves will absorb the glue and die. For something different, hang your Tillandsia in mid-air by a fishing line or glue it to a window pane.

Watering. As Tillandsia have no roots and must obtain their water via their leaves, the leaves should be wetted down on a regular basis using a hose or a hand spray. The plant itself should be given a thorough soaking as it loses a lot of water through transpiration. So in hot weather they could need watering every 3-4 days while in winter this could stretch out to 3-4 weeks. Tillandsia should be allowed to almost dry out before they are watered again. You can tell if your plant needs by looking at the leaves which should be firm and upright. Like most plants, if they are under-watered they will go limp. Tillandsia appreciate a very weak dose of a general purpose liquid fertiliser when you are giving it its monthly watering.

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



► After all the rain followed by the warm weather your lawn will be starting to put on some fairly rapid growth. Many gardeners, with the view to saving time on a job that can be boring, will lower the blades of their mowers and cut the grass lower than normal in the summer. This is not a good practice. By removing the extra leaf area you are depriving the lawn plants of the food that would normally be supplied by the leaf you have just cut off. It also allows the soil to dry out quicker. If anything, let the grass grow a little bit higher this summer as this will keep the roots cooler and damper.

▶ As the weather warms up more, ticks will start to appear. Keep an eye on your pet dog or cat. Watch for unusual behaviour, run your hands through their coat every day or so feeling for lumps, no matter how small, that should not be there and then do something about them. If you have been working in amongst shrubbery, check yourself and get someone to have a look at those places you can't see. Don't pull any you find off but use medication available from your chemist to kill them painlessly.

▶ With all the predictions of hot weather, what can you do to help protect your plants from drying out? Give them a good deep watering late in the afternoon then put a good deep layer of mulch over all of the bed. The mulch can be chopped up vegetation that you have made yourself or sugar cane mulch or other mulch you have bought. These will all break down over time. A longer term mulch could be wood chips.

▶ To give extra shade to plants that are growing along a fence, drive a few nails into the top rail of the fence and hang some shade cloth off them. Shade cloth comes in several grades, rated in numbers. The higher the number the more light will be cut off.

▶ No doubt you have admired wisteria and would like one. Well, now is a good time to plant one. First, read the label on the wisteria you have chosen. Check how high it will grow. Colours range from mauve, pink to pure white. While wisteria are fast growers, they can take up to three years to bloom. Wisteria will grow almost anywhere but before you plant yours, check out where your sewer pipes and storm water pipes are as wisteria have invasive roots and you don't want blocked pipes. They like a slightly acid soil and plenty of water when they are flowering. Once established, don't let your wisteria get away from you and keep those long whippy bits under control.

▶ Take a stroll around your garden and look for ants, then follow them and see if they are going up into any of your shrubs. If they are, then you have trouble. They are going to collect honey dew from mealy bugs and scale in your shrub. Check your shrub and spray the pests with either Pest Oil (mineral), or Eco Oil (organic). Back track the ants to their nest and scatter some borax near the nest. The ants will take it back to the nest where it will kill them.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Question? I often see the word Zoysia mentioned when talking about lawns and the grasses used. What is Zoysia grass?

Answer: Over the last 10 years or so grass breeders have developed two major grass families. They are Zoysia and a

new Buffalo called Sir Walter. The most common of the Zoysia family of grasses are Empire and Nara. Both these grasses can turn brown under hot dry conditions but they are drought tolerant, perform well in the shade and are low maintenance. The third Zoysia grass is Platinum Zoysia. This is a fine bladed grass that does well in a warm climate. The other popular lawn grass is Sir Walter. This is a soft Buffalo grass that performs well in the Sydney area and Southern NSW.

Question? Why won't my Peace Lily flower? I have several down a side path that is cool and quite well shaded. The leaves are all in good condition, I fertilise them with a good slow release fertiliser and water them regularly but still no flowers. What is going on?

Answer: By the sound of it you are doing everything right. They are probably not getting enough light. Move one into an area where it will get some more light and see how it goes. Don't move it out into the blazing sun, just somewhere where it is lighter, then see how it performs.

Question? I would like to plant a Jacaranda outside my front fence on the nature strip. Are they hard to grow?

Answer: Before you do anything, go outside and check where the overhead power lines are and if they are on your side of the street, forget about growing the jacaranda on the nature strip. Jacaranda can grow up to 10 metres while a power line can come down as low as 6 metres. A jacaranda is not hard to grow but being a tropical plant, it does not like the cold weather. Be generous with the planting hole and use lots of compost. Once it is established it will not need much maintenance. Keep the water up to it in the hot dry weather.

Question? Can I grow a Croton in the Sydney area?

Answer: Sydney is a borderline case when it comes to growing Croton. Croton grow best in an area where the temperature does not fall below 15°C and there is fairly high humidity. These conditions can be maintained in a hothouse or inside a house. If grown inside a house, it will need bright light but not direct sunlight. The brighter the light, the more intense will be the leaf colour.



Arrangement of Native Flowers and Foliage

Regards
Hugh