

# 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](http://www.khsgardenclub.org.au) Email: [khs.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:khs.secretary@gmail.com)



## FEBRUARY 2023

### COMING EVENTS

- Feb. 7 **KHS February Meeting - Speaker: Robyn Kennedy**  
Feb. 18/19 **Highfields, 111 John Grant Rd, Little Hartley 10am-4pm Entry: \$15**  
**Also open on 25/26 February and 4/5 March**  
17-26 Feb **Royal Botanic Gardens: Fleurs de Villes—Pride in the Calyx. Tickets: book online**  
Feb. 19 **The Bath House Garden, 2 Forest Hill Dr. Oakhampton Hts 10am-4pm Entry: \$15**  
Mar. 7 **KHS March Meeting -**

### MEMBER NEWS



Some 60 members and friends gathered to enjoy the December meeting with our very popular guest speaker, George Hoad, and a Christmas supper table laden with tasty treats. Thank you to all the members who brought in a contribution. The President started the meeting by thanking all the many helpers who had worked tirelessly throughout the year to ensure that the meetings ran without a hitch. This was followed by a commentary on the Show Bench exhibits and a joke after which we heard from our guest speaker. George spoke to us about his very interesting life which included gardening, theatre and music, travel and collecting. He finished by leading the audience in the rendition of some of the better-known Christmas carols. George then drew out the Lucky Door Prize winners before the meeting adjourned to partake of the supper table.

**90th Anniversary:** This year, on Tuesday 2nd May, we will celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of our Society. Plans are well advanced for this special meeting and we are asking members for their support and contributions. In place of our usual Show Bench we will have a number of table-top displays and we are asking for members' help. It is suggested that members get together to organise and set up a display table. At our 85th Anniversary we had a number of our members' displays and these were both creative and beautiful. So we are throwing down the challenge again and hope our members will respond. Please let the Secretary know if you would like to participate. In addition we have a wonderful guest speaker, Professor Michelle Leishman, who is a Distinguished Professor in the School of Natural Sciences, at Macquarie University. Prof. Leishman appeared recently on Gardening Australia, in a segment on Gardening Responsibly. It will be most interesting to find out how we can do our bit to help preserve our natural environment. We will finish the evening with a catered supper and (hopefully) a repeat of the wonderful croquebouché we had at our last anniversary celebrations

### OUTINGS

In order to gauge the wishes of the members regarding the length of outings that best suited the majority, Ted Shaw asked for a show of hands. This resulted in one-day and two-day outings proving the most popular. The Outings Committee has since met and booked one one-day outing and one two-day outing. The first outing will be to Daffodils at Rydal on 10th September followed by an outing to Wollongong and Berry on the 12/13 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

The Show Bench this month had some especially lovely displays of roses, fuchsias and hydrangeas. This was the last Show Bench for the year and the results of the 2022 Show Bench Competition are as follows:

1. A Knowles
2. S Ballinger
3. T & N Shaw
4. B Zimmerman
5. E Mason
6. L Riordan
7. R Ballinger
8. D Stewart
9. M Hamilton
10. J & P Whitney.

Section Awards: **Cultural:** A Knowles **Containers:** L Riordan **Small crops:** A Knowles **Decorative:** B Zimmerman **Pictorial:** R Ballinger **Encouragement:** Judith Barry.

**Hearty congratulations to all the winners!** The prizes will be given out at the February meeting.

The opinions and recommendations published in this newsletter are those of the authors and the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc. takes no responsibility for any losses or damages that may be attributed to the use or misuse of any material or opinion in this publication. Its contents are protected by copyright and no part may be reproduced without permission of the authors.

## GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table was not in operation at the December meeting so the next one will be at the February meeting. Let's hope members have been busy propagating over the Christmas break and will have some interesting plants and cuttings to bring in.

## MEMBERS' TRADING TABLE (March meeting)

**Advance notice** - members may bring in up to 30 plants for sale to fellow members so start thinking about what you will have ready for the March meeting. Full details and the forms required will be in the March Hortulanus.

**MAIN SPEAKER FEBRUARY:** Our main speaker in February will be Robyn Kennedy who is a botanical artist, and she will be demonstrating the techniques she uses for adhering the textiles and photographic pieces in a collage. She will be bringing some of her framed and unframed wall art and vessels for sale.

**MEMBER SPEAKER FEBRUARY:** Ted Shaw will speak to us about the floral emblems of our States and Territories. This should be a most interesting presentation.

## IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN FEBRUARY by Christine Rethers

With your summer vegetables hopefully cropping nicely, now is the time to start thinking about vegies for the autumn and winter months. For those of you who love Brussel Sprouts, now is the time to sow the seed or procure some seedlings from your local garden centre. The reason for starting this early in the year is because the plants need a very long growing season to reach maturity and carry plenty of sprouts, between 5 to 7 months in fact. They like to be grown in full sun and need to be at the back of a vegie bed as they will reach over 80cm in height. Plant the seedlings 60cm apart in very well composted soil. Keep the young plants covered with exclusion netting to ward off attack by the cabbage white butterfly. Other brassicas such as Broccoli and Cabbage can wait another couple of months to be planted as their growing season to maturity is only around 4 months. Ideally you want to be able to harvest your brassica crops in winter.

Some problems are cropping up with vegies like Zucchini. Growers are finding that the fruit starts growing nicely but before it reaches anything like maturity it starts to turn yellow and dies. The reason for this is because of incomplete pollination of the flower. To overcome this, get yourself a small paint brush and manually transfer the pollen from the male flower to the female flower. This is best done early in the morning while the flowers are still fresh. Another problem is the run-away pumpkin that covers any available space with a speed that astonishes. This can be tackled by keeping an eye on your plant and nipping out the growing tip before it reaches places where it is not wanted. This will force the plant to produce lateral growth which will help to slow down the plant and hopefully produce more flowers, especially the female flowers. These may also need to be manually pollinated if there are not too many bees and other pollinating insects around. Some of us like to grow Green Onions for use in salads and Asian dishes especially. These are also known as Spring Onions or Scallions and are a type of onion that never forms a bulb. They are usually harvested while they are still young but occasionally we don't get to harvest all the crop we planted and by mid summer they start to send up a flower spike. Once this happens, usually that particular plant is beyond harvesting as it becomes tough and woody. However, rather than pull it out, try leaving it. If you cut off the flower head, the plant will start to wilt and die but at the base it will send up a new plant. This will then become your next season's crop. Another trick when harvesting is to cut the green onion about 2cm from the base instead of simply pulling it out. This will then shoot again and will also give you a new plant at the base so you can prolong your crop.



## PLANT OF THE MONTH – the Stanhopea orchid (the upside-down orchid)



Many members have reported that the summer season this year has seen exceptional flowering of this very popular orchid. Why this is so may have something to do with the very wet conditions that were experienced for much of 2022. Whatever the reason, Stanhopeas are filling our gardens now with their very strong perfume of vanilla and chocolate. In the coastal areas of much of NSW a number of these orchids can be grown outside in the garden, hung on a tree which gives them light shade for much of the year. There are estimated to be around 55-60 different species (the number differs according to which reference you consult) and they are native to Mexico, Central America and south to Venezuela. There are different species that grow from sea level to about 4000m elevation and about 20 of these are cool growing and suitable for growing outside in our area.

Stanhopeas in their natural setting are epiphytes and live on trees and rocky slopes so although they are easy to grow, they have some very specific requirements. Because the flowers force their way downwards from the surface pseudobulb, they need an orchid mix that will allow this movement. A popular mix is medium pine bark to which can be added some large perlite or shredded sphagnum moss for extra moisture retention. Because the flowers will emerge from the base of the container, they must be able to get through. The ideal container is therefore a wire basket that is shallow rather than deep and which can be lined with

substances that can be easily penetrated by the flower such as sheets of paperbark, coconut fibre or sphagnum moss. (Beware of the commercial coconut fibre liners as they contain a plastic coating.) Once filled, this basket can be hung either outside in a tree or fairly high in an orchid house.

The care of your Stanhopea is much the same as for most of your orchids – keep it well watered in the warmer months and ease off during winter. It can be fertilised with a suitable orchid liquid feed or some of the pelleted fertilisers that you use in the garden can be lightly sprinkled on during the spring and summer growing season. Splitting up and repotting should ideally take place soon after flowering. It is important not to split up the pseudobulbs too much as the plant will take much longer to reflower in subsequent years.

There are some disadvantages to growing this orchid. The first is that each flower only lasts approximately three days before it fades and dies. The second is that to get that ‘wow’ factor, your plant needs to be grown to quite a large size. Both these factors are reasons why we do not often see on the Show Bench some of the spectacular flowering that this orchid is capable of. If this has sparked your interest, plants can be obtained at orchid fairs, auctions, club sales bench or even garage sales.



**Ref: The Astonishing Stanhopeas by Barney Greer. Photos sourced from the gardens of Alan and Jill Collins and Christine Rethers**

## **WILDFLOWERS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA by Maureene Smith**

At the end of September and early October 2022 Keith and I went to West Australia to see the wild flowers. This was a long overdue Covid trip and we are glad not to have missed it. The wildflower season in the West goes from August through September to October and as it was later in the season we missed the fields of everlasting daisies,



**Leuschenaultia**

that are so much a feature, but compensated by seeing many other plants that are not out early in the season.

We travelled north of Perth, predominantly along the Coral Coast but did go a little bit inland to Pindar, purposely to see the wonderful Leuschenaultia Wreath Flowers which were out in profusion along the sides of the road. Roadsides in rural WA are very important, providing a wildlife highway and places for many wildflower species to grow where the land is heavily farmed. This was recognised in the 1960’s by the then premier, David Brand, who ordained that all new country roads would be at least 40 metres wider than needed for transportation, thus protecting this wonderful habitat for generations to come.

Road travel in WA is easy, not only on the highways and state roads but on the gravel roads as well, which all seem to be well graded and thanks to Brand, very wide. Our first destination was to Hi Vallee farm near the Mount Lesuer National Park. On this sheep and grain property the owners have preserved a large area of pristine native vegetation that is home to four declared rare and many priority plant species. This Kwongan heathland has been described as the most valuable native bushland in private hands and is home to more than 520 different species of WA wildflowers. The owner, Don, takes us for a morning walk identifying plants and talking of their varying uses over time. He showed us Gastrolobium in which 1080 (fox bait often used by local councils) occurs naturally. It is harmless to native wild life but will kill stock and feral animals. The area abounds with Hakeas, many so different to what we are used to. He showed us another Leuschenaultia, *L. biloba*, a very different plant with its vivid blue to the pink wreath flower. Grass trees abound but not only Xanthorrea, the variety we see here in the nurseries at astronomical prices, but also another species of grass tree, *Kingia australis* which is very different.



**Kingia australis**

This place is well worth a visit, not just because of the diversity and abundance of species, but because Don is so knowledgeable and willing to share that knowledge.



**Gastrolobium**

Another outstanding spot was in the Kalbarri National Park, but before we got there we visited Hutt Lagoon, part of the Hutt River Province. Some of you might remember way back when a grazier, after a stoush with the government over wheat quotas, declared himself Prince Leonard of Hutt. This micro nation no longer exists, having been disbanded in 2020. The lagoon is famous for another reason as it is a bright pink salt lake coloured by the beta carotene in the water. This beta carotene is harvested commercially.

The highlight of the visit to Kalbarri was the Skywalk. This steel and sandstone construction, built during the pandemic, is cantilevered over the gorges of the Murchison river. It has been carefully designed and built and although thoroughly modern, particularly in its engineering, sits beautiful in its ancient landscape. From it you can see the many layers of sedimentary rock that make up the Murchison gorges. The park itself is abundant in flowers with Verticordias and different species of Eremophila all out in flower.

After we left Kalbarri heading for Wolleen station, the Grevillea Plume flower which we had been seeing intermittently, increased and spread as far as we could see. This unusual Grevillea, sometimes referred to as Old Socks due its flower aroma, sends up strappy branches from a rounded shrub. Each of these branches holds a cluster of flowers at the end which sway in the breeze. The flowers are recognisably a grevillea flower, Grevillea ‘Moonlight’ in colour, but the plant structure is very different.

An interesting diversion happened on the way to Wolleen. We had pulled over to photograph the swathes of native blue cornflowers that dotted the landscape when a woman, who we later discovered was Kylie the postie, pulled over



Coppercups

and said to follow her. She led us off the road which took us to what looked like a field of mini anthills. They turned out to be the nests of Dawsons burrowing bees, the second largest solitary native bee in Australia and endemic to WA. Kylie's postal round was from Gascoyne to Mullewa, a distance of 500km by direct route, but many of her customers were well off this major track.

I have only touched the surface of the many beautiful flowers we saw but will finish up with Pileanthus, commonly called Coppercups, a species known only in WA and a most attractive bush that really catches the eye with its vibrant colour.

If you go to WA you can see many of these flowers in the Kings Park Botanical Garden where they are doing an enormous amount of work developing hybrids so that we can enjoy them in our gardens Australia wide. Its not the same as seeing them en masse in the wild and I recommend a trip, both north and south of Perth during the wildflower season.

### YOUR FEBRUARY GARDEN by Maureene Smith

► If recent days are anything to go by we are in for a summer of contrasts, either copious rain or hot and humid, so what about our gardens and balconies. Trees and climbers can provide shade, giving protection from sun and rain. It is too late in the season to be planting trees (wait until autumn or winter) but climbers could still be not only a handsome addition to your garden or balcony but a useful one as well. They can be attractive showy plants such as *Pyrostegia venusta* (Golden Trumpet vine) or *Ficus pumila* (the Creeping Fig) which will provide a calming green cover.



Pyrostegia



Petrea

► Depending on what climber you choose it may require support. Many climbers with tendrils will intertwine with themselves, but if you want it to attain any height you will need to provide a trellis or such like for it to grow onto. Two prolific flowerers that grow well against a wall or trellis are *Clerodendrum x speciosum* (Bleeding Heart vine) and *Petrea volubilis*. They will flower most of the warmer months and are only dormant for a short winter period. If you like natives, there is *Pandorea pandorana* (the Wonga Wonga vine). All these grow densely enough to provide shade for other plants that are not so sun hardy.

► Although many Australian natives are very sun tolerant, many of them are not acclimatised to wet weather so pick you plants carefully. Some rainforest plants work well. One is the *Helmholtzia glaberrima* (Stream Lily). This plant flowers in summer but has large clumps of shiny strappy foliage all year round. It is very adaptable to sun or shade. Other natives that thrive in Sydney conditions are the new forms of the *Brachyscome* (Cut Leaf daisy). They have a good spreading habit and flower abundantly. These come in a number of colours though generally in the mauve/pink range.



Brachyscome

► To encourage the bees and butterflies you can't go past *Salvias* in all their many forms, but to be realistic, most of them require a bit of room. Another favourite is the Lavender and they currently come in many forms. We have a variegated one, with pretty foliage but the flowers are never spectacular. For good flowering and heat tolerance, it is hard to beat *Lavender dentata*. Remember to deadhead to keep it flowering, but do not cut back into old wood.

► As well as looking after your plants, look after yourself these hot sunny days ... slip, slap slop, wear a hat and keep hydrated!

### Christmas meeting 2022

