

HORTULANUS

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

President: Evelyn Mason, 7 Deakin Place, East Killara (0412 812 824)
Secretary and Editor: Christine Rethers, 1 Wolsten Ave, Turramurra 2074 (9449 6245)
Treasurer: Robyn Brown (0408 295 601)

Website: www.khsgardenclub.org.au Email: khs.secretary@gmail.com



JULY 2023

COMING EVENTS

- July 6** KHS Meeting. Speaker: Judy Horton—Great American Gardens and Gardeners
July 8/9 Camellia Show: Ravenswood, Gordon Sat. 1.30pm-4.30pm, Sun. 10am-4pm Entry: \$5
July 29-Aug. 13 Botanica Art Exhibition, Lion Gate Lodge, Royal Botanic Garden Sydney 10-4pm.
Aug. 1 KHS Meeting - Speaker: Nicky Court on 'Walks on Sandstone Country'.
Sept. 5 KHS Meeting and AGM - Speaker: Helen Lovel from Neutrog.
Sept. 9 KHS Trip to Daffodils at Rydal.
Sept. 10-15 Garden Clubs of Australia Biennial Convention, Toronto. Enq. www.gcac2023.com
Sept. 16/17 Plant Lovers Fair, Kariong. Sat. 8-4pm, Sun. 9-3pm. Further information:
<https://www.plantloversfair.com.au/>

MEMBER NEWS

The heartiest of congratulations to long-time member Shirley Walker who recently celebrated her 100th Birthday. Shirley has been an ardent supporter of the Society and attended meetings regularly until quite recently. We send her our love and our very best wishes.

Membership subscriptions are due on 1st July 2023 - \$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. You can pay by direct debit, cash or cheque and please remember to include your completed subscription form. This is important as it is needed to check that we have your details correctly recorded.

We have some printed copies of the Society's History available for you to purchase for \$5 a copy. We have also put a copy on the website (www.khsgardenclub.org.au). You will find it under 'Society Info'. It is interesting to read as it gives readers a history not only of the Society but also a glimpse of the life and times in our suburbs in the years leading up to World War II and the years following this. Certainly worth dipping into.

OUTINGS

The first outing of the year will be to 'Daffodils at Rydal' on Saturday, 9th September. The outing will include morning tea, lunch (a sausage or steak sandwich and tea/coffee) and all garden entries and the cost will be \$75. (As there are no food facilities at Rydal, you may wish to bring some extra snacks or drinks). A booking form is included with this newsletter. Helen Gilkes will be taking bookings at the July and the August meetings or you can send her your booking by mail. You can also book by phoning Helen on 9144 4826. The Society has visited Rydal before but not for quite some years. Those who went on our previous trip were very impressed with the wonderful displays of daffodils and other early spring flowering bulbs and plants such as Forsythia.

We will follow this a month later with an outing to Wollongong and Berry on the 12th/13th October. We suggest that you put this date in your diary right away. Further details of this trip will be available shortly.

SHOW BENCH

We are well and truly into the Camellia season and the Show Bench display did not disappoint this month. There were a number of very lovely blooms that were in excellent condition (perhaps because of the notable absence of rain). The Azaleas are just starting to reach their flowering period and there were several very nice examples displayed. The Salvias are still putting on a good show together with the lovely pink *Ruellia makoyana* and the bright yellow *Reinwardtia indica* (which used to be known as *Linum*). The display of the evening has to go to the excellent examples of *Schlumbergera*—several different colours and all in excellent condition. The vegies and citrus also put on a good display. In the Decorative, much imagination was displayed with excellent examples of all three themes.

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GARDEN TABLE

This was back in operation again at the June meeting and did some good business. Quite a number of members picked up bags of the *Orlaya* seeds on offer. These can be sown any time now by simply scattering the seeds over the prepared area and watering them in. They look better if they are simply allowed to come up randomly. Pull out any that come up in the wrong place or if they come up too thickly. There were also a number of pots of the pink-flowering *Oxalis* which can be left to colonise a corner of the garden that gets at least half a day of sun.

RAFFLE

There were a number of very nice prizes on the raffle table including a lovely *Cyclamen* bought by the Society, a large potted *Schlumbergera*, a watering wand, bulb planter and a misting bottle as well as some chocolates. Many thanks to all the anonymous donors.

MAIN SPEAKER JUNE:

This was Chelsea Costello, who is the Natural Areas Officer for Ku-ring-gai Council. Chelsea is an ecologist with over 10 years' experience in biodiversity monitoring throughout the east coast of NSW. She's been lucky enough to be involved in surveys for some of Australia's most unique species – koalas, possums, bandicoots, frogs, microbats and many more. As she explained, in her job with the Council, she focuses on the management of threatened species. To do this, she and her team have set up nesting boxes in the most likely areas in the municipality where these animals are to be found. In addition, cameras have been located close to the nesting boxes to monitor the movement of animals in the area.

The good news is that it would appear that there are quite a number of places in our local bushland where some of



A nesting box and camera set up in position for monitoring.



A family of Pygmy Possums in one of the nesting boxes. Note the nest is lined with leaves collected by the mother.



A mother Pigmy Possum bringing some leaves to the nesting box. They are tightly curled up in her tail.



A Flying Fox (a bat) living in a colony in the Gordon area. They are nomadic and come and go from time to time.

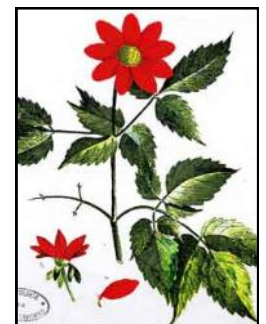
these threatened species are to be found. Chelsea's job is now to make sure that they remain there and hopefully continue to thrive. She has suggested that members may like to send through to her any interesting observations of Powerful Owls, Echidnas, Possums, etc. so that she can record these on the Council's database. You can send them to her at ccostello@krg.nsw.gov.au. We hope that Chelsea will visit us again next year, to let us know how her research is progressing.

Main speaker July: This will be Judy Horton who will tell us about some of the great American gardens and gardeners she has visited. Judy has travelled widely and her talk is sure to be very interesting.

MEMBER SPEAKER JUNE: Our President, Evelyn Mason, gave us the first of three talks about Dahlias. As she says, she is a rather passionate grower of these lovely plants and has done quite a bit of research into their background. We learnt, for instance, that the Dahlia originated in the high country of Mexico and Central America. Very little is known about them before the time of the Aztecs. It is thought that the Aztecs used the tubers as food and medicine.

The species Dahlias are plants with simple flowers and at present there are 35 different species to be found there. They were brought to Europe about 200 years ago and named after a Swedish scientist, Andreas Dahl. It was soon found that Dahlias readily produce hybrids when bred together and quite early on growers were able to produce plants with more complex and interesting flowers and many different colours. The only colour not produced is blue. During the mid-1800's, Dahlias attained cult status with gardeners and several thousand different cultivars were produced.

After 200 years of culture, selective breeding, and hybridizing, today's Dahlia has one of the largest variation of forms, colours, and sizes of any flower grown. More Dahlia hybridisers are active now than at any other time in history which means a constant addition of new varieties each year. At present, it is estimated that there are around 50,000 different named varieties available. Although the Dahlia waxes and wanes among gardeners, the introduction of the smaller growing 'bedding' type Dahlias has renewed their popularity.



Dahlia pinnata

Member speaker July: This will be Evelyn Mason who will give us the second part of her very interesting talk on Dahlias.

IN THE VEGIE GARDEN IN JULY

This is usually a quiet time in the vegie garden. Your winter crops should be coming on well and you could well be harvesting silverbeet, radishes, maybe even broccoli. Remember with the silverbeet to gently pull off completely the outer leaves, leaving a good heart to continue growing. This way you could be harvesting them for at least two or three more months. As we are going through a very dry time at the moment, keep the water up to the vegie garden to keep your plants moving along.

July is a good month have a look in the catalogues and at the garden centres for tomato seeds. If you start your tomatoes now in a seed tray on a warm windowsill, they should be up by the end of July and ready to plant in the vegie garden in early September. This way you will be able to get an early crop, maybe in time for Christmas, and beat the wretched fruit fly which attacks from about January onwards. There is nothing quite as nice as a home-grown tomato.

This is a great time to grow a couple of herbs—dill and coriander. Both these herbs will go to seed very quickly if you try to grow them when the weather warms up but planted now, they will grow more slowly and produce those yummy leaves that are so nice in your Asian dishes especially. Not only can the leaves be harvested but if you let them go to seed in late spring, you can harvest the seeds, dry them and use them also in your cooking.



Coriander



Dill

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE DAFFODIL by Evelyn Mason

After researching the history of Dahlias, I thought it would be interesting to know more about the history of the daffodils that I have growing. I can't help myself when I see a packet of daffodils for sale! Then I get home and have to find a suitable spot to plant them. One thing I have learnt is that they need at least six hours of sunshine each day. They don't survive in shade – believe me, I've tried! I remember learning Wordsworth's poem *Daffodils* at primary school as I am sure so many of you did back in the 1950's. I would even assume you can still recite parts of it... *Fair daffodils I hate to see you fade away so soon...*

I came across the UK National Trust website and the next two paragraphs are directly from that website. It is so informative and well written I thought I can't do better.

The origins of narcissus: The botanical name for the daffodil is *narcissus*, named after the beautiful youth in Greek mythology who was tricked into falling in love with his own reflection. The drooping flowers that characterise most daffodils are said to recall Narcissus bending over to catch his image in a pool of water. The name derives from the Greek 'narco', root of the word narcotic. The etymology probably relates to the daffodil's toxicity as all parts of the plant are poisonous. The stalk's sap can cause a rash when it comes in contact with the skin.

How daffodils came to Britain: The Romans are known to have planted *narcissus* in memory of loved ones or comrades fallen in battle. It's likely they brought daffodils to Britain from the Iberian Peninsula, predominantly Spain and Portugal, where the largest variety of daffodil species are found. Further research told me that daffodils are actually native to not only Spain and Portugal but other parts of Europe and also to North Africa, and the Middle East, and have been cultivated for centuries by gardeners in those regions. The ancient Greeks believed that daffodils were a symbol of joy and good luck and they were often used to decorate temples and homes.

The earliest mention of the poet's daffodil (*Narcissus porticus*) is in the writings of Theophrastus (born 371 BC) and it has also been recognised as the flower that Persephone and her companions were gathering when Hades abducted her into the Underworld.

As I am beginning to learn more about the history of certain plants, it is fascinating to learn about the dedicated naturalists and horticulturalists of the 1700 and 1800's who searched for and then hybridised so many species. According to the National Trust website, the Rev. George Herbert Engleheart is often credited as the father of the modern daffodil. In 1901 he moved to Little Clarendon in Wiltshire and continued his work producing new daffodil hybrids. Engleheart registered 720 new daffodil varieties between 1882 and 1923, although only around 30 are still commercially available. His work with the *poeticus* species is his enduring legacy.

This latest piece of information had me googling – what is the *poeticus* species? According to a BBC News article, *Narcissus poeticus* was one of the first daffodils to be cultivated, and this is the one linked to the Greek legend of Narcissus.

I was surprised to learn there are more than 13,000 different varieties of daffodils. Confusingly though, as their bulbs all look the same! Oh, and they are related to the amaryllis! Now I know why I love them too.

The *Gardening Know How* website said that daffodils can be divided into about a dozen different types that are characterized by the size and shape of their petals (the outer part of the flower) and their coronas (the inner petals that are often fused into a single tube).



The 12 most popular varieties of daffodils are:

- * **Trumpet varieties** of daffodils are distinguished by a fused corona that is noticeably longer than the petals (like a trumpet). If the corona is shorter than the petals, it's called a cup. Two varieties of daffodils are known as large-cupped and small-cupped, depending on the size compared to the petals.
 - * **Double daffodils** have either a double set of petals, a double corona, or both.
 - * **Triandus** has at least two flowers per stem.
 - * **Cyclamineus** has petals that flare back from the corona.
 - * **Jonquilla** has fragrant flowers that appear in clusters of one to five per stem.
 - * **Tazetta** has fragrant clusters of at least four and as many as 20 flowers per stem.
 - * **Poeticus** has one fragrant flower per stem with large white petals and a very small brightly coloured corona.
 - * **Bulbocodium** has a very large trumpet with relatively tiny petals.
 - * **Split corona** has a corona that is not fused and appears as another ring of petals.
- Not all daffodils fall neatly into these categories, but these do give you a good guide.

YOUR JULY GARDEN by Maureen Smith

▶ Gardening in the depth of winter is generally not a fun chore, but then again our winters are quite mild so that well rugged up, it's not too bad and there is always something to do.

▶ Dead wood in shrubs is easier to spot now without the profuse foliage of warmer months so this is a good time to prune it out, right to ground level. Some shrubs can also be pruned back at this time, but not the spring flowerers or you will lose the future blooms.

▶ With the branches bare, it is also a good time to check for borers. Look for gumming or bleeding or patches of sawdust. If you scrape away the debris, it will reveal a hole with a grub usually in residence. A piece of wire pushed into the hole can quickly fix this, then squirt in some metho.

▶ Another winter chore is a bit of tool maintenance. A cleaning and then a sharpening and oiling will stand you in good stead in the months to come.

▶ Despite the clear blue skies, we are having some fairly nippy mornings so a top-up of mulch will help to keep your soil warm and if the lack of rain occurs as forecast, will also help to retain moisture.

▶ Pots of Pansies or Primulas can always brighten up the winter garden and seedlings are available at your friendly hardware store or garden centre. Find a protected spot for them, keep deadheading and they will continue to flower throughout these cold months.

▶ And when it is really too cold and wintery, settle down indoors with a couple of good gardening books. The Armchair Book of Gardens by Jane Billingham or Creating an Australian Garden by Angus Stewart are two favourites of mine to dip into.

