

HORTULANUS

Official Publication of Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc.
DECEMBER 2021



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COMING EVENTS

Dec 7 **KHS December Meeting: Speaker—Costa Georgiadis**
Feb 1 2022 **KHS February Meeting: Speaker—Jeremy Critchley, Green Gallery Nursery**



Christmas message from the President

As your new President I am racing to the end of the year with feelings of excitement, concern and humility. Excitement as 2022 has to be a much better year than the last two. Concern for the enormous shoes that I have to fill – Doreen Clark’s 10 years as President and more recently Ted Shaw’s presidency. Humility knowing that I will be representing you all at the KHS activities.

I know that 2021 saw most of us in our special happy places – our gardens. So many members have kept themselves motivated and healthy by spending hours remodelling, planting, weeding and generally working with our favourite plants. As a club our member activities in 2021 were greatly reduced but it did not stop us altogether. We still managed a delightful day in the Hunter Valley and a small number of monthly meeting.

So, it is with great pleasure that one of my first tasks is to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a refreshing and rewarding New Year. I am sure that our 2022 events will be greeting with enthusiasm...the same enthusiasm that you have shown in past years when we were free of Covid and all its restrictions. On behalf of the entire committee I hope that you will keep well and safe until we can meet again in February 2022 and your gardens will continue to flourish after all the attention they have recently received. Should you have any topics you would like us to explore in our monthly meetings, please let us know. We would be delighted to find speakers who can answer your concerns or specific interests.

Christmas greetings to you all and a healthy and happy New Year.

Evelyn Mason



RESULTS OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society was held at the Louise Lennon Pavilion, St Ives Showground on 2 November 2020.

The President, Ted Shaw, opened the meeting. The Minutes of the previous (2019) AGM previously circulated were accepted. The President’s and Treasurer’s reports, also previously circulated, were accepted. The President thanked the committee for their work during the past two years and then he and the committee stood down. Bob Ballinger took the chair, thanking the President for all his hard work over the past two years. Bob then called for nominations for the position of president. Evelyn Mason was nominated and there being no other nominations, she was elected as President and took the chair. The election of the new committee then proceeded with all members of last year’s committee offering themselves the re-election. Additional nominations to fill the positions vacated by Doreen Clark, Fiona Arnott and Peter Fisher were received for Nancy Shaw and Jenny Watsford.. There being no further nominations, all those nominated were elected. The new committee is now: President—Evelyn Mason, Vice-President—Ted Shaw, Treasurer—Robyn Brown, Secretary—Christine Rethers, Committee -Helen Gilkes, Nancy Shaw and Jenny Watsford.

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MEMBER NEWS

For our meeting on 7th December we will be returning to the Uniting Church Hall, Turrumurra Avenue, Turrumurra. Entry is from the carpark. The meeting will be at the usual time of 7pm for a 7.30pm start. We are very pleased that Costa Georgiadis of ABC Gardening Australia has agreed to be our guest speaker. Costa's talk will be followed by our Christmas supper.

Please note carefully the following requirements:

- The meeting will be restricted to members only. As this is our Christmas meeting and the Society will be providing an individually packed Christmas supper, we ask you to book in by Thursday, 2 December so that we can know numbers for catering purposes. Please state when you book in whether you require a gluten-free supper. Bookings may be made with Robyn Brown by phone on 0408 295 601 or by email to medway2@bigpond.net.au.
- For your booking you will need proof of double vaccination or a certificate of exemption—a copy of your vaccination certificate or exemption can be forwarded to Robyn when you book or brought to the meeting for checking. Those of you who have already presented us with proof of vaccination do not have to show it again.
- If numbers allow, we will open the booking to members' friends and family after the 2nd December (you will receive an email advising you whether additional bookings can be made).
- Masks are required to be worn in this indoor setting except when eating and drinking.
- The hall will operate at 1 person per 2 sq.m.
- Please use the Covid Safe QR code check-in that you will find at the entrance.
- Disinfectant wipes and hand sanitisers will be provided for your use.

There will not be a raffle but instead there will be Lucky Door Prizes. The Garden Table will **not** be operating but it is possible that Costa will be able to bring some copies of his new book for sale and will sign it for you.

Ku-ring-gai Council has indicated that the Community Hall at St Ives should be available to us for our first meeting of 2022 on 1st February. If that is the case, we will be able to resume our normal meeting format and the Show Bench will operate once more. The Point Score competition will therefore run from February to December 2022 inclusive. We are hoping that Jeremy Critchley of Green Gallery Nursery will be available to be our main speaker at our first meeting of 2022.

Please note that the Society does not meet in January and your next newsletter will be sent towards the end of that month, in time for the February meeting.

KHS Open Day

This was held on Saturday, 27 November when two of our members' gardens were open. Members were invited to walk round the gardens of Christine Rethers and Smila Smithers and a sale of plants propagated by members was held at Christine's. The funds raised were donated to the Society. Despite the on-and-off showers, members enjoyed walking round these two interesting but different gardens and most people went home with a plant or two (or more!).





At our November meeting, Ted Shaw had the pleasure of presenting the Ann William Clark award to our past president, Doreen Clark, in recognition of her many years of service to the Society. Doreen joined the Society in 2000 and was a committee member for 17 years with 10 of these years as our President. This medal is awarded by Garden Clubs of Australia for outstanding service to a garden club. In addition, Doreen was presented with Life Membership of our Society.



Main Speaker—November

Our speaker for November was Andrew Thomas from Plants Plus Cumberland Forest. Andrew's topic was Indoor Plants and he brought along an excellent selection of plants suitable for growing indoors. Most nurseries have a good selection of indoor plants and he noted that young people especially sought them out to create 'jungle rooms' full of leafy plants growing up totems or trailing down from a high shelf. Coir totem poles are now available for sale from good nurseries. However, there is plenty of colour to be had with indoor plants using plants such as Phalaenopsis orchids, Anthuriums, African violets and bromeliads.

In the larger plants suitable for indoors, the Fiddle Leaf fig is popular as are a number of the different Ficus and palms such as the Rhapsis, Kentia and Parlour palms. Philodendrons of all kinds are particularly sought after as are Zanzibar Gem, Pilea and many of the ferns and succulents.

Care of Indoor Plants: The key to care of these plants is watering. Andrew suggested using the 'finger' test, up to the second knuckle. If it feels damp, the rule is not to water as over-watering kills more indoor plants than any other single thing. The plants like to dry out between watering so when you water, water deeply—no 'fairy' watering. If you have discoloured leaves, the problem does not usually mean it is old growth but rather too much water. If a plant is underwatered, the problem will be dried up and shrivelled leaves.

When repotting, use an indoor potting mix which is peat-based with added vermiculite and perlite. Be prepared to repot when the soil gets 'tired', usually after about two years but don't under any circumstances overpot (using a pot larger than the root mass). The best situation for indoor plants is in filtered light and be prepared to move your plants around as the light changes with the seasons. Indoor plants don't like extremes of temperature and on the whole like a bit of warmth, especially in winter. They will also enjoy some time outside but in the shade only.

Andrew would welcome a visit by any of our members and his nursery can be found at 95 Castle Hill Road, West Pennant Hills. It a very well-stocked nursery with a great café and is beautifully situated in the Cumberland Forest.

Butcherbirds are well named by Ted Shaw

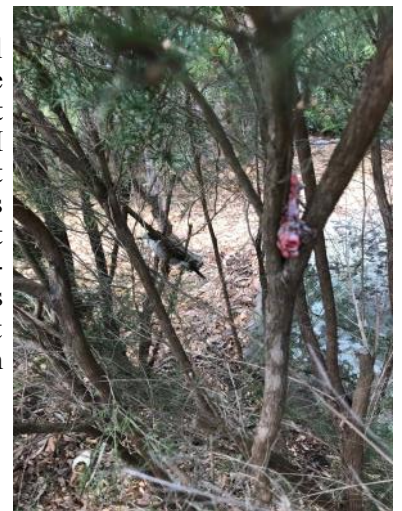
I'd never thought much about how butcherbirds got their name. They have a nasty hook on the end of their beaks, so I think I had the idea they use that beak for tearing up ('butchering') little birds to eat.



Recently I was working in our garden and walked past a small tree. The butcherbird in the tree didn't fly off when I got close so I stopped to check it out. The butcherbird moved away a bit to another branch on the tree but still didn't fly away. Then I spotted a fleshy bone in the fork of a branch and realised that the butcherbird was staying close in order to keep an eye on its meal. I had never seen this before, so it was time to consult our friend 'Dr. Google'. In Sydney we have the Grey Butcherbird and this bird often has a dark side. Many small birds

tremble in fear when they hear the beautiful, rollicking call of this bird which it often performs in a duet. That's because small birds, their chicks and eggs are on the menu of the Grey Butcherbird.

Butcherbirds get their name from their gruesome way of feeding. When they catch prey, they hang it off a branch or tree fork and hack the meat away, just like a butcher. They also hang uneaten food in the fork of a branch or impaled on a twig (their 'larder') and come back to eat the leftovers later.



In the Vegie Garden in December by Christine Rethers

This photo shows the harvest that one of our members, Ray Kench, picked just on one day this week (late November). Admittedly, Ray now lives on the Central Coast so his climate is probably slightly warmer than here in Sydney but this shows just how productive our gardens can be, given the right conditions.



So what should we be doing in the vegie garden at the moment? Probably at the top of the list is the need to keep feeding our vegetables. Pelleted chicken poop, cow manure and home-made compost are all good and natural ways to feed the soil. The second important element is to put down a good layer of mulch—sugar cane, pea straw, lucerne hay are all good mulches and, as they decompose, they, in turn, feed and help condition the soil.

Keep an eye on your tomatoes. They should be growing strongly and starting

to set fruit. Now is the time to think about protecting them from the dreaded fruit fly. For me, the best and simplest way is to cover them with a fine white netting, making sure that the netting is not sitting on the fruit in such a way that the fruit fly can sting the fruit through the netting. You might also like to try fruit fly exclusion bags that are available online (just use Google to find them). Cut off any yellowing leaves. If your tomatoes grow very tall, it is quite okay to take the tips out of the top of the plant as the laterals will continue to grow and produce fruit. Beans, cucumbers and leafy vegetables such as spinach and lettuce should all be growing strongly so harvest the crop when they are young. The more you harvest, the more they will produce so don't let any go to seed just yet. This applies especially to zucchinis as they will continue to grow quite large and although still edible, they will lose their flavour somewhat.

If you are growing corn, remember that when the tassels turn brown, the corn is ready to pick. Harvest while they are still young and very sweet. Most importantly, check that your vegetables are getting enough water.

Don't walk on the grass—remember those signs in the parks?

Well, I should have had one!



I needed some strong muscles and a few hours of youthful energy to help me get the garden and pathways cleaned up. The brick paving we had laid years ago still looks good but we didn't realise when we had it installed, all around the house and driveway, just how many weeds could grow between each brick when we were not paying attention!!!

One of our grandsons – his name will remain unspoken to preserve his anonymity and dignity – came over with a mate and they started work. One was given the high-powered pressure cleaner to clean around the pool area and verandah. The other was given the sprayer and weed poisoner and asked to spray the weeds in the pavers at a ration of poison to water as per the instructions on the container. I also gave him a measuring jar with markers so he would see the measurements clearly.

And so, a busy day began.

I was out the back working in one of the garden beds not daring to interfere too much with the activities of the two enthusiastic nineteen-year olds - who once told "know it all". I do remember saying – don't spray near the edges of the pavers as it will kill the grass.

As we all know, spraying with chemical poisons takes several days to have an effect. So, it was not until I looked over the veranda the other day that I wondered why I had brown marks in the middle of the lawn – not only along the edge of the pavers, which of course was from the poison being sprayed too close to the grass, but a number of dead patches throughout the lawn. And then the penny dropped. They were footprints. One of us has walked along the path before the poison had dried and then walked on the grass—essentially killing everything trodden on!

I must admit, I haven't had a weed in the pavers in the last 3 weeks ...

(Thank you, Evelyn, for this cautionary tale. Ed)



Your December Garden by Maureen Smith

▶ Jacarandas are in full flower and leaving their lovely carpet of fallen blossoms, but it means summer and hotter weather is on the way. So it's time for a few garden chores. If you have a watering system, check it is in good working order, no leaks or blocked lines. It is also a good time to top up your mulch. It is best to use a good organic mulch which will enrich your soil as it breaks down. A good layer of mulch not only suppresses weeds and keeps moisture in but I think it gives a garden a well tended and cared-for look.

▶ With so many plants bursting into flower, now is a good time to think about feeding them appropriately. It is always best to water before fertilising and depending on the product you use, sometimes afterwards as well. Seaweed products are general all-purpose garden tonics and probably safe to use on just about every plant, especially just after planting. Some swear by fish fertilisers such as Charlie Carp, especially for roses. Fertilisers come either as powders to be mixed with water and watered on or as pellets to be scattered around your plants.

▶ If you grow from seed, you are probably ready to plant your seedlings out. However, it is not too late to still grow a few plants from seed, sown directly into the garden. California poppies in cream, pink or red and Cosmos in their myriad of colours could be scattered now, preferably after a good downpour. Nasturtiums are another one to pop into the ground when you find a bare spot. They will soon emerge and fill the space nicely with their bright red or yellow flowers.

▶ Seedlings to plant include the Brachyscome which many know as Swan River Daisy. They come in blue, pink and white varieties and will spread to give good ground cover. Zinnias and Dahlias will give wonderful colour over summer and are very tough so cope happily with a Sydney summer. All these plants are drought tolerant as well.

▶ Don't mow the lawn too close. The little bit of growth that is left helps deter weeds and if you leave the clippings after you mow, this provides nutrients. It is a mistake to think that cutting it shorter means less mowing.

Season's Greetings!