

# HORTULANUS

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

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## COMING EVENTS

**June 6 KHS Meeting - Speaker: Chelsea Costello, Natural Areas Officer at Ku-ring-gai Council**

## MEMBER NEWS - 90th Anniversary Celebration:

As you will see from the accompanying photos, the meeting went very well and everyone had a good time. We had a good representation from the local politicians including our Federal member, Paul Fletcher, and our two State members, Alister Henskes and Matt Cross. The Mayor was represented by the Deputy Mayor, Cr Barbara Ward as he was unwell on the day. Among the invited guests we had a number of our past presidents including Nick Heath (1974-76), Jim Sweeting (1995-2000 and 2003-2005), Doreen Clark (2010-2020) and Ted Shaw (2020-2021). Sadly, past president Ian St Clair (2005-2010) was unwell and could not be present. Among the other invited guests were the President of Garden Clubs of Australia, Lorraine Emerson, and our GCA Zone Coordinator, Glennis Clark, presidents and/or secretaries of Mosman, Wahroonga, Killara and Gordon garden clubs, Juliet Muras and Helen Wallace representing Eryldene, and of course, our guest speaker, John Siemon, Director of Horticulture at the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens. Our own membership was very well represented with approximately two-thirds of our members present.



Hon. Alister Henskes, Cr. Barbara Ward, Gary Ward



Hon. Paul Fletcher



GCA President, Lorraine Emerson,  
KHS President, Evelyn Mason



Director of Horticulture  
RBG, John Siemon

The meeting started with a warm welcome to all present by our President, Evelyn Mason. We then heard a short address, first from Cr. Barbara Ward and then from Paul Fletcher. Evelyn outlined some of the past achievements of the Society and thanked a small band of members who had recently worked on updating the Society's history. She thanked those members who had beautifully decorated the nine tables that were spread around the hall. The members involved were: Beth Bunyan and Jan Ho, Maureen James, Nancy Shaw, Ted Shaw, Theo Rethers, Len Riordan, Jenny Percy, Colleen Lukey and Margaret Hamilton, and Brenda Zimmerman. Next Evelyn spoke about Margaret Watts, a member of KHS and a past committee member of GCA, who has made a big contribution to the efforts of the GCA to help garden clubs with ideas for meetings and different activities for their members.

Then followed a wonderful illustrated talk by John Siemon who outlined some of the work that he and his colleagues do at the Botanic Gardens, including control of the African Olive at the Mt Annan site, the new Seed Bank and Herbarium which is also at Mt Annan and the day-to-day running of the three sites - in the city, at Mt Tomah and at Mt Annan. He also showed us some pictures of the devastation caused by the recent bush fires in the Blue Mountains and how the native bush is slowly regenerating. His last task was to cut the celebratory cake which he accomplished with aplomb.

The last item on the agenda was to draw the Lucky Door prizes. The lucky winners were able to choose their prizes which included a wrought iron bird feeder donated by Margaret Watts, a large box of Organic Crop Protectant goods donated by Steve Falcioni of Yates Australia and two lovely large potted cyclamens kindly donated by the Elegant Outdoors nursery in Turramurra. To conclude, those present were directed to the supper table which had been filled in the interim with many delectable items by the band of supper helpers, ably supervised by committee member, Jenny Watsford.

The President and Committee of the Society would like to express their thanks to all those who helped to make this a memorable evening. A special 'thank-you' to Bob Ballinger who spent the evening taking the photos.

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A big thank you to the volunteers who so willingly and cheerfully worked behind the scenes at the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary meeting. They are – Jocelyn Hackett, Jenny Percy, David Temple-Cole, Elizabeth Moreau, Julie Iyengar, Kerry Kruger, Robin and David Stewart. They were a brilliant team and together they, and many others, made the evening a great success.

Many thanks from Jenny Watsford and the KHS Committee.

We have put an updated version of the Society's History on the website ([www.khsgardenclub.org.au](http://www.khsgardenclub.org.au)), just in time for our 90th Anniversary. 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. It is certainly worth dipping into. If you would like a hard copy of the history, the Society can get some printed at a cost of \$5 each. Just let Christine Rethers know and she will organise it.

## OUTINGS

The first outing of the year will be to Daffodils at Rydal on Saturday, 9th September. The Society has visited Rydal before but not for quite some years. Those who went on our previous excursion were very impressed with the wonderful displays of daffodils and other early spring flowering 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 these dates in your diary right away. Further details will be available closer to the two respective dates.

**SHOW BENCH, GARDEN TABLE AND RAFFLE** will all be back in action at the June meeting. Please bring in any plants or cuttings you can spare for the Garden Table and donations for the Raffle are always welcomed.

**Main speaker June:** This will be Chelsea Costello who is the Natural Areas Officer at Ku-ring-gai Council. She will tell us about Ku-ring-gai Council's threatened species monitoring program.

**Member speaker June:** Evelyn Mason, our President, will speak to us about Dahlias. This will be the first of two talks that Evelyn will give us on this subject with the second talk to be given at the July meeting.

## Nick Heath (Past President 1974 – 1976) by Evelyn Mason



I am still enjoying the hum and buzz of the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations as I write this article. We had over 120 attendees of which 22 were special guests some representing the three levels of government in Australia, Council, State and Federal. Of special note, Mark Carter, of the Carter family who were members and office bearers back in the 1960's. I had the pleasure of acknowledging several past presidents as well that evening. But then the inevitable happened. A kindly gentleman came up to me after the formal part of the evening had ended and introduced himself as the President from 1974 – 1976.

Nick Heath must be one of the longest standing members of KHS if not the longest member. Our records make it hard to check this fact but it is enough to say, Nick has been a member for almost 50 years. I spoke to him in some depth recently and asked him about his adventures into gardening.

Nick shared with me the fact that he first started gardening at his grandmother's home in Fairlight when he was 13 years old. His first real landscaping efforts happened when his parents purchased a house at West Pymble and he helped then with landscaping and creating garden beds until he married. His first home was also in West Pymble and as a young husband and father he decided it was time to join a garden club so he could learn more about gardening, horticulture and landscaping. In about 1972 he joined KHS and by 1974 he was President. A meteoric rise!

His legal profession meant that he worked in the city and one of his greatest delights was to walk over to the Royal Botanic Gardens at lunchtime and look at and learn about the palms. This is where his love of tropical plants began. He would talk to the gardeners and horticulturalists and the more he learnt, the more enthusiastic he became. Nick was the founder of the Palm Society, New South Wales Chapter (the precursor of the present society) in 1979 and remained its President until 1984. The Society has evolved through several iterations before it adopted its present name of the Tropical Garden Society of Sydney in 2003.

Nick loves plants and tropical plants are his favorite but he doesn't stop at just once genre. In his home at Clontarf, he tends towards tropical plants but he is known to buy any potted plant that catches his eye. Colour, shape and form all attract him and he has a garden filled with a multitude of interesting flora. He and his partner are not the only ones who love the garden. Wallabies, bandicoots (with ticks), water dragons, a myriad of birds all visit his garden and enjoy the oasis he has created.

It was lovely to meet you, Nick and to hear about your journey in gardening. Thank you for your many years of membership and for your past service to KHS.

## IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN JUNE by Christine Rethers

The cold weather has arrived, especially the night-times. You can protect delicate plants such as very young seedlings with a some horticultural fleece or even bubble wrap which can be placed over the plants at night and removed in the morning. The fleece is quite readily available on line and is not expensive. However, you can also protect vul-



nerable plants with thick mulching of straw but remember to scrape it back a bit when you are watering otherwise the water may not penetrate. Once your plants are over about 10cm, they are usually pretty safe to leave alone as we do not get too many frosts in our part of Sydney. Plants like peas, silver beet and most of the brassicas should be racing away by now and we can look forward to harvesting them by August or September. Remember to keep up the watering during dry spells but preferably water in the morning so that the leaves have time to dry before the cold hits them in the evening which can cause fungal problems on damp leaves. This applies to most plants, not just vegetables.

Those of you who are in apartments or town houses can still grow vegetables very successfully in large pots. One of the big advantages of this is that you can move the pots to follow the sun as it changes its trajectory over the winter months. Many vegetables do best with at least a good half-day of full sun although some of the leafy ones will be okay in shadier spots. The pots should ideally be wider than deep as the roots of most of the commonly grown vegetables only need about 30cm depth to grow well. Trough-shaped pots are the best but not absolutely essential. You can try many different kinds of vegetables and herbs this way so go and have a look in a good garden centre and see



what kind of seedlings you can find that appeal to you. If you would like to try your hand at growing potatoes, you will need to have deeper pots or, better still, grow-bags which can be obtained garden centres or look online. If you haven't tried to grow your own vegetables, it is really worth giving it a go. Just remember to use the best potting mix you can find and feed your young plants with a good liquid fertiliser every couple of weeks. Good luck!

## GROWING STRAWBERRIES IN SYDNEY

**Question?** Why grow your own strawberries when they are always available in every supermarket and vegie shop?

**Answer:** Simply because they taste better! What better reason could you want.



This is the time of year to be thinking about planting strawberries. It is best to start with runners. These are shoots that a mother plant sends out during the season and each one develops a new plant at the end of it. These new plants will then grow roots of their own and it is at this point that they can be cut off the mother plant and planted up, either in the garden or in pots. The advantage of using runners rather than seed is that they will most likely produce fruit in their first year. The plants you buy in a garden centre have probably been produced this way. They are sometimes sold bare-rooted in which case you should plant them straight away before they dry out.

Should I plant them in the garden or in a container? Your choice really, as they will do well either way. If you put them in the garden, they should be planted about 20cm apart in well-composted soil. In pots they like a good rich potting mix. As they like to be grown in slightly acidic soil, add plenty of cow manure. After planting, water the runners in well and watch for new growth to emerge. This might take a while if the runner has dried out a bit. Once you see new growth, you can give them a liquid feed with a fertiliser suitable for flowers and fruit—Yates' Thrive is a good one, just follow the directions on the packet.

Flowers should start to appear once the weather warms up and it is then time to put down a mulch of sugar cane mulch or straw so that the fruit that forms will not be sitting on bare earth. Commercial growers use black plastic but we don't recommend this for the home gardener as long term it is harmful to the soil and soil microbes. For the first year, remove any runners that form as this takes away energy for fruit production. Keep up the liquid feeding every two weeks. After the third year, start saving runners for a new set of plants as the mother plants will be exhausted.

One of the biggest problems with growing strawberries is that not only do you like to eat them but so do a host of other beasties. One of the biggest problems is the gastropod (snails and slugs) so be on the watch and use methods to control them such as beer traps, animal-friendly organic snail bait or simply coming out at night with a large pair of boots on. The other problem is animals such as birds, rats and possums so the best protection for this is netting which is firmly secured right around your plants so they cannot get in.

One of the best ways we have found to grow strawberries is in hanging baskets. The advantages are that they are safe from slugs and snails and usually rats and they stay nice and clean for picking. Below are photos of some different ways to grow them in pots and hanging baskets.



The mother plant has sent out runners which can be cut off when they have formed roots and saved for planting a new crop.

## **YOUR JUNE GARDEN by Maureene Smith**

► This year, perhaps because of the mildness of the weather and good rain in March and April, growth doesn't seem to have slowed as much so there seems even more cutting back to do than usual. June is a good time to cut back ornamental grasses quite hard, almost to the ground, before the new shoots appear. Salvias like the Leucanthe group that have finished flowering can also be cut back hard if the new growth is appearing at the base. Day lilies can be taken to the ground and will benefit from a feed of seaweed or worm tea.

► If you have Hellebores growing under a deciduous tree, make sure the new growth is not being smothered by falling leaves. These hardy woodland plants will be flowering soon. You can tidy them up now by cutting off the old leaves at the base.

► Now is a good time to move plants, giving them a feed if you do so. It is also the season to plant any bare rooted trees and shrubs. Ornamental fruit trees and roses are in the nurseries now. When choosing, look for a pleasing shape and don't forget to tidy up any ragged roots and prune the top a little before planting.

► Because I want early flowering, I also prune my climbing roses in June. As we do not have frosts in Lane Cove, it's not too early. If you are not sure about rose pruning, there are some great YouTube videos available. In fact, it seems to me you can find a YouTube video on just about 'How to do' anything.

► I'm still weeding and deadheading, the growth has slowed a bit but there is plenty to do. I always leave the old flowers on the Hydrangeas as long as possible. They turn such lovely colours as they fade, but now is the time to prune down to two fat buds ready for a burst of spring growth. However, only prune those growths that flowered last summer and leave those that did not flower. They will flower for you this coming summer.

► Hold off pruning most of your roses such as the Hybrid Tea and Floribunda roses until July. Pruning promotes growth and you do not want new and delicate shoots developing if there is any chance of a very cold snap.

► By now you should have all your spring bulbs planted, either in the ground or in pots. Keep an eye on them and when they finally emerge, push them along with a feed of liquid fertiliser for flower and fruit every couple of weeks.

## **90th Anniversary– some glimpses of the evening**



**Signing in**



**Before the meeting started**



**Viewing the decorated tables**



**Lorraine Emerson and Evelyn Mason**



**A full hall**



**John Siemon giving his talk**



**Helpers preparing supper**



**Drawing the Lucky Door prizes**



**The Cake!**