

HORTULANUS

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

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MARCH 2024

COMING EVENTS

- Mar. 5** KHS March Meeting - The speaker is Pamela Munro and her topic will be Bromeliads
Mar. 9/10 'Highfields', 111 John Grant Rd, Little Hartley. 10am-4pm Entry: \$15
Mar. 27 KHS Outing to 'Boongala', 76 Pitt Town Rd, Kenthurst (see below for further details)
Apr. 2 KHS Meeting: The speaker will be Lewis Matthews and his topic will be Landscaping
Apr. 13/14 Collectors Plant Fair, Hawkesbury Racecourse, Clarendon

MEMBER NEWS

The February meeting was well attended with 63 members and 5 visitors. We were pleased to welcome our two new members, Philippa St Clair and Paul Gratiaen and we hope they enjoy their time with the Society. This was followed by the presentation of their prizes to the winners of the 2023 Show Bench competition. Many congratulations to them all and to all those who benched their exhibits last year. The Show Bench is a highlight of our Society and we are one of the few societies that still have an active and indeed flourishing show bench.

The Society has been approached by the Eryldene Trust to publicise their concerns about the new planning policy being introduced by the NSW State Government which will allow multi-storey development adjacent to Eryldene. The historic house and garden lies within the 400m zone around Gordon Station which is now the focus of the Government's new housing initiatives. Attached you will find a copy of the Trust's formal submission to the State Government outlining their concerns for the historic house.

OUTINGS

The first outing of the year will be to 'Boongala' Native Garden and Rainforest on Wednesday, 27 March 2024. This will be a self-drive outing as the garden is fairly close by at 76 Pitt Town Road, Kenthurst. The cost will be \$15 which covers the garden entry and morning tea. We aim to be there by 9.30am and expect to leave by 12.30pm. Bookings can be made with Helen Gilkes either at the March meeting or by phone on 9144 4826. A booking form is attached to this newsletter. Please let Helen know if you require a lift or if you would have room to give another member a lift. This spectacular native garden is usually only open in spring for one or two weekends so we are privileged to have this opportunity for a visit at this time.



We have also made a booking for a one-day trip to three lovely gardens in Little Hartley on Wednesday, 16 October 2024. The three gardens are Wild Meadows, Hartvale and Highfields. More details closer to the date.

SHOW BENCH

At the February meeting the winners of the 2023 Show Bench competition received their prizes. Hearty congratulations to the winners and to all those who took part in the competition.



1. Aubrey Knowles and Judith Williamson 2. Robyn and David Stewart 3. Ted and Nancy Shaw, 4. Evelyn Mason
5. Len Riordan 6. Brenda Zimmerman 7. Sue Ballinger 8. Jill and Peter Whitney 9. Judith Barry 10. Colleen Lukey

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Unfortunately Aubrey Knowles was unable to attend as he was unwell on the day but Judith Williamson was able to collect the President's Shield and the Section awards for the two of them.

Section Winners:



Cultural: A Knowles & J Williamson;
Containers: L Riordan;
Small crops: A Knowles & J Williamson;
Decorative: B Zimmerman, C Lukey (Equal);
Pictorial: R Ballinger
Encouragement: Jeanette Bond and John Darge

There was a very nice display for the first Show Bench of the 2024 Show Bench Point Score Competition. Roses, dahlias, fuchsias and hibiscus were of special note. Also of special note were the flowers of a banana and also the beautiful and unusual flower of a ginger plant. In the Small Crop section there was a profusion of very nice-looking vegetables including pumpkins, eggplants and beans. In the Decorative there were some lovely exhibits in the Petite Arrangement class and in the Seashore class but sadly no one took up the challenge in the First-time Exhibitor Class.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table was doing very good business at the February meeting with daffodil bulbs a feature as well a number of nicely potted-up plants available. Next month there will not be a Garden Table as it will give way to the Members' Trading Table.

MEMBERS' TRADING TABLE

The Trading Table will be operating at the March 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 FEBRUARY:



John Siemon, Director of Horticulture and Living Collections, Botanic Gardens of Sydney, spoke to us about the Living Collections in the three localities administered by the Botanic Gardens in Sydney, Mt Annan and Mt Tomah. Together they are home to over 60,000 different varieties of plants. The Australian Plant Bank at Mt Annan already houses over 100 million Australian plant seeds and seeds continue to be collected to be housed there. John described that in the gardens themselves there is a broad representation of plant species from across the world. If you are looking for a particular plant, John suggested that you use a program called Garden Explorer to find its location in any of the three gardens. John also outlined some of the problems that the Gardens face including sea level rise at the Sydney gardens and fires in and around Mt Tomah where 583 specimens were completely lost during the recent fires. The rains after these fires caused significant damage from slope slump.

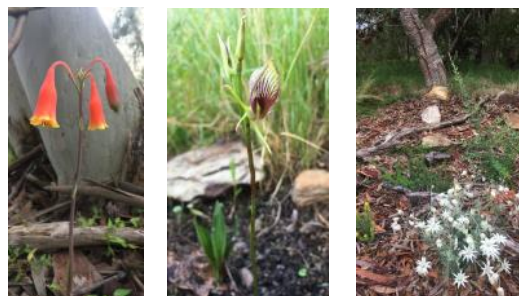
Care and oversight of the gardens also entails continuous need for field trips to further expand the Gardens' collections. This involves the need to obtain permission and permits from various authorities which is time consuming and often difficult.

John finished his talk with some spectacular photos he had taken whilst on field trips in Western Australia. The range of colourful and very beautiful plants found there was astonishing. John is also involved in sending Australian plants to other botanic gardens around the world. The Wollemi pine has been sent to over 30 different institutions but not always successfully transported sadly with one consignment sent to the USA all dying due to lack of care by the transport company on the journey over.

Main Speaker March: This will be Pamela Munro who will take us through the care and culture of bromeliads and describe the various types that will grow well in Sydney.

MEMBER SPEAKER FEBRUARY:

Phillip Sarkies gave an illustrated talk about Bush Care in the Willoughby Council area. Phillip has helped to train bush care volunteers and with their help, his team have worked on clearing the bush of noxious weeds without resorting to the use of harmful herbicides. Phillip showed us how spot burning (flame weeding) helped in some of the more difficult areas and covering with black plastic was effective in getting rid of weedy plants in areas where it could be used effectively. He showed us how a tough and resilient plant like a large oleander was removed by first cutting it down as low as possible and then over more than two years removing any regrowth until the shrub eventually gave up and died. Once an area was cleared of noxious weeds, it had then to be regenerated. This was done by spreading leaf litter and soil taken from a flourishing site to the site to be restored. It was replanted with species that were native to that area of Sydney and before long seeds were springing up that had long been covered by the weeds that inhabited the area before restoration. The restored site was a joy to behold, even producing a clump of very healthy Christmas Bells (*Blandfordia grandiflora*), a native orchid (*Cryptostylis erecta*) and Flannel flowers (*Actinotus helianthi*) - all of this in an area the size of a suburban block.



Member Speaker March: This will be Warwick Wilson who will show us pictures of his recent trip to the Canning Stock Route in Western Australia where he and his wife Yvonne were able to photograph some amazing scenery and plants. This will be a very interesting presentation.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN MARCH by Christine Rethers

This month is all about getting ready for your autumn/winter vegetable garden while your summer vegetables are gradually finishing off their growing season. By this time of the year, tomatoes and cucurbits are now looking a bit sad with yellowing leaves that may be suffering from downy mildew but you can keep them going a bit longer while they are still producing a crop. Beans will hang on a bit longer but lettuce will probably start going to seed. So as each of your summer crops finish their growing season, pull them out and refresh the soil by digging in your home-made compost (if you have it available) with some pelletised fertiliser and cow manure. If you didn't put dolomite lime on your soil back in spring, do it now, just a light dusting. It's time to go to your garden centre and browse through the punnets of the different kinds of vegies available. Look for punnets where the seedlings look young and healthy and avoid punnets that have roots protruding from the bottom (they have been there too long). These can be planted in your well-prepared vegie bed. Don't forget to water in your new plants to settle them into their new home.

What is a kitchen staple in many savoury dishes but is always very expensive to buy and hard to find a reliable Australian source of? It's garlic, of course!

But garlic can easily be grown in our gardens here in Sydney and needn't take up too much space. However, it does take time to grow and develop - a good six months - so you will need to start soon. March to May are ideal times to put your garlic bulbs in the ground as they are a cool season crop. Unlike many vegies, they do not need very well fertilised ground as if they grow too well, they tend to not make the bulbs around the roots which is what we harvest. Make sure you source your bulbs from a garden centre and not from the local supermarket (those in the supermarket have for the most part been treated with chemicals so that they do not sprout). Plant the individual little bulbs in a hole about 3-5cm deep about 10-15cm apart, fill it in and then water them well. Mulch over the top with straw. Shoots should appear in about 2-3 weeks. Water them only when the soil feels dry as too much water will rot the bulbs. Your garlic should be ready to harvest in 200-300 days by which time the leaves will be turning yellow and starting to wilt. Before lifting them, bandicoot around to see if a bulb has formed. The main period for bulb development is in the weeks leading up to harvest. When you lift them, place the whole plant on a wire rack or hang them by their stems for several weeks so that they can harden off. Shake off any dirt and cut off root material. They can then be stored in a cool airy place for several months. (NB For rose growers, if planted near roses they act as an insect-deterrent.)



YOUR MARCH GARDEN by Maureen Smith

► It's March, so autumn is with us. We can now look forward to cooler, more pleasant days and a wonderful time to be in the garden where there is plenty to do.

► Weeds are still pretty prolific so we need to keep on top of those.

► It is also a good time to think about feeding. A gentle autumn dose of seaweed tea will do wonders at this time. Most of us are not in a position to make seaweed tea by using actual seaweed but seaweed concentrate is readily available, both in liquid and powder form to which you just add water. Bear in mind these products are different from seaweed granules which are a slow release form and are used for scattering over the ground round your plants.

► Autumn is also a good time to plant. Remember, however, that we can still have some very hot days in early autumn so you may need to provide some cover for some of these early plantings. A 50% shade cloth works well. Nurseries and garden centres have plenty of seedlings ready to go. These include alyssum, cornflowers, poppies and primulas. Planting seedlings is not the only option - scattering cosmos, Californian poppy, nigella (Love in the Mist) or orlaya seeds can be a very successful way of filling up some bare patches.

► Another great option for autumn planting is vireya rhododendron. They do wonderfully in Sydney. If you don't have the rich and slightly acidic soil they need, remember they also look great in pots. They like a sheltered and semi-shaded position with wind protection. Provide this and you will be well rewarded. There is quite an array of colours now available and some even have a beautiful fragrance.

► Whilst thinking about autumn planting, we must not forget the daisies, both large and small. Brachyscomes, the low-growing native daisy, comes in shades of red, pink, purple and white. The more bushy Federation daisy which will grow up to 60cm high, comes in even more colours, including different shades of yellow.



Vireya rhododendron



Brachyscome



Federation daisy



Cosmos



Orlaya

With all this choice there is no excuse not to get out there and plant something!

