

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



OCTOBER 2023

COMING EVENTS

- Sept. 29-Oct. 2 **Leura Gardens Festival, 7 Gardens open.** Info: www.leuragardensfestival.com.au
Sept. 30/Oct. 1 **Bromeliad Society, Autumn Show & Sale, Castle Hill Showground, 129 Showground Rd, Castle Hill. 9am-4pm**
Oct. 3 **KHS Meeting - Prof. Michelle Leishman 'Towards Nature—Smart Liveable Cities for the Future'**
Oct. 21/22 **Hartley Valley Garden Festival and Plant Fair, Little Hartley. 10am-4pm. Five gardens to visit.** Enq. clover.hill.plants@bigpond.com
Oct. 20/22 **Galston Open Gardens. Tickets and map available at the Galston Club, 21 Arcadia Road, Arcadia. 9.30am-4.30pm.**
Oct. 28/29 **Bundanoon Garden Ramble. Tickets available from the Memorial Hall. 9.30am-4.30pm**
Oct. 28/29 **Bathurst Spring Spectacular. Tickets available from Bathurst Visitor Centre. 9.30am—5pm.** Enq. Chris Bayliss 0499 049 299.
Nov. 7 **KHS Meeting**

MEMBER NEWS

As a result of the AGM held at the September meeting, the Officers and Committee of the Society were returned as follows: President - Evelyn Mason, Vice-President - Ted Shaw, Secretary - Christine Rethers, Treasurer - Robyn Brown, Committee - Helen Gilkes and Jenny Watsford.

Some 84 people enjoyed the three open gardens of Jim and Alison Wood, Smila Smithers and Christine and Theo Rethers on Saturday, 23 September. Apart from seeing three lovely gardens, the visitors were able to enjoy a delicious morning/afternoon tea in the Rethers' garden. In addition they were able to buy plants propagated by Evelyn Mason, Ted and Nancy Shaw and Theo Rethers. The weather was kind and the gardens were looking lovely despite the dreadful run of very hot weather during the week prior to the event.

Thank you to the three people who volunteered to sell raffle tickets - Maureen James, Robyn Stewart and Ian St Clair. With their cooperation, we will draw up a roster so they can rotate their dates of duty.

The Society is now on a recruitment drive to boost our membership which slipped a bit during the Covid period. At the October meeting members will be given a Society brochure and asked to pass it on to a friend or family member who could be interested in joining. They may attend a meeting without being a member as a trial and then make a decision as to whether our Society is for them.

Christmas Lunch: This will be held on Tuesday, 21 November 2023 starting at 12.30pm at the Terrey Hills Golf and Country Club, Booralie Road, Terrey Hills. The cost will be \$75 per person and the lunch will include a glass of wine and some canapes on arrival followed by a choice of two main courses and two desserts. Tea/coffee and petits fours will finish the meal. An invitation to this event which contains instructions on how to book and pay is being sent with this newsletter.

OUTINGS

Our first outing of the year to the Daffodil Festival at Rydal was voted a great success by the 40 people who joined the trip. Although the weather was significantly cooler than in Sydney, daffodils were indeed in abundance in all the garden we visited, as were other spring bulbs such as Hyacinths and Muscari (Grape Hyacinths). In one garden there were some glorious bushes of Forsythia. We were treated to a visit by the Daffodil Express steam train and entertained by a Scottish Pipe Band. The lunch was a barbeque in a very rustic barn, again entertained by a local band. One of our travellers, Bob Ballinger, will be showing some photos he took on the day at the October meeting.



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Bookings for the trip to the Berry Gardens Festival on the 12th/13th October have now closed.

RAFFLE

There were three lovely native plants provided by the Society on the raffle table as well as a lovely big clump of Dahlia tubers donated by our President. Also on the raffle table were some very interesting books donated by Anonymous. Thank you, one and all who bring along some very nice prizes.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table had a nice mix of interesting plants for sale. Don't forget to check out the Garden Table each month for some real bargains.

Please note that the Garden Table will not be in operation at the October meeting as it will be replaced by the Members' Trading Table for one meeting only.

MEMBERS' TRADING TABLE

The Trading Table will be operating at the October meeting. Members may bring in a **maximum of 30 plants** to sell and 10% of the proceeds will go to the Society with the rest to the member.

Traders are reminded of the following requirements:

- * Only plants can be sold,
- * All items should be in good condition, pots should be clean with no soil, roots or stains.
- * The plant must be disease- and insect-free with no damaged or dead leaves and weeds should be removed.
- * The plant should be named with a label or sticker. In addition, a paddle pop stick showing the owner's initials, the plant number and the price required should be put in each pot.

On the form there are two sections, the first half is your record. The first column will be ticked off by the sales team as the plant is received. The second column is for the number of the plant so each plant will have a number from 1 to 10. The third column is for the plant name – if you don't know the name then a short description. The fourth column is the price you wish to receive for this plant and the fifth column is the price that the plant sold for. On the second half of the form you should repeat this information so that the sales team can keep a record which they use to process your payment.

If you want to bring more than 10 plants, then simply use another form but continue the numbering, e.g. the next set of plants will be numbered from 11 up to 20. You will receive your payment at the next meeting. You will be handed back the first half of the form at the end of the meeting. **Please take home any of your unsold plants.** Paddle pop sticks and extra forms will be available at the table. Plants will be checked in on arrival at a table outside the hall and the paper work will be signed off.

As the wonderful team who run the Garden Table will be looking after the Trading Table, **there will be no Garden Table for this meeting only.** The form to be completed is available with this newsletter –just print out a copy, fill it in and bring it with you when you bring in your plants that you want to sell. **Remember - this is a cash only sale and you will need to bring your own bags or boxes for your purchases.**

MAIN SPEAKER AUGUST

This was Helen Lovell from Neutrog Biological Fertilisers. Helen gave an outline of how this company developed and then took us through many of the products that have been produced for the home gardener. Neutrog is based in Kanmantoo, South Australia and was started back in 1988 as a producer of composted chicken poo for farmers, viticulturalists and horticulturists. Farmers had been used to using large amounts of superphosphate to boost crop production and Neutrog at first had a hard job to convince them that composted chicken poo could not only do the same job but could do it better. This market is still a major focus of the business but before too long, it was decided to develop a range of products specifically for home gardeners. Most of us are now familiar with many of their products and use them in our gardens. Everything they produce is organic and has been developed with a specific purpose in mind. Their research and development department is continually looking at ways of overcoming the many problems we gardeners encounter. For example, we are all aware of how an established azalea or camellia can suddenly lose whole branches due to root rot—Neutrog has now developed a product (Popul8) to help with this problem. Helen's enthusiasm for the products the company sells was obvious and her talk gave us an insight into just how these various products were developed.

Main speaker October: This will be Professor Michelle Leishman, School of Natural Sciences, Macquarie University. Michelle Leishman is an internationally renowned ecologist who works in the fields of plant invasion biology, climate change impacts and adaptation, plant conservation and urban greening. The topic of her talk will be 'Towards nature-smart liveable cities for the future', a topic relevant to us all. She has appeared on Gardening Australia and is involved in a number of studies on how our cities can be sustainably developed.

No member speaker because of the AGM

Member speaker October: This will be Bob Ballinger who will take us on a pictorial visit to the Daffodils of Rydal.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN OCTOBER by Christine Rethers

With winter vegetables well and truly over, it is time to get going with your summer crops. If you have not been sowing your own seeds, it's off to your garden centre and pick up seedlings of vegies you would like to have for your summer crop. Be careful when buying vegie seedlings not to get ones that look very mature and have a lot of root mass. These have been hanging around for too long and if you plant them, the chances are that they will go straight to seed rather than provide you with a nice crop. There is a wide selection available so what you buy will be guided by your personal preferences. Once planted in your vegie patch, the most important thing you can do is to keep up the water to them and give them a liquid feed every 10 days to two weeks to keep them moving.

I found an interesting paragraph in the most recent Diggers magazine and have copied it here. It's something I have known for a while but now I know where it has come from. Read on....

Three Sisters Collection

Developed by the First American peoples, the sustainable 'Three Sisters' practice involves planting three crops together – corn, beans and pumpkin (also known as summer squash). The corn provides support for the beans, and in return the beans stabilise the corn in strong winds. Beans also fix nitrogen in the soil for the corn and pumpkin. The large pumpkin leaves act as a mulch and suppress weeds while preventing water from evaporating from the soil. Try the ultimate companion trio yourself!



I would welcome any questions you may have regarding your vegie patch. I can't guarantee to know all the answers but I will make a big effort to find out any answers I don't know.

EUPHORBIAS by Maureen Smith

The Euphorbia, more properly the family Euphorbiaceae, is a wonderfully diverse genus in the plant world. We all probably know only a few species of the approximately 2,100 there are. Half of them are succulents, many are commonly referred to a Spurge. They grow from small ground covers to trees but all are recognisable by a white milky sap they exude if cut. This can cause some people skin irritation so handle them carefully if cutting.

The name Euphorbia is derived from the name of the Greek physician Euphorbus who discovered the genus in West Africa and used it as a strong laxative. Needless to say, this use is not recommended in modern medical practice. In general Euphorbia flowers are small, white and insignificant. It is their showy bracts that make them such attractive plants. Euphorbia plants can be ornamental, a source of drugs, agricultural weeds or invasive but this article will look at a few of the ornamentals.

Probably the most recognisable in Australia is *Euphorbia pulcherrima* (Poinsettia). This can be a small shrub in a pot to a small tree in the garden. Poinsettias naturally flower in winter, but in the southern hemisphere they are often grown in temperature-controlled green houses to fool them into flowering at Christmas where their vibrant red bracts make a perfect show. There are quite a few varieties of this Euphorbia around, some with white bracts others with pink. They are fairly easy to grow, an open spot with morning sun is best and they need to be kept pruned to maintain the size you want as they can grow up to 3 metres high.

Another small tree euphorbia is *Euphorbia cotinifolia* (Caribbean Copper Plant). Often mistaken for the Smoke Bush, this deciduous tree makes a lovely feature plant in a garden. It grows to about 3 - 5 metres high with stunning burgundy leaves that make it stand out in a garden. In Sydney, however, it does lose its leaves in winter.

Completely different is *Euphorbia trigona* (African Milk Tree). This cactus-like plant can grow to 3 metres outdoors, but if used as an indoor plant it is more contained. They come in a completely green form but some have a reddish tinge. They do flower but the flowers are not remarkable. Although a succulent, it does need regular watering but needs to be well drained as it does not like to sit in water. Not a people-friendly plant so it needs to be carefully positioned in your garden or house.

Usually referred to as Cushion Spurge are two other varieties of Euphorbia. *Euphorbia polychroma* comes in two forms. Both grow as a low-mounded clumping perennial which can look great in borders in either full sun or part shade. One has bright lime-yellow bracts which appear in spring and continue for many months. The other, *Euphorbia polychroma* 'Bonfire', though starting in spring with the lime yellow bracts, soon changes to a top growth of red/orange bracts which deepen to burgundy in late summer. The other Cushion Spurge variety is *Euphorbia dulcis*. The rich burgundy foliage in spring and summer changes to red and pink in autumn. It is compact and easy to grow.

When looking at Euphorbias for your garden, it is hard to go past *Euphorbia hypericifolia*. Sold as *Euphorbia* 'Diamond Frost', 'Diamond Star' and 'Stardust', it is a low growing shrub with mid green leaves and masses of delicate white bracts all year round. It will grow in the sun but is wonderful to lighten a shady area. It does spread but is relatively easy to thin out if you need to.

These are just a few of the wide and varied range of this family, so don't be deterred by the milky sap, just protect yourself if you are affected by it.



Euphorbia pulcherrima



Euphorbia cotinifolia



Euphorbia trigona



Euphorbia polychroma 'Bonfire'

YOUR OCTOBER GARDEN by Maureen Smith

Do you have one of those difficult areas under a tree where it is so hard to grow anything? Many resort to just putting potted plants in the area, but there are things you can plant that will grow there. One of those is Liriope. There are many varieties of these, but in the dark shade of a tree the newer silver-leaved forms look great. Look out for *Liriope* 'Silver Star', it has all those tough attributes of the dark leaved Liriope but has a lovely silvery green and cream foliage.

For a sunnier spot now is the time to grow Sunflowers. They now come in a wide range of sizes and colours. They do need at least six hours of sunlight to look their best. Something I recently found out is that the flower heads have spirals of seed that follow the Fibonacci sequence, so they are not just a pretty face. Breeders have produced some pollen-free versions which last longer, both as a cut flower and in the garden, but to the detriment of our bees which need all the help they can get at the moment.

With new growth starting to come through on your plants, be alert. Sap suckers like aphids just love that succulent spring growth. Blast them off with your hose or rub them off with your fingers or alternatively, smother them with a soap spray or Eco oil. Snails and slugs will also be on the lookout for new young seedlings. If you are not keen on the pellets, there seem to be a myriad of ways to deter them - sawdust, egg shells and beer, to name a few.

Keep feeding any bulbs that still have green foliage to nourish them for next year's flowers. They do tend to look a bit untidy and are not harmed if you tie up the leaves in bunches. They will still nourish the bulbs until the foliage turns brown. If you have cold climate bulbs such as tulips they are best lifted and dried and stored in an airy dry spot until next autumn. The mesh bags that oranges and onions come in make great storage bags to hang to hand up in a cool, dry and shady spot.

Don't neglect your indoor plants. A short sojourn outdoors, hopefully washed by a gentle rain shower, will work wonders. Now is the time to also check that they haven't outgrown their pots. If so, this is one of the best times to repot.

Last but not least, don't forget that the best time to fertilise is when your plants are putting on new growth and for many of them, that is right now.

Happy Gardening!



Sunflower



Sunflower 'Prado Red'



Aphids on a Rose bud



Liriope 'Silver Star'