

HORTULANUS

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

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DECEMBER 2025

COMING EVENTS

Dec. 2 **KHS Meeting and Christmas Supper:** Lanny Pramana will demonstrate making floral arrangements for Christmas.

2026
Feb. 3 **KHS Meeting:** Speaker to be advised.



A Very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

As the gardening year intensifies and produces the most beautiful blooms (and weeds) we also look forward to the festive season which we celebrate with our loved ones. I want to take a moment to wish each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas and a peaceful, prosperous, and green New Year.

This year has been a wonderful success for our club. We've enjoyed a diverse range of activities, informative speakers, beautiful garden tours, and fun gatherings that have helped our gardens (and friendships!) flourish. It is your passion and enthusiasm that make this club the special community it is. For that the committee and I are so very thankful.

I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to all our incredible volunteers and committee members. Your tireless efforts in organizing events, supporting our monthly meetings, and managing club affairs are the backbone of our success. Without your dedication, we simply wouldn't have this wonderful club we all enjoy so much.

As we head into December and January, please take note of the slight changes to our usual meeting schedules (details can be found in this newsletter). This downtime offers a chance for reflection, gratitude and, of course, a little rest after a very busy year.

On behalf of the entire committee, I look forward to seeing you all at our next event in the New Year and working together for an even better year ahead.

Take care, stay safe, and keep gardening!

Evelyn Mason, President



MEMBER NEWS

We welcomed 50 members and friends to our November meeting. Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, 2nd December, and will be our final meeting of the year. We will take a month off in January before resuming again on 3rd February 2026.

At our December meeting, Lanny Pramana will demonstrate making floral arrangements for Christmas. Ted Shaw will film the demonstration and display it on the wall behind Lanny so that everyone will be able to see Lanny working on her arrangements. The floral arrangements will then become part of the Lucky Door prizes. Make sure you pick up a ticket when you sign in—just one ticket per person. To finish up, we will have our Christmas Supper and we invite our members to contribute by bringing along a plate of something either savoury or sweet.

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A number of KHS members and friends enjoyed a delicious Christmas lunch at the St Ives Club recently. Lunch included drinks on arrival with canapes, followed by a very tasty two course lunch. It was especially nice to catch up with Maureene and Keith Smith who cannot get to our night-time meetings and to have time to enjoy conversation with other members that one only sees fleetingly at meetings. Needless to say, our President, Evelyn, managed to come up with some very suitable Christmas jokes to entertain us with!



OUTINGS

We have several exciting outings planned for the coming year. The first outing will be to two gardens in Mt Colah, the gardens of one of our members, Clare Bell and her near neighbour, Michael Hughes. This will be on Sunday, 29th March starting at 1.30pm. We will need to divide those attending into two groups so that half will visit Clare's garden first while the second group will go to Michael's garden and then after about an hour-and-a-half, we will change over. Afternoon tea will be served in Clare's garden. Michael Hughes' garden is a permaculture garden and Michael will explain how he gardens the permaculture way. The lower part of the garden is a bit steep but the whole garden can be viewed from the top. The cost will be \$10 and the Society will help with car pooling. We will send out a booking form with our February newsletter.

The second outing will be '*the big one*' - five days in Queensland from Wednesday, 8th to Sunday, 12th July 2026. At the moment, this is still in the planning stage but basically we will travel up to Queensland by coach with an over-night stay in Armidale and then travel on to Montville where we will be based. We will travel out from there to visit the Queensland Garden Show at Nambour as well as gardens on the Sunshine Coast and in the hinterland. We will finish the trip in the Gold Coast from where our travellers can fly back to Sydney. Those who don't want to fly back can stay on the coach and travel back to Sydney by coach. Put these dates in your diary - we will have more information for you in the February newsletter.

Our final trip will be on Saturday, 19th September 2026 for a one-day visit to the Plant Lover's Fair at Kariong as well as gardens on the Central Coast. More about this trip closer to the date.

RAFFLE

This month's raffle consisted of three lovely Australian native plants provided by the Society as well a classic gardening book and some chocolates among other donations. Many thanks to all the donors. There will not be a raffle at the December meeting but there will be Lucky Door Prizes instead. Don't forget to pick up your ticket when you sign in.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table had a generous amount of white irises and daffodil bulbs as well as some tomato seedlings for sale. There will not be a garden table at the December meeting so the next time you will be able to buy plants will be at the February 2026 meeting.

MAIN SPEAKER NOVEMBER

This was our Secretary, Christine Rethers, who stepped in literally at the last minute to replace our scheduled speaker, landscape designer Libby Birley, who had come down with RSV. Libby has agreed to speak to us next year, so we will not miss out. Christine showed photos of a trip she took in South-West England and spoke about some of the wonderful gardens she visited on this trip which went from Bath in Somerset down to Land's End. Christine was there when many of the gardens were at their very best, resplendent with deep borders full of roses, delphiniums, clematis, lavender and salvias. We also visited the Eden Project which unfortunately Christine said was looking a bit run down. It was opened in 2000 and is made up of two biomes with one housing rainforest plants and the other Mediterranean plants.



The garden at Lanhydrock, Bodmin



The Eden Project in Cornwall



The RHS garden, Rosemoor

MEMBER SPEAKER November

Our member speaker was Guy Vissel who gave a very interesting talk on the upsides and pitfalls of setting up a beehive in your garden. Guy admitted that he went into this project with not very much actual knowledge of what lay ahead for him. However, he soon found that he needed to get more information and found local bee-keeping groups who were able to put him on the right path. He started off with a flow-hive (an Australian invention) but found that the bees were reluctant to use it. This led him to add a more conventional hive and the bees were happier. Guy has already harvested quite a bit of honey and brought some to the meeting for members to taste—very nice indeed! Some of the problems that come with bee-keeping include living with the Varroa mite which arrived on our shore in 2022 and spread swiftly through most of the eastern states. Varroa mites are external parasites that feed on developing and adult European honey bees. Eradication has proved impossible and management of the pest is now being used. The mite can be controlled with the use of pesticides but of course, this will affect the honey. The other problem that Guy has encountered is the swarming of bees when a new queen bee will take off with her followers to 'greener pastures'. A bee swarm can be captured and returned to the hive but this is not always possible. With many of our members commenting on the lack of bees in our gardens this spring, maybe more of us should be considering keeping bees in our gardens too.



Setting up the hive



The original hive



Bees 'working hard'



Harvesting honey



Varroa mites



A bee swarm

There will be no Member speaker in December.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN DECEMBER/JANUARY by Christine Rethers

All should be ticking along in your vegie garden with the tomatoes filling out and beans ready for some light harvesting. Don't forget that you must pick them and not leave them too long as otherwise the plants will think that they can go to seed and stop producing fresh new beans. The same goes for your other crops like zucchini and cucumbers. Watering and liquid feeding should be done regularly and make sure you mulch your vegetables crops to help them to get through the warmer months.

Have you thought about planting some herbs to help your Christmas menus along? One that I cannot do without is basil - seedlings can be found not only in the garden centres but also in Woolworths at a very good price. A patch of basil will last you the whole of summer and is an essential ingredient in any tomato dish, hot or cold. Another herb I cannot do without is parsley and again seedlings can be found at garden centres and Woolworths. Have you tried making tabouli? It is an easy recipe with a lovely fresh flavour. Just take a bunch of parsley, chopped finely, then mixed with rehydrated cous cous (burghul). To this you add tomatoes chopped finely, some chopped mint leaves, a light seasoning of salt and some olive oil, then mix all the ingredients together and serve as a salad or side dish.



Jenny Watsford has given us a recipe when you have an oversupply of parsley and coriander - just perfect for a warm summer's day.

Seafood Pasta with Salsa Verde (serves 4)

500 gm fettucine (or other type of pasta)

Salsa Verde ingredients:

½ cup parsley, chopped

1 cup coriander, chopped

½ cup olive oil

1 tablespoon capers

2 tablespoons macadamias, chopped

2 tablespoons lemon juice

Pepper

Method: Combine all the salsa verde ingredients in a blender and process to a coarse puree.

In a heated non-stick pan, cook the seafood and macadamias, stirring occasionally for 3 – 5 minutes or until just cooked and a bit pink inside.

Meanwhile cook the pasta in boiling water for 10 minutes, drain and toss through a little salsa verde. Serve pasta on plates, top with seafood and extra macadamias then the remaining salsa verde. Sprinkle with grated parmesan if desired.

Salsa is best served on the day it is made to preserve the green colour.

Seafood Ingredients:

600 gm mixed raw seafood, eg prawns, salmon, barramundi

½ cup macadamias, chopped

1 tablespoon olive oil

YOUR DECEMBER/JANUARY GARDEN by Maureen Smith

The transition from spring to summer is very blurred nowadays with quite large fluctuations in the weather to cope with. Early December is probably the last chance to plant any summer flowering plants to attract the pollinators and beneficial insects to your patch. Summer-hardy flowers, apart from the ubiquitous petunia, are those such as zinnias, dahlias, verbena and phlox. They will all cope with a Sydney summer and if regularly deadheaded, will flower through the summer and into autumn. Any plants you put in in November would appreciate a light feed right now, try some seaweed or worm tea.

Apart from flowering plants, using foliage plants can enhance your garden or balcony. Many are shade lovers like *Iresine herbstii*. Others such as coleus now have varieties that will withstand full sun - *Solenostemon Sedona Sunset* is one such plant. You will need to keep the water up to them though. Other foliage plants worth looking at are the strobilanthes and plectranthus. Again, while most plectranthus prefer shade or semi shade there are varieties like *Plectranthus argentatus* that will take full sun.



Solenostemon Sedona Sunset

Keep your garden looking good by deadheading flowering plants as they fade and thereby encourage new growth. Roses respond well to this treatment. Whilst doing this look out for aphids, caterpillars and other pests. They can be controlled by hand, hosing or Eco Oil, whichever is your preference.

Weeding, that perennial task, and topping up the mulch are regular chores, of course. Some people use vinegar or a vinegar and salt mix for weeding. This needs to be used carefully as it will damage any plant it comes in contact with. Another drawback is that it doesn't kill the roots so if you do not like using chemicals such as glyphosate, hand weeding and mulching are the way to go.



Zinnias



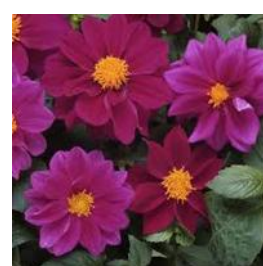
Iresine herbstii



Verbenas



Capsicum



Dahlias

As the weather warms up don't forget the 3-hour-rule - avoid gardening between 11am and 2pm. Plants are stressed and the UV is not good for you either.

A final thought for December - what better Christmas gift than one that keeps on giving, a potted flowering plant or vegetable? Think a poinsettia or some miniature tomatoes or capsicums.

