

HORTULANUS

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

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OCTOBER 2022

COMING EVENTS

- Sept.2 to Oct. 10** Boongala Native Gardens, 76 Pitt Town Rd, Kenthurst. Fri-Mon. 10am-4pm
Oct. 1-4 Leura Gardens Festival, 8 gardens open, 9.30am-4.30pm. Enquiries:
<http://www.leuragardensfestival.com.au/>
Oct. 4 KHS Monthly Meeting
Oct. Highfields Garden, 111 John Grant Rd, Little Hartley. Open each weekend in October from 10-4pm.
Oct. 7 & 9 Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. Open Fri. 7 Oct. 10-12noon, Sun. 9 Oct. 11-2pm.
Oct. 20 KHS Self-drive Outing to three Hills District private gardens (see below)
Nov. 1 KHS Monthly Meeting

MEMBER NEWS

As a result of the AGM held at the September, the Officers and Committee of the Society were returned unchanged. President - Evelyn Mason, Vice-President - Ted Shaw, Secretary - Christine Rethers, Treasurer - Robyn Brown, Committee - Helen Gilkes, Nancy Shaw and Jenny Watsford.

Show Bench Exhibitors—please note that Show Bench judging starts at 7.20pm. This is so that the meeting can start on time at 7.30pm. Exhibitors must finish putting their exhibits on the Show Bench by 7.20pm.



There was a very pleasing roll-up to the September Garden Ramble when members were able to view three of their fellow members' lovely gardens. We were blessed with a really splendid spring day which made viewing the gardens even more pleasurable. Hopefully those who came went away feeling truly inspired. Many thanks to all those who brought many delectable goodies to the afternoon tea in the garden of Sue and Bob Ballinger. A special thank-you to Alison and Jim Wood, Christine and Theo Rethers and Sue and Bob Ballinger for all their hard work in getting their lovely gardens ready.

Don't forget to have a look at our [Facebook](#) page which continues to have some interesting postings. We now have 52 contributors and it has proved very useful in answering questions such as finding out plant names and helping members with problems with their gardens. Remember that this is a private group and can only be accessed by members of our Society so nothing of what you post is distributed to the public at large. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2273344029640713>.

OUTINGS

In these uncertain times and due to great difficulty in booking a coach, your committee has decided to try something a little different for our last outing of the year on Thursday, 20th October to three lovely Hills District private gardens. This outing will be self-drive, with private cars being used to travel to and between the gardens. Our Society will be providing morning tea but you will need to bring your own lunch.

The plan is that we will meet at our first garden in Dural at 9:30am (allow at least 30-45mins driving time from the Northern Suburbs at that time of day) where the garden owner, Tracey Fleischner, will give us a guided tour, followed by our morning tea provided by the Society. At about 11:15am we'll leave there and head for Arcadia, arriving at our second garden, Guestlands, at about 11:30am where our host, Jenny Guest, will welcome us to her extensive Tuscan-inspired garden. Leaving there at 12:15pm or so, it is just a short drive still in Arcadia to our third garden. Esther Ronco has invited us to have our BYO lunch at her home and then enjoy wandering through her garden. All three gardens are very well cared for and are quite large, but for those wanting to see more seasonal plants or get a good dose of retail therapy, a stop at Swane's Nursery in Galston on the way home may just top-off the day.

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A booking form for this outing is included with this Hortulanus. It provides addresses for the three gardens and for Swane's Nursery. The cost for this outing will be \$20 per person to cover morning tea, the garden entry to Guestlands and thank-you gifts to Tracey and Esther. Family and friends will be welcome to join the outing. Please contact Helen Gilkes if you would like to come but are not able to do the drive. We will attempt to find spare car seats for any members without transport.

A booking form is included with your October Hortulanus. Bookings may be made with Helen Gilkes at the October meeting or by mail to 20A Normurra Avenue, North Turramurra 2074 by 14 October.

MEMBERS' TRADING TABLE

The Trading Table will be operating at the October meeting. Members may bring in a **maximum of 30 plants** to sell and 10% of the proceeds will go to the Society with the rest to the member.

Traders are reminded of the following requirements:

- * Only plants can be sold,
- * All items should be in good condition, pots should be clean with no soil, roots or stains.
- * The plant must be disease- and insect-free with no damaged or dead leaves and weeds should be removed.
- * The plant should be named with a label or sticker. In addition, a paddle pop stick showing the owner's initials, the plant number and the price required should be put in each pot.

On the form there are two sections, the first half is your record. The first column will be ticked off by the sales team as the plant is received. The second column is for the number of the plant so each plant will have a number from 1 to 10. The third column is for the plant name – if you don't know the name then a short description. The fourth column is the price you wish to receive for this plant and the fifth column is the price that the plant sold for. On the second half of the form you should repeat this information so that the sales team can keep a record which they use to process your payment.

If you want to bring more than 10 plants, then simply use another form but continue the numbering, e.g. the next set of plants will be numbered from 11 up to 20. You will receive your payment at the next meeting. You will be handed back the first half of the form at the end of the meeting. **Please take home any of your unsold plants.** Paddle pop sticks and extra forms will be available at the table. Plants will be checked in on arrival at a table outside the hall and the paper work will be signed off.

As the wonderful team who run the Garden Table will be looking after the Trading Table, **there will be no Garden Table for this meeting only.** The form to be completed is available with this newsletter – just print out a copy, fill it in and bring it with you when you bring in your plants that you want to sell. **Please bring your own bags or boxes for your purchases.**

SHOW BENCH

There were several stand-out displays this month - the Native section had some lovely and unusual exhibits, the Vegetables were very good with some delicious-looking spinach, cabbage and rhubarb. The orchids had to be seen to be believed - a wonderful Cymbidium orchid with numerous flower spikes (it took an heroic effort to bring in this very big plant), some very well-flowered Paphiopedilum orchids as well as several others including a lovely Coelogyne. There was a big disappointment for one of our newer members whose exhibit had multiple cuts in a class that specified only one cut. Please make sure that you carefully read the specifications for each class you would like to exhibit in. It is important that all the exhibits in a class be on an equal footing in their opportunity to win a place.

We were very short of judges at the September meeting and are looking to recruit some more. We ideally would like to have six judges available at each meeting so that judging can be completed in the time allotted. To be a judge you would have a good knowledge of plants in general and have read the Show Bench rules as set out in the booklet each member receives. You would then serve an 'apprenticeship' with one of the experienced judges until you feel confident about judging. If this is something that interests you, please let the Secretary, Christine Rethers, know.

RAFFLE

Again this month there were some lovely raffle prizes A special 'thank-you' to those members who donate a prize, most of them anonymously. The Society always provides one or two plants, so if you can spare a plant or an item of gardening interest, your donation to the raffle table will always be gratefully accepted.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table this month was rather light-on. It seems that not many members have been actively propagating so perhaps it is time for a talk on propagation to get members' interest going again. **Please note that there will not be a Garden Table at the October meeting** as the Garden Table team will be running the Members' Trading Table.

MAIN SPEAKER SEPTEMBER



This was Bob Balinger who presented some wonderful photos of his recent travels with his wife, Sue, from Cairns to Karumba on the Gulf of Carpentaria, along the Savannah Way which crosses the Atherton Tablelands. The landscape is very varied from lush rainforest to almost desert. Bob's photos and description were outstanding and the ones of the birds in flight were worthy of the National Geographic. This is a part of our country that many of us don't get to see so Bob's talk was also very educational.

Main Speaker October: Judith Watson, the Secretary of The Tropical Gardens Society of Sydney, will give a presentation entitled 'Exploring Singapore's Gardens by the Bay'. Judith will share photos taken during several visits to the gardens, focussing on the amazing variety of plants and wildlife to be found there in different areas.

MEMBER SPEAKER SEPTEMBER: As the Society's AGM was being held, there was no member speaker as such but Ted Shaw showed us some photos taken during the trip to the Auburn Botanic Gardens' Cherry Blossom Festival and the E G Waterhouse Camellia Garden at Caringbah.

Member speaker October: We will show some of photos of the September KHS Garden Ramble.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN OCTOBER by Christine Rethers

At this time of the year, the winter vegetables such as the brassicas (cabbage, kale, cauliflowers, etc.) will be finishing up and it will be time to pull any remaining ones out and refurbish the patch where they have been growing. You can do this by spreading over the area a generous helping of cow manure, some pelletised manure such as Dynamic Lifter and a dusting of garden lime or dolomite, and then digging over the area lightly. It is best to then leave this area fallow for a few weeks to allow the fertilisers to work their way into the soil and replenish it. It will then be ready for planting your summer crops of beans, cucumbers, zucchini, pumpkins, sweet corn, capsicums and eggplants. All these like as much sun as possible so hopefully you can position them in a nice warm and sunny spot.

If you are a lover of home-grown sweetcorn, don't forget that they should be planted in a block pattern rather than one or two long rows. The reason for this is that the plants need to be close together so that the corn cobs are pollinated efficiently by the wind. The corn cobs are ready to be harvested when the tassels turn brown, usually six weeks after they emerge. It is important to harvest them as soon as they are ready as this is when they are at their sweetest. If you leave them too long, the corn becomes starchy and is not as nice to eat. It is possible to grow another crop such as cucumbers along with the corn. That way, the cucumbers can use the corn stalks to climb on.



If your vegetable garden does not have full day sun, do not despair. You can still grow very successfully many different types of lettuce, herbs—parsley and coriander, rocket, radish, spinach and leafy Chinese vegetables such as buk choi and pak choi, wombok, choy sum and gai lan. Just make sure that you protect them from slugs and snails. Mulching with a straw and sugar cane mulch helps as snail don't like climbing over this.

NEW PRODUCT



There have been a quite a few complaints accompanied by graphic pictures on our Facebook pages of 'something' eating plants and fruits in our gardens this winter and spring. As this damage is mostly done at night, it is very hard to work out who are the culprits. There are a number of contenders - possums, both brush-tail and ring-tail, rats and/or mice, brush turkeys and possibly bandicoots (although they are mostly after worms and insects in the soil). The solution to this problem is not straightforward. For possums, brush turkeys and bandicoots, there is little that can be done as they are protected species. The best way to safeguard damage from these animals is to physically protect your crops with a cover such as chicken wire or strong netting.

However, for rats and mice there are poisonous baits that for the most part are effective. Unfortunately, there is a problem with this solution in that the affected rats can be eaten by other animals and birds. Most at risk are pets (cats and dogs) and the owls who hunt mostly at night. It is known that eating a rat affected by a poison will in turn affect and kill the owl. This cannot be allowed to happen as these birds are simply too precious to our environment. Members are therefore urged not to use rat baits that contain **brodifacoum**. This is sometimes referred to as a super-warfarin, because it is longer acting than the drug Warfarin. Warfarin is used to prevent blood clots in people. Put simply, a rodent simply bleeds to death internally, as will any other animal that in turn eats the affected rat.

One of our members has brought to our attention a product that has been available for a year or two and that is imported and sold by Yates. This is Ratsak Naturals and the product description reads as follows: '*RATSAK NATURALS*^ is a rodent bait that kills rats and mice by causing them to dehydrate. It is made from natural ingredients and whilst deadly to rodents it is safe around humans and animals when used according to instructions. Rats and mice have strong stomach sensors that tell them when they are thirsty. When they eat the Ratsak Naturals it turns off the stomach sensors and rodents stop drinking. These stomach sensors are unique to rats and mice.' It goes on to say that no other animals are effected either directly or indirectly by ingesting the affected rat.

Our member has used this product and reports success in that she has not seen a rat or the effects of rats since using it. It says on the packet that this product is in the form of pellets and that they should be kept dry. In order to use it in the garden, this member cut the pouring end off a one litre plastic drink bottle to widen the opening and using a bent wire coat hanger threaded through it, anchored it an inch or two off the ground. She put some pellets inside and placed it close to plants that had been rat-affected. Over a few days, the pellets disappeared each night until eventually, they were no longer taken. She has had no more problems with rats since that time. The product as available at Bunnings where it is advertised at \$17 for approx. 225gm.

Please be aware that KHS is in no way endorsing this product and this article is intended only to bring to your attention some of the problems that have been encountered by members and some possible solutions to try. It would be interesting to hear from any other members who have already tried this product.

YOUR OCTOBER GARDEN by Maureene Smith

Now is certainly a busy time of year. The weather is warming up and there is plenty to do in the garden.

▶ Clivias looked wonderful this year and as the flowers die down it's a good idea to cut the stems off, unless of course you want to save the seeds. A better idea to get new plants is to divide up the clump, especially if it is crowded. Replant elsewhere in the garden and after a few weeks, feed with slow-release fertiliser.

▶ Treat a morning walk around your garden like a pest patrol. Check new growth for aphids, thrips, caterpillars and other nasties. Wear gloves and use your fingers for picking off and squashing whilst the numbers are still small.

▶ It is a good time to feed Hydrangeas to encourage summer blooms. Watering every couple of weeks with a flower-boosting liquid fertiliser should pay dividends. Remember Hydrangeas are thirsty plants so keep the water up to them in dry spells.

▶ Surprisingly it is not too soon to think about Christmas and get busy filling pots with seedlings for some colourful late December displays. Petunias, Portulaca and dwarf Sunflower are great for sunny spots while Coleus and Impatiens can brighten up a shady area. Zinnias can also add a great splash of colour and come in all sizes, dwarf cultivars to 15cm and giants to 90cm. Zinnias however are better grown from seed as they have very fragile root systems. Another great way to add some surprise summer colour is to just scatter seeds over your garden beds, Cosmos, Nigella and California poppies work well this way. If you can time it well, just before a rain shower is best.

▶ Mulching is always important as the weather heats up but you might like to try a living mulch. There are many plants suitable as ground covers and which shade the surface of the soil. *Heterocentron elegans* 'Spanish Shawl' has lovely dark green foliage with profuse magenta flowers in spring and summer; spreading sedums such as Gold Mound or little Missy; *Lysimachia Golden Globes* with bright yellow flowers and *Nasturtiums* can look great too and they have the added benefit of providing a pep to your salads. Living mulches also help keep weeds in check which is a constant chore no matter what time of year it is.



Heterocentron elegans



Zinnias



Sedum Gold Mound

PLANT LOVERS FAIR KARIONG by Maureene Smith

Did many of you venture to the Fair? Keith and I went and although it seemed a lot smaller than previously there were plenty to see and buy (!) and the weather was perfect. The crowd seemed much smaller too which made it easier to get around. Looking at what people were carrying in their arms, it seems native orchids, *Dendrobium kingianum* and the Soft-cane *Dendrobiums* are very popular at the moment. There were many lovely new hybrids on sale at various stalls. Of course, this is the season they are flowering so it makes it easier to catch your eye. Another popular item seems to be *Rhipsalis*, again in many different forms. We have long had the *haitora* and *pilocarpa* growing at home but some of the new ones on sale were stunning. Three new to us were *Rhipsalis ramulosa*, *cruciforme* and *spinosa*.

Wandering around we saw a few faces familiar to KHS members. Nancy and Ted Shaw were busy on the Tropical Gardens Society stall and Jeremy Critchley, a recent speaker at the KHS, was busy selling his beautiful perennials and indoor plants. We also bumped into Costa Georgiades wandering around filming for his Facebook followers and encouraging people to buy.

One stall was specialising in *Vireya* Rhododendrons. Although Sydney is not the best climate for cold-climate Rhododendrons, *Vireya* do well here. An evergreen plant great for the garden in a protected part-shade position or in a large pot, they are not difficult to grow and there are even two native varieties, one of which, *Vireya lochia*, they had for sale.

David and Blake from the Living Edge nursery at Peats Ridge (you often see them at the Cottage Garden Club) were also there with many rare plants including some beautiful grey-leafed *Sinningias*. These fleshy evergreen plants are easily recognisable with their large tuberous bases and make a lovely indoor feature when they are flowering.

Succulents still seem to be in favour and there were quite a few stalls selling them with prices ranging from 20 cents to \$200.00, so something for everyone. One plant that many might think is old fashioned, seems to be making a resurgence and that is the *Hoya*. A number of varieties were for sale and proving very popular.



Rhipsalis spinosa



Sinningia leucotricha



Vireya Rhododendron