

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, P O Box 508, Forestville 2087 (0408 295 601)
Website: www.khsgardenclub.org.au Email: khs.secretary@gmail.com



NOVEMBER 2025

COMING EVENTS

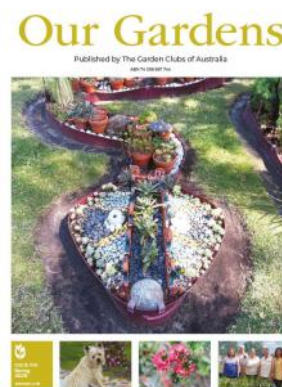
- Oct. 25-Nov. 2** Artisans in the Gardens, Lion Gate Lodge, Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens. Entry free.
Nov. 4 KHS Meeting: Speaker will be Libby Birley, garden designer. Topic: 'From Too Much to Just Enough'.
Nov. 20 KHS Christmas Lunch at the St Ives Club, 100 Killeaton St, St Ives 12.30pm-2.30pm.
Nov. 22 African Violet Association - Display and Sale, Burwood RSL, 96 Shaftesbury Rd, Burwood from 10am to 2pm. Entry: \$5.
Dec. 3 KHS Meeting and Christmas supper: Speaker is Lanny Pramana who will demonstrate floral arrangements suitable for Christmas.

MEMBER NEWS

October has proved to be one of the busiest months of the whole year for KHS members. We had a well supported Members' Trading Table, followed by the Members' Garden Ramble and the KHS one day trip to the Bundanoon Open Gardens. We hope members have enjoyed all these activities.

Christmas Lunch: All members are invited to attend the Society's Christmas lunch which will be held on Thursday, 20 November 2025 at the St Ives Bowling Club, 100 Killeaton Street, St Ives starting at 12.30pm. The cost will be \$75 per person and the lunch will include a glass of wine and canapes on arrival, followed by a delicious two course buffet lunch. Do come and join fellow members for this special event. An invitation to this event which contains instructions on how to book and pay is included with this newsletter.

Garden Clubs of Australia Our Gardens Quarterly Magazine: Subscriptions to this magazine are now due for 2026. We strongly recommend the purchase of a subscription as the magazine is very relevant to home gardeners, as most of us are. Most of the articles are written by experienced garden folk like ourselves and cover a very wide range of topics. The cost is only \$20, posted directly to you, for four quarterly editions. Please let Robyn Brown know if you would like to take up a subscription either by email to medway2@bigpond.net.au or at the November meeting. Payment may be made by direct deposit, by cash or by cheque. Payments by direct deposit should be made to the KHS bank account: Account name: Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc. BSB: 062-173 Account Number: 00900110. When making your deposit, please include your surname and OG in the reference line so we are able to identify you as paid. Cheques should be made out to Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc. and can be posted to Robyn Brown, P O Box 508, Forestville 2087. All renewals or new subscriptions must be deposited or received no later than Friday, 21 November 2025.



OUTINGS

We have a short outing planned for next March. It will be on Sunday, 29th March 2026, starting at 1.30pm. We will have a guided tour of the very interesting permaculture garden of Michael Hughes in Mt Colah and a visit to the large and interesting garden belonging to one of our members, Clare Bell, also in Mt Colah. The Society will provide afternoon tea in Clare's garden. Michael has asked if we would restrict the group to around 15 people so we plan to have two trips to his garden, the first starting at 1.30pm and the second at 3pm. We will split those attending into two groups with the first going to Michael's garden whilst the second group is at Clare's garden and then we will ask the two groups to swap around. The cost will be \$10 for the garden entries and afternoon tea. Car pooling is suggested and the Society can help with this. More on this in the February *Hortulanus*.

Plans are currently in the making for a four-day trip to the Queensland Garden Show in Nambour in July 2026. We are just at the preliminary stage at the moment but will let you know more in due course.

The opinions and recommendations published in this newsletter are those of the authors and the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc. takes no responsibility for any losses or damages that may be attributed to the use or misuse of any material or opinion in this publication. Its contents are protected by copyright and no part may be reproduced without permission of the authors.

RAFFLE

This month's raffle consisted of three lovely native plants provided by the Society and sourced for us by Nancy Shaw, more gardening books, a large bottle of fertiliser and some chocolates. Many thanks to all the donors. The cost is 3 tickets for only \$2.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table will be back in action again at the November meeting but this will be for the last time this year as at the December meeting we will be having our Christmas Supper and a Lucky Door Prize draw. Let's make the November Garden Table a bumper one.

The Members' Trading Table was again very successful with nearly 100 plants finding new homes. We welcomed a number of visitors from other local garden clubs who boosted the numbers who were buying plants. We will be holding our next Members' Trading Table at the March 2026 meeting. Hopefully this will give everyone plenty of time to get going with propagating some more lovely plants from their gardens.



MEMBERS' GARDEN RAMBLE

About 40 members took the opportunity to visit the gardens kindly opened by Paul Gratiaens, Vered Wagmann and Guy Vissel and Christine and Theo Rethers. The afternoon started off in bright sunny weather but by the time everyone got to the last garden the weather had changed to being cool and blustery. However, this did not deter our intrepid garden visitors. Paul's garden was distinguished by having quite a number of plants that provide food including several mango trees, a bed filled with mint and some sugar cane. Vered's and Guy's garden had three young Silk Floss Trees (*Ceiba speciosa*) which are remarkable as their trunks are covered with fearsome-looking thorns which they retain as they grow bigger. Guy had a thriving collection of camellia cuttings and a productive European bee hive. Their front garden was full of flowering plants with a path of stepping stones to access the rear of the house. The last garden, belonging to Christine and Theo, was familiar with many members but each time members visit there is something different to see. The roses had just started to bloom and the early blooms looked fresh and lovely. The vegie garden was packed with spinach, lettuce, beetroot, eggplants (which had overwintered very well from last year), rhubarb and lots of herbs. A Snowball Tree (*Viburnum opulus*) was covered in white balls of flowers. There were also plants for sale at very modest prices organised by Ted and Nancy Shaw and Theo Rethers. The afternoon tea was bountiful and delicious and enjoyed by all. Next time we organise a Members' Garden Ramble, think about volunteering your garden and we guarantee that you will end up with a garden you will be proud of.



Paul's Garden
Mango Tree Sugar Cane

Vered and Guy's Garden
Ceiba speciosa Foxgloves

Plant Sales

Afternoon Tea

MAIN SPEAKER OCTOBER



Our speaker this month, Bernard Chapman, is an old friend of the Society who has visited us quite a number of times. His talks are always interesting and very relevant to our local area where he himself lives and works as a horticulturalist. He called this talk 'Wisdom from a Plant Whisperer' and in his talk he passed on to us some of the invaluable information he has gained after over 30 years of working in gardens in Sydney. For example, he showed us how to rescue hydrophobic plants when ordinary watering did not wet the soil properly. For this, he uses a dowel to make deep holes in the potting mix and at the bottom of these holes he places a few dry water crystals and then back fills the holes with potting mix. Then, when you water, the crystals will take up the

water and let it out slowly to water the plant roots deep in the pot. What a useful hint this is! Bernard emphasised the need to 'water, mulch and feed' our plants and he ran through the many do's and don'ts of this. He gave us his thoughts on plants that are simply duds such as those that need constant spraying with insecticides or distribute seeds everywhere - *Viburnum odoratissimum* is one that falls into this category. He also warned about planting anything that will be out of its comfort zone. This would include plants such as Lilac, Smoke Bush and some Rhododendrons that all do so much better in a climate cooler than Sydney's. Another hint Bernard passed on is to be careful when transplanting. Leaving a plant's roots in the open air for any length of time is severely detri-

mental and it is very important to get a plant back in the ground as quickly as possible. Bernard also stressed the importance of feeding plants, then watering this in before putting down mulch. He suggested that lucerne mulch (if you can get it) was preferable to sugar cane as it contains nitrogen.

With all these words of wisdom, there is no excuse for any of us not to have a perfectly lovely garden!

Main speaker November: This will be Libby Birley, a well-known landscape designer, who will speak to us about downsizing - 'From Too Much to Just Enough'.

MEMBER SPEAKER October

Bob Ballinger gave us the third talk on his and Sue's trip to Scandinavia last year for the Heritage Rose Conference. This time they were in Norway and their first visit was to the amazing Frogner Park in the middle of the country's main city, Oslo. This park is especially well known for a great abundance of statues. It also has the largest rose garden in the country, holding around 14,000 roses of 150 different varieties. The Monolith is around 14.2m high and depicts 121 human figures.

Leaving Oslo, Bob and Sue traveled north-west, making their way through the most picturesque villages, with hanging baskets of flowers adorning the light poles and balconies of the houses. In one village they came across a 'stave' church. This was built in 1220 and is made entirely of wood. The vicarage garden was filled with roses.

Some of the villages make a feature of their local 'trolls' as trolls form an important part of Norwegian mythology. One of the towns they visited, Molde, is known as 'The City of Roses' and as can be imagined, there are roses everywhere.

As they proceeded up the west coast of Norway, the scenery was spectacular, made up of numerous mountain peaks and the fjords. Passing through many small villages, they noted numerous examples of roses, either in the village gardens or planted in the public parks. Their final destination was the city of Bergen, a fishing and trading port which dates back to its foundation in 1070. It served as the capital of Norway in the 13th century and was Norway's largest city until the late 1800's. As a fishing port, it is fascinating to walk through the numerous stalls, selling all kinds of fish including shellfish, whale meat and even reindeer and moose meat. Bob and Sue left us, high up on one of the mountains overlooking the city of Bergen. Hopefully they were able to take one of the gondolas to get to ground level again.

That was the final instalment of what was an amazing trip for the two of them. I wonder where they are off to next!



Statues in Frogner Park, Oslo



One of many rose gardens in Oslo



Roses in a village street



Flowers on a light pole



Stave church



A Norwegian troll

Member speaker November: This will be Guy Vissel who will talk to us about keeping a bee hive in the back-yard.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN NOVEMBER by Christine Rethers

It is not too late to plant some summer vegetables but buy seedlings from the nursery as opposed to sowing seeds at this time of the year as it is getting a bit late for them to mature before we start to go into autumn. Most vegetables such as tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, eggplant and pumpkin will require a nice bright and sunny position but lettuce, rocket, spinach and most herbs can handle a shadier spot.

As the hot weather arrives, it is important to make sure you have put plenty of mulch on the vegie garden and are watering on a regular basis. Problems like blossom end rot on tomatoes occur because of irregular watering. Especially keep the water up to your fruit trees as the trees will abort their immature fruit if watering is too infrequent.

HELP YOUR PLANTS SURVIVE A HOT SYDNEY SUMMER by Maureen Smith

The first question to ask is whether they are they in the right position; that is, if they really cannot cope with our summer afternoon sun and hot winds, can we move them to where other more hardy species will provide shade or windbreaks. If this is not possible, temporary shade with umbrellas and/or shade cloth may be the answer. White shade cloth is best in terms of reflecting heat but it is more obvious than the standard green.

Wherever your plants are, watering is essential. Long deep watering early in the morning is best. Water the base of the plant not the foliage. For established plants, this should be done three times a week, for newly planted specimens daily for at least a month and for a dry succulent garden once a week is probably sufficient watering. This is a general rule of thumb but check with your finger whether the soil is moist as overwatering can also kill plants.

Mulch is also a good idea. The bark or cane mulches work really well if you have irrigation as they hold the moisture in the ground but a downside is that if we do have rain, it is not always sufficient to get through the mulch to the needy soil. There are alternatives such as gravel or stones or alternatively other hardy plants. They look attractive, protect the soil and keep weeds under control. They look best if planted in swathes and provide contrast. Remember

the maxim, repetition provides cohesion. Some suitable plants are sedums which will thrive in full sun as will natives such as the *Myoporum* and *Scaevola*. Others include *Creeping Thyme* and prostrate *Rosemary* and they are also great for the kitchen! There is also *Convolvulus sabatius* and members of the *Lysimachia* family, all quick spreading.

Pots of course are particularly vulnerable at this time of year. Grouping them together and moving to shadier spots is a good solution though not always possible. Light coloured pots help to stop the roots frying and although terracotta pots are attractive, unless sealed inside, they are very porous and the plants in them can dry out quickly. If your pots are on a balcony or other hard surface, it helps to raise them on pot feet to maintain airflow. If your balcony or courtyard is particularly sunny in the afternoon then some form of temporary shade is vital.

Don't fertilise in the height of summer - your plants need to concentrate on survival not growth. Another don't is if some foliage gets burnt, just leave it. Pruning the plant will only encourage new growth which is extremely vulnerable to the hot sun.

Hopefully these tips will help, but just remember a plant death always warrants a trip to the nursery for a new one!



Ideas for plant protection

YOUR NOVEMBER GARDEN by Maureen Smith

Things are starting to warm up, even earlier than expected, so it is time to think seriously about deep watering and mulching. Mulching our flower and vegie beds hasn't been a common practice for that long but it certainly is a boon to a garden in any climate. Conserving moisture and suppressing weeds is the prime objective.

Perhaps because of the warmer weather, the *Jacarandas* are dropping their old foliage and have already started flowering so sweeping up the dropped leaves and petals is an essential chore right now, especially when they fall on paths. You can add this to your compost as it is excellent brown material, full of carbon, so just mix in with some green nitrogen-rich stuff to help it break down.

Shady spots under trees and shrubs can pose a problem with what to plant. Rhizomatous *Begonias* are one solution. They come in a variety of colours, patterns, textures, leaf shape and sizes. They are easy to look after and basically pest free. Other suggestions are *Origanum vulgare* which is said to repel mosquitos and the old fashioned Bugle flower, *Ajuga reptans*. This evergreen, hardy plant comes in green, deep burgundy and variegated forms, is easy to maintain and spreads quickly. Both of these have flowers of course but they are fairly nondescript and it is the foliage that attracts. These last two can be planted in a sunny spot and they all do well in pots.



Rhizomatous begonias

Plants that do well in our gardens often originate in Southern or Eastern Africa. They have been bred for a similar climate. Two that you could plant right now are *Arctotis* and *Gaura*. They are very different but both are very hardy perennials. *Gaura*, also known as the Butterfly flower, has a delicate flower that moves with the breeze. It has pretty little white and pink flowers. Grow it in full sun and cut it back hard after flowering and it will reward you the following season. It does self-seed however, so is more suited to a rambling cottage-type garden. *Arctotis* on the other hand is more structured. It has either grey or green foliage and comes in many colours. Both are water-wise. *Convolvulus sabatius* is another plant that does well in a full sun situation.

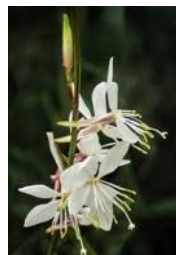
When really hot days come along, please do not be tempted to go out in the heat to water your plants in the middle of the day, even if they look like they have collapsed. You could be doing more harm than good. Watering in the middle of the day means that water droplets on the leaves can act as a magnifying glass and burn the leaves. It is always best to water either early in the morning or later in the evening to avoid this occurring. It is very likely that plants that look as though they are really suffering will remarkably pick up in the cool of the night.

So put on a big hat, slap on the sunscreen and enjoy your garden in summer!

Some sun-happy plants



Arctotis



Gaura



Convolvulus sabatius



Creeping Thyme



Ice Plant (*Delosperma cooperi*)