

HORTULANUS

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

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AUGUST 2026

COMING EVENTS

- Aug. 4** KHS Meeting: The speaker is Daniel Low and his topic is Camellias
Aug 7-9 National Orchid Extravaganza (Cymbidiums and Paphiopedilums), Arena Sports Club, 140 Rookwood Rd, Yagoona Fri./Sat. 9-4pm Sun. 9-3pm
- Aug. 9** Eryldene House and Garden, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. Open 10am-3pm
Aug. 14 Eryldene House and Garden, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. Open 10am-12.30pm
Aug. 14-16 St. Ives Orchid Fair, St. Ives Showground. Open 9am-4pm (Sun. 9am-3pm) Entry \$10
Aug. 15 Bonsai Society of Sydney—Exhibition at the Forest Community Art Centre, 6 Darley Street, Forestville 9am-3.30pm Enq. Ph: 0434 681 542 Entry free
- Aug. 20-1 Sept.** The Garden Gallery, Sydney Royal Botanic Garden, 14 Artists Exhibition, 10-4pm
Sept. 1 KHS Meeting and AGM - Speaker: Ian Thompson and his topic will be Garden Insects, Friend or Foe
- Sept. 19/20** Plant Lovers Fair, Kariong. Sat. 9-4pm, Sun. 9-3pm. Further information: <https://www.plantloversfair.com.au/>
- Sept. 19/20** Spring Clivia Show and Sales, Phyllis Ave, Thornleigh Sat. 9am-4pm, Sun. 9am- 3pm Entry: \$5

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that our Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, 1 September 2026

The purpose of the meeting is:

- * *To confirm the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting.*
- * *To receive the President's Report for 2026*
- * *To receive and consider the accounts for the year ended 30 June 2026*
- * *To elect office bearers and committee members.*

All existing officers and committee members will stand down. Evelyn Mason, Ted Shaw, Christine Rethers, Robyn Brown, Helen Gilkes and Jenny Watsford offer themselves for election. Additional nominations would be welcomed.

If you wish to offer yourself for nomination or would like more information, please phone Christine Rethers on 9449 6245.

MEMBER NEWS

It was a wet and cool evening for our July meeting but despite this, 38 members and visitors ventured out to enjoy the activities. We were very pleased to find that our hall was at a comfortable temperature throughout the evening.

Membership subscriptions were due on 1st July 2026 - \$25 for a single and \$35 for a double. Please complete the attached renewal form and return it with your payment (cash, cheque or by direct debit) in an envelope with your name on it to Helen Gilkes at the August meeting or post it to Mrs Robyn Brown, P O Box 508, Forestville 2087. Please fill in the subscription form as it is needed to check that we have your details correctly recorded.

OUTINGS

The Society has just completed its longest trip to date when we visited Queensland's Sunshine Coast. We went by coach, spending the first night at Armidale and arriving at our motel in Montville the next day. Whilst there we visited the Queensland Garden Festival where most of us took advantage of purchasing some of the wonderful plants on offer, viewing the many exhibits and listening to some of the very interesting speakers. Our other two days were spent visiting several very lovely gardens, the Mary Cairncross Reserve, a wonderful remnant rainforest

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area, and the Ginger Factory where we had a tour, a tasting and opportunity to purchase some of their tasty products. The trip also included a cruise on the river at Noosa and a Christmas in July celebration at the restaurant where we had our dinners. On the last day of the tour some returned to Sydney by air from the Gold Coast airport or went on to other destinations whilst the rest returned to Sydney by coach with an overnight stop at Coffs Harbour. We were very fortunate to have Campbell Lewis as our coach driver. Cam is a trained horticulturalist and gave us a running commentary on the countryside we were passing through.



Grain Silo (en route)



Poinsettia



Euphorbia fulgens



Mary Cairncross Rainforest

The Society's Members' Garden Ramble will take place on Sunday, 18th October, starting at 1.30pm and finishing at about 4pm. We will give you all the details closer to the date. Grateful thanks to the members who have volunteered to open their gardens.

RAFFLE

There were some lovely native plants provided by the Society on the raffle table. The other raffle prizes were donated by members—thank you to all those anonymous members who bring along some very nice prizes.

GARDEN TABLE

No plants on offer at the July meeting but we look forward to some contributions next month when we have had a chance to get back into our gardens again. Don't forget to check out the Garden Table each month for some real bargains.

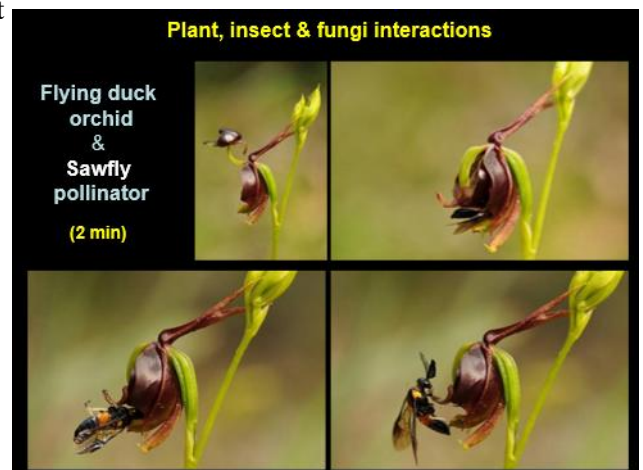
GUEST SPEAKER JULY



After a career as a lecturer in medical science at Sydney University, our guest speaker, Dr Ray Kearney and his wife Elma have spent their retirement years researching the symbiotic relationship between insects, plants and fungi. They found nine species of fungi in Lane Cove National Park that had not been described before and have been listed now as endangered. Rather than 'competition', Ray noted that research today confirms that plants are interacting with each other, trying to help each other survive. Fungi act like a symbiotic 'internet' underground.

The pollination of a number of native orchids found in our local area relies on a species of sawfly. The male is duped into thinking that the orchid flower is a female sawfly so he lands on it in an attempt to mate with this supposed female sawfly and in the process knocks off the sticky pollen packets called pollinia which then adhere to his head. When he then flies to the next flower to repeat the process, the sticky pollen packets he has collected adhere to the female part of the orchid flower, the stigma, and pollination takes place. This interdependence of species has been proven to help our native bush to recover from bushfires, with fungi helping with the regeneration of plant material.

Ray's talk ended on a lighter touch when he recounted a particular annoyance he has with a sign in Mt Wilson that lists the different types of fungi to be found in the area. Incredibly, each illustration of the various fungi was incorrectly named and the descriptions were very inaccurate. This sign remain uncorrected despite the Government department responsible being advised of the errors.



Main Speaker August: This will be Daniel Low who is a past president of the NSW Camellia Research Society. Daniel is an expert on camellias so bring along any questions you may have on this topic.

Member speaker August: Clare Bell will give us a master class on how to make and grow hardwood and softwood cuttings. Some cuttings such as hydrangea and rose cuttings are best taken in winter.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN AUGUST by Christine Rethers

All your winter vegetables need to be pushed along with regular (every two weeks) applications of liquid fertiliser. Seeds can now be sown of crops that you will be planting in September and October. These include tomatoes, eggplant, capsicums, zucchinis and cucumbers. They will need a nice and warm, north-facing window sill to grown on. Be careful when watering not to drown them, they need to be kept moist but not wet.

As you harvest your winter vegetables, it is time now to start planning ahead where your summer crops will go. You do need to be mindful that crop rotation will always produce the best results. Try not to plant the same vegies where you planted them last year, especially the members of the Solanaceae family (potatoes, tomatoes, capsicum, chillis and eggplants) as they are particularly susceptible to fungal diseases which can linger in the soil for a while.

Every good vegie gardener will have a nice sunny place in their garden for growing herbs. Herbs make such a difference to many dishes that you are going make with vegies from your garden. I am still using pesto which I made from our basil last summer and froze in small containers. It is lovely on any kind of pasta and also plain boiled potatoes cut into smallish chunks. Parsley is particularly good as it is high in vitamin C and can be used in many dishes.

I hope you are all harvesting lots of lovely citrus. Some members have reported that cockatoos have been a big problem this year as they pick the fruit off the tree, take a bite or two and then drop them on the ground. This should be a reminder to you to prune your citrus trees straight after you take off the fruit (and before flowering starts when the weather warms up) and take your trees back to a manageable height so that you can throw a net over them when next season's fruit start to develop.

This is an ideal time to plant asparagus and rhubarb crowns. Both of these, once planted will last in the same place for quite a few years as long as they are looked after. Rhubarb are quite hungry plants so at the end of winter when they start to put on their spring growth, I like to give them a good feed of pelletised fertiliser and mulch them well with cow manure. Seed potatoes can also be put in now. Please buy proper seed potatoes from a garden centre or mail order supplier as potatoes from the supermarket can spread disease even though they are quite safe to eat. Make sure that you choose a spot in your vegie patch that has not had any other solanaceae plants growing there last year (tomatoes, eggplants, chilli etc.) as these almost always have had fungal problems the previous season.



Rhubarb

SAFETY IN THE GARDEN by Virginia Fischer

We gardeners generally enjoy looking after our plants whether that be inside or outside our homes. But although gardens and gardening can bring many pleasures, we ought to consider the potential for hazards in our gardens and try to reduce the risk of injury.

Just being outside in your garden can be a hazard. We need to protect ourselves against solar radiation by wearing a broad-brimmed hat, sunglasses and sunscreen. We should also wear cotton clothing with long sleeves to protect our arms and collars to cover the back of the neck. Drinking plenty of water and avoiding being outdoors at all in very hot weather is advised. In summer, gardening is often best done either in the early morning or late afternoon.

We need to think about the air quality in a garden. Dust and airborne organisms from soil, potting mixes and mulch can be harmful if inhaled. It is advisable to wear a mask while handling mulch and soil or else wet them first before spreading them. Remember to wash your hands after handling these materials.

Gloves need to be worn to protect our hands not only from bacteria in the soil and scratches from plants but also while handling chemicals. Gloves also offer protection against insect and spider bites, along with insect repellent and long sleeves.

Tools are a great help in the garden but they must be used with care. Tools work best if kept sharp. When you are not actually using them, they should be closed or placed face down on the ground to prevent injury. Remember to always use the right tool for the job. Store hoses safely.

Always take extreme care if mixing chemicals or measuring fertiliser and always read the directions on the label carefully. It is wise to wear a mask while spraying or mixing chemicals and wash your hands with soap afterwards.

To avoid injury from lifting, use correct lifting techniques such as keeping your back straight and keeping the object close to you. Use a wheelbarrow if available. When digging, know where underground services such as pipes are and watch out for stakes in garden beds to protect your eyes. Take regular rest breaks to help avoid injury.

Finally, keep your eyes peeled for trip hazards such as uneven ground, hoses and irrigation pipes. Walk slowly. To prevent falls, keep your garden tidy and clean up promptly.

If we keep in mind these simple precautions, we will keep safe while gardening.

YOUR AUGUST GARDEN by Christine Rethers

As we are now well into winter, the garden can benefit from some preparation for the spring that is just around the corner.

Digging in some compost, manure or organic matter will enrich the soil and aid moisture retention, making it ready for the spring growth. This is also a good time for pruning woody plants as they will recover quickly and be ready for their new spring growth. A warning - do not prune the spring-flowering varieties or you will lose the flowers.

If you have not done so yet, it is time to prune hydrangeas and buddleias. Don't prune weigela or flowering prunus (plum, cherry or peach) until their flowering has finished (around the end of September). Fuchsias can be pruned around the second half of August. Take them back by about a half, making sure you take out old and woody stems at ground level. Now is the time to give them a good feed of pelletised fertiliser and a mulch with cow manure.

Very shortly the hellebores will start flowering. A word of warning - do not leave the finished flowerheads on the plant as they produce copious amounts of seed. The seeds do not reproduce the plant they came from as they have always been fertilised by other hellebore plants close by and the resulting seedlings are often a disappointing mixture. In addition, the seeds are extremely fertile and you will end up with numerous unwanted seedlings that are not all that easy to pull out.

Cymbidium orchids are starting to put on quite a show. To get the best out of them, make sure you stake them up (unless they are the downward flowering varieties). The flowers should last a good month to six weeks and like to be in a bright and sunny position. Once the flowers have finished, it is time to look at your plant and see if it needs repotting into a bigger pot or perhaps splitting up. If the pseudobulbs have reached the edge of the pot, the time has come to make that decision. Don't forget that orchids need to be potted in orchid bark. Some nurseries carry this but if you come to the St. Ives Orchid Fair (14-16 August at St. Ives Showground), you will be able to buy bags of orchid bark there together with other orchid supplies such as fertiliser, stakes and pots. There will also be repotting demonstrations. Orchid pots are different from ordinary pots in that they have a lot more drainage holes in them. Don't ever be tempted to plant orchids in potting mix or garden soil (except the terrestrial orchids). Most orchids are epiphytes or lithophytes (they live on trees or rocks) and therefore in nature have perfect drainage.

Although it is too late to plant spring flowering bulbs, there are many summer flowering bulbs that can be planted now. They all need well drained soil to prevent bulb rot, plenty of sun, but protection in the hot afternoons and all are good for gardens or containers. Some suggestions are gladioli, hippeastrum, calla lilies and lilliums. There are some exciting new hybrids in all these available now. Remember, unlike the some other bulbs, hippeastrums like to be planted with a third of the bulb above the level of the soil.



Two types of cymbidium orchids



Hippeastrum



Flowering Cherry

Be Aware!

The asparagus fern (*Asparagus aethiopicus*) is a popular house plant that often ends up somewhere in the garden. However, this plant, originally from South Africa, is one of the most invasive weeds in the Australian bush, especially in Queensland and NSW.



Asparagus Fern

It produces masses of tiny red, orange, or purply-black berries – depending on the species – eaten by birds, reptiles and foxes, and the seeds are then released with their droppings. Additionally, the plant can also spread underground through its rhizomatous roots. Asparagus ferns have a unique, aggressive root system featuring a dense mat of fibrous roots attached to thick, fleshy, white tubers. These bulb-like tubers act as water reservoirs, making the plant drought-tolerant. It is important not to put this plant in the garden where the seeds can be easily disbursed.

When pulling it out of the garden, do not put it in the compost or even the green waste bin but rather straight into the rubbish bin.



Bulb-like water-storing tubers