HORTULANUS

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

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SEPTEMBER 2025

COMING EVENTS

Until Oct. 6	**Boongala Gardens, 76 Pitt Town Rd, Kenthurst. Open 10am-4pm Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon.**
Sept. 2	**KHS Meeting and AGM - Speaker: Paul Nicholson, Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney**
Sept. 6-7	**Plant Lovers Fair, Kariong. Sat. 8-4pm, Sun. 9-3pm. Entry: $15 Further information: https://www.plantloversfair.com.au/**
Sept. 13-14	**Spring Clivia Show and Sales, Phyllis Ave, Thornleigh. Sat. 9am-4pm, Sun. 9am-3pm Entry: $5**
Sept.13-Oct.12	**Floriade, Commonwealth Park Canberra. Open 9.30am-5.30pm daily. Entry free**
Sept. 27	**Geranium Show and Sale, 1 Gilroy Lane, Turramurra. 1pm-3pm**
Oct. 4-5	**Bromeliad Society Spring Show and Sale, Federation Pavilion, Castle Hill Showground, Showground Road, Castle Hill. Sat. 9am-4pm, Sun. 10am-3pm.**
Oct. 7	**KHS Meeting and Trading Table**
Oct. 12	**KHS Members' Garden Ramble**

President's Report

The past year has seen so many wonderful activities enjoyed by our members. The highlight of the year was the three-night bus trip to Beechworth, Bright and Tumut which took us though some of the drought affected parts of southern NSW and northern Victoria. Whilst Sydney and the northern coastal areas had excessive rains and in some areas, floods, the southern regions have struggled through a persistent drought. But the ingenuity of gardeners prevailed and we were treated to a range of beautifully crafted and tended gardens everywhere we went. The Little Hartley trip was equally enthralling in the Spring.

Our guest speakers excelled and covered areas of interest from the native meadow project in the Sydney Botanic Gardens, to the history of roses and to designing innovative urban plantings for nature and humans. We were also entertained, and in some ways, enthralled by a lecture on Brush Turkeys!

One eventful evening, we awarded our Secretary the GCA Ann Williams Clark Award for her outstanding service to KHS. Christine Rethers has been our tireless Secretary since 2000 – a 25-year term which has never been surpassed.

Our wonderful members attended loyally throughout the year despite rain, hail and heatwaves. They continued to bring wonderful flowers, plants, fruits, vegetables, decorative displays and photos to delight us all. The passing of our multi-year past winner of the President's Cup has been felt with the passing of Aubrey Knowles who was such a prolific gardener. We miss his varied and bountiful displays.

A big thank-you goes to all the members who have assisted month in and month out. The member presenters, trading table, raffle and supper helpers, the biannual plant sellers, the Facebook contributors, the photographers, the people setting up the display tables, to name but a few of the many tasks. All are undertaken by willing volunteers.

And finally, I would like to recognise and thank the committee who meet each month to plan the outings, guest and member speakers, organise the suppers, keep the books, oversee the renews, check attendances and answer the questions at meetings and on our Facebook site.

Together, we continue a tradition of camaraderie and a sharing of knowledge and skills that started 93 years ago. A wonderful legacy that enriches all who attend.

Evelyn Mason, President

MEMBER NEWS

Membership subscriptions were due on 1st July 2025 - $25 for a single and $35 for a double. Please complete the attached renewal form and return it with your payment (cash, cheque or direct debit) in an envelope with your name on it to Helen Gilkes at the next meeting or post it to Mrs Robyn Brown, P O Box 508, Forestville 2087. Please take a moment to fill in the subscription form as it is needed to check we have your details correctly recorded.

Note: This will be your last Hortulanus if we do not receive your renewal. If you are not sure if you have paid, please send an email to our Membership Secretary, Robyn Brown, medway2@bigpond.net.au.

It was another cool evening for our August meeting but despite this, 59 members and visitors ventured out to enjoy the activities. We were pleased to find that our hall was at a very comfortable temperature throughout the evening.

The Garden Clubs of Australia advises that the 'Beautiful Gardens of Australia' Calendar 2026 is now available at a cost of $15 inclusive of postage and GST. For orders of 10 or more the cost is $13 each delivered to one address. To order your copy, please contact the Treasurer at treasurer@gardenclubs.org.au specifying the number of calendars and include your postal address. Payment is by Direct Debit to the GCA Bank Account: Commonwealth Bank BSB: 062 000 Account No. 00922899. Please remember to add your name for easy identification of the payment.

Don't forget that we will be holding a Members' Trading Table at our October meeting. This means you will need to start **now** to prepare the plants you would like to bring for sale. We will be inviting members of the local garden clubs to this meeting so the potential number of customers will be greater. We will be sending out next month the form with instructions that will be needed to record the plants you bring for sale together with the sale price.

A number of KHS members were also members of the Cottage Garden Club which folded unexpectedly earlier this year following the sudden passing of the organiser, Jackie Perkins. We are pleased to report that the club is being resurrected by Mark Massey (of Mother Earth Nursery fame) and the first meeting will be held on Saturday, 13th December. The location will be revealed closer to that date. It is expected that there will be speakers both in the morning and the afternoon as well as plants for sale. If you wish to be put on a contact list, please send an email to: gardenclub@menursery.com.au.

The Society will be holding its Christmas lunch on Thursday, 20 November 2025 at the St Ives Club, 100 Killeaton Street, St Ives, 12.30pm to 2.30pm. Everyone is invited to attend and the cost will be $75 per person for a wonderful buffet with drinks and canapes on arrival and a choice of mains and desserts. We are attaching a booking form with further details of the dishes you can expect. Bookings can be made with Helen Gilkes (9144 4826) or at a meeting.

OUTINGS

Bookings are now open for a one-day trip to the Bundanoon Garden Ramble on Saturday, 25th October. The cost is $82 per person. In the interests of keeping the cost of this trip down, we are asking that you bring your own lunch and morning tea. When we arrive in Bundanoon, we will head first to the village hall which will have many different market stalls and close by there are several lovely cafes for a quick morning tea if desired. Then it will be on to the gardens—we aim to see at least four of the eight gardens that will be open and we have arranged to have lunch in one of the gardens. Seats on the coach are filling fast so don't delay in getting your booking in to Helen Gilkes (9144 4826). Bookings will close on Friday, 10th October.

The Society's Members' Garden Ramble will take place on Sunday, 12th October. The gardens should be visited in the following order:

1.30-2.15pm Paul Gratiaen, 10 Kalista Avenue, St Ives
2.15-3pm Vered Wagmann and Guy Vissel, 14 Romney Road, St Ives
3-4.30pm Christine & Theo Rethers, 1 Wolsten Avenue, Turramurra

We will have afternoon tea in the last garden and ask that you bring a small plate of something sweet or savoury. The Society will provide tea and coffee plus cups, plates and serviettes.
Grateful thanks to the members who have volunteered to open their gardens.

RAFFLE

There were three lovely native plants provided by the Society on the raffle table. The other raffle prizes were donated by members —thank you to all those anonymous members who bring along some very nice prizes.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table had a number of interesting items on offer including a basket full of Hippeastrum bulbs and some pots of interesting ground covers. Don't forget to check out the Garden Table each month for some lovely plants.

GUEST SPEAKER AUGUST

Our guest speaker was Stuart Read. Stuart is a landscape architect and horticulturist helping manage change in some of NSW's most significant historic parks and gardens. He has long been active in the Australian Garden History Society (AGHS) at national and state level. Stuart gave a most interesting talk about the life and works of Paul Sorensen, a prolific garden designer and creator in the period between the 1920's and 1980's and mostly in NSW, especially in the Blue Mountains towns of Katoomba, Leura and Wentworth Falls. *Everglades* in Leura, managed now by the National Trust, is perhaps the best known of these gardens.

Stonework at *Everglades*

Paul Sorensen

Paul Sorensen was born in Denmark in 1891 and moved to Australia at the outbreak of the First World War. His early training as a horticulturalist stood him in good stead and before long, Sorensen had established a nursery in Leura and started work as a garden designer. He not only designed the gardens but also provided the plants which he sourced from his own nursery. He undertook the enormous task of moving mature trees which was done by pure manpower (without the help of any machinery).

Feltex House Roof Garden

A notable garden that Sorensen created in the city was a roof garden on the top of Feltex House, 261 George Street which was a feature until it was demolished in 1961 to make way for an extra seven stories which were added to the building.

Sorensen had a number of wealthy patrons who were industry leaders. These included Henry van der Velde and Sidney Hoskins (Australian Iron & Steel) for whom he designed not only their private houses but also the landscaping for their industrial sites.

Ha-ha walls

Trees were a very important feature of most of Sorensen's gardens. He also made good use of the Ha-ha wall which is used to separate two parts of a landscape without the use of a fence. *Mahratta* in Wahroonga has a garden that was designed by Sorensen in 1925. It is noted for its magnificent trees, many of which came from Sorensen's nursery in Leura, and included several species of cedars, other conifers, oaks and maples, many of which still survive. Of the native trees, the Queensland Firewheel tree, Crows Foot ash, Bunya Bunya pine and Tallowwood are still growing well.

Sorensen died in Leura in 1983. On a sad note, Sorensen lost two of his three sons in the Second World War.

Main Speaker September: This will be Paul Nicholson from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney. Paul will give a talk on how plants are adapted to their pollinators – this should be quite fascinating.

MEMBER SPEAKER AUGUST

Ted Shaw gave us a wonderful glimpse of his and Nancy's trip to India last year. The trip started in Delhi where among other things they saw a number of the beautiful old buildings, visited the spice market and took a rickshaw ride. Their next stop was Jaipur with visits to some of the notable buildings and a craft centre. At their next stop, one of the highlights was a Cattle and Camel Fair. In Udaipur they took a cruise on Lake Pichola. During a visit to Ranthambore National Park they were fortunate to see a tiger who was enjoying a meal. Then it was on to Agra to spend time at the Taj Mahal - that iconic building built in 1648 by Emperor Shah Jahan as a white marble mausoleum in memory of his wife, Mumtaz Mahal. No visit to India is complete without a visit to this beautiful building.

Jaipur

Also in Agra is the Red Fort which is in fact older than the Taj Mahal and was the residence of the rulers of the Mughal dynasty until the capital was moved to Delhi in 1638. From there it was back to Delhi and the flight home

A tiger in Ranthambore National Park

Nancy and Ted at the Taj Mahal

Taj Mahal

The Red Fort in Agra

Member speaker September: We will not be having a member speaker this month because we are holding the Society's AGM.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN SEPTEMBER by Christine Rethers

It is time now to plan for our spring and summer vegetables. Pull out your winter vegetables as they finish up and put them in the compost. Plan now what you would like to grow and then select where in the vegie garden they will be planted. Remember not to plant the same plants in the same place two years in a row but vary what you are growing. It is better for the soil and also helps prevent the spread of pathogens.

Some vegetables will need some support so when you have worked out where your summer vegies will be planted, put in the appropriate supports **before** you put in the plants. Beans, cucumbers and even pumpkins will need the support of a trellis. This can be as simple as a tee-pee of long bamboo stakes, tied at the top. Most types of tomatoes will also need support. A 1½m stake for each tomato plant should be put in before you plant the young tomatoes.

I find it handy to grow on the seedlings in small individual pots for a few weeks before I plant them in their final spot in the garden. Tomato seedlings especially benefit from this. Remember that you can deep plant tomato seedlings as they will then grow extra roots on the stems you are burying.
It is a bit early to plant sweet corn, better to wait until about October. When you do, it is best to plant them in a square rather than a long single row as in a square it is easier for insects to pollinate them. Beans can be planted in with the corn and the bean plants can then use the stems of the corn to climb on.
Be careful when you buy vegie seedlings from a garden centre. Sometimes they are left to grow on in their punnets and become long and leggy with roots coming out of the bottom. I find these plants have a tendency go straight to seed.


Tomatoes at 2-3 weeks, then potted on at 4-5 weeks.

Corn planted in a block

Bean tee-pee

YOUR SEPTEMBER GARDEN by Christine Rethers

This is the best time of the year to prune citrus—after removing all the fruit and before the new season's leaves and blossoms arrive. The aim is to reduce the height to a height where you can comfortably pick the fruit without having to use a ladder and to improve light penetration. As with most fruit trees, you are aiming for a 'vase' shape. Watch out for any shoots that have thorns and come from below where the plant was grafted. These are coming from the root stock which is a different plant to the one you are pruning. They usually have different shaped leaves too so are quite easy to spot. These should be removed right back to the trunk. After pruning give your citrus a good feed with an appropriate fertiliser. Ideally, fertiliser should be applied once each season. They are hungry plants and have a shallow root system. Water the fertiliser in well after applying.

As your azaleas and camellias finish flowering, this is the time to prune them. Azaleas should only need a light trim and tidy-up. However, camellias can take a much harder prune at this time of the year, right down to bare stems if you need to rejuvenate them or reduce their size. They should come back well. Again, feeding them after pruning is very beneficial. Make sure you use the appropriate fertiliser as they are acid-loving plants and are sensitive to lime.

A hard-pruned camellia

New growth

Whilst in the pruning mood, the end of August or early September is the very best time to prune hibiscus. Most will have lost their leaves over winter and it is easy to see the structure of the plant. Remove weak branches and any that cross over. You can shorten the main stems by at least half if required. The prunings can then be used as hard-cane cuttings. Just dip them in a hormone gel and put them in a pot of sifted potting mix. Wait until they have some roots and then pot them on into a larger pot. Give your pruned hibiscus a good feed.

Most of your bulbs will either be in flower or just finishing flowering. Give them a good feed now—this will help them to form the flowers for next spring. Whatever you do, don't cut the foliage of your bulbs as they die down. It looks a bit messy for a while but the foliage is essential to feed the bulb for next year's flowering.

This a good time to take cuttings of frangipani. Cut off a stem - and leave it in a cool dry place to callous over the cut end. You can then plant it in a pot with a dry sandy and gritty mix and water lightly. It could take as long as a year for the cutting to form any roots. Don't over–water or the cutting will rot.

If you have bought new, bare-rooted roses and planted them, you must wait until they get their new leaves and start their growth cycle before giving them some fertiliser. The new roots are very fragile and could burn if you fertilise heavily before they are established.

If you haven't done so yet, it is time to cut back ornamental grasses. In fact they benefit from being cut down to just about soil level. The fresh new growth will come quite quickly as the weather warms up and before very long you will have a lovely new clump of ornamental grass. These clumps are so useful if you have an awkward spot to fill and don't require much in the way of watering and feeding.

Happy gardening!