

# 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)



## APRIL 2024

### COMING EVENTS

- Mar. 27** KHS Outing to 'Boongala', 76 Pitt Town Rd, Kenthurst (see below for further details)  
**Apr. 2** KHS Meeting: The speaker will be Judith Watson who will take us through Kew Gardens  
**Apr. 13/14** Collectors Plant Fair, Hawkesbury Racecourse, Clarendon  
**Apr. 27/28** Southern Highlands Autumn Gardens and Plant Fair. Info. <https://shbg.com.au/>  
**May 4/5** Bromeliad Autumn Show and Sale. Castle Hill Showground Sat. 9-4pm, Sun. 10-3pm  
**May 7** KHS Meeting: Speaker is Jill Richardson and her topic is 'A Taste of the Bush'  
**May 11& 12** Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St. Gordon. Mothers' Day Afternoon Tea at 1pm and 3pm.  
Bookings: <https://events.humanitix.com/mothers-day-teas-eryldene>

### MEMBER NEWS

The March meeting was well attended with 69 members and 3 visitors. Brisk business was conducted at the Members' Trading Table with over \$700 dollars' worth of plants sold. The range of plants was impressive and quite a number of members went home with some very nice plants at bargain prices. Many thanks go to the hard working Trading Table team of Viv Lowther, Patricia Gibson and Alison Wood who handled the whole proceedings very smoothly and efficiently. Our next Members' Trading Table will be held at the October meeting so there is plenty of time to start propagating some of your special plants. It would be nice if there were a few more members bringing in plants for sale. If you need help with propagation there are plenty of members who would be prepared to give you some help so just ask one of the committee.



### OUTINGS

The first outing of the year is to 'Boongala' Native Garden and Rainforest on Wednesday, 27 March 2024. This is a self-drive outing as the garden is fairly close by at 76 Pitt Town Road, Kenthurst. The cost is \$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 still be made with Helen Gilkes by phone on 9144 4826. 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

Roses had to give way to dahlias as the most striking flowers on the Show Bench this month. There were a number of quite spectacular blooms of different colours and styles. Fuchsias are still producing some lovely flowers as are the salvias. In the potted plants, there were a number of very nicely displayed cacti, begonias, orchids and bromeliads. A plant seldom seen on our Show Bench was a lovely red ginger, possibly a *costus*. The vegetable classes were rather bare although there were some very nice-looking pumpkins on display. All three Decorative classes were well filled with very nice and interesting exhibits. The 'Luck of the Irish' had some innovative entries and the 'Cup and Saucer' displays had some very pretty exhibits with a great choice of flowers used.

### GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table will be up and running again at the April meeting so bring in any plants or cuttings that you can spare. There are always some bargains to be had very cheaply so make sure you have a good look.

### RAFFLE

There were three very nice plants donated by the Society as well as a lovely bromeliad donated by our guest speaker, Pamela Munro. Other prizes were donated by members, many thanks to those people for their donations. Your donations are always welcome - something nice that you wouldn't mind winning yourself. \$2 gets you three tickets so don't miss out.

## MAIN SPEAKER FEBRUARY: Bromeliads



This was Pamela Munro who spoke to us on growing bromeliads. First she took us on a trip through her own garden where she is growing many different kinds of bromeliads, mostly in pots of different shapes and sizes. She emphasized that these plants grow best in semi-shade. There are only a few varieties that do well in full sun. Pamela told us that she is always on the look-out for interesting objects from council clean-ups to use to display her plants. Some of these included old step-ladders, chairs and a wheel barrow which she had painted in bright and cheerful colours. Pamela next spoke about some of the bromeliads that she had brought along to show us and described their various characteristics. She gave us information on how best to grow them. She suggests making sure there is always some water in the centre of the plant. You can use a fertiliser for flowering plants, making sure that there is not too much nitrogen in it. For planting, she uses a very coarse medium which includes orchid bark and some perlite as these plants require very good drainage. Keep an eye out for mealy bugs, scale and mosquito larvae in the crowns and treat appropriately. Take off the old and dried up leaves around the outside of the plants as they tend to house decaying matter that lodges in them and as a consequence, makes the plant look rather ugly. To take off a leaf, splitting it down the middle and then tearing off each half is easier than trying to pull off the whole leaf. Tillandsias can be fastened to a mount (a piece of wood usually) with liquid glue—you only need a small amount.

Growing them in pots means that they can still be displayed around the garden but can be picked up easily when it is time for repotting. She explained that the mother plant will eventually flower, although it may take several years, and then will produce 'pups' (new plants) around the base of the mother plant. When these are of sufficient size, they can be carefully removed together with a small bit of the mother plant's roots and potted up in a new pot. The mother plant will then slowly die and should be removed. Pamela finished up by giving members the opportunity to buy the bromeliads she had brought along with her.

*(For those interested in knowing more, the Bromeliad Autumn Show and Sale is coming up on 4/5th May at the Castle Hill Showground. Ed.)*



*Aechmea fasciata*



*Alcantarea Silver Plum*  
(in flower)



*Tillandsia*  
(Air Plants)



*Tillandsia usneoides*  
(Spanish Moss)



A glimpse in a corner of  
Pamela's garden

**Main Speaker March:** This will be Judith Watson, Secretary of the Tropical Garden Society of Sydney. Judith has travelled extensively and has given us in the recent past a wonderful and well illustrated talk on the Singapore Gardens by the Bay. This time Judith will be taking us to Kew Gardens in London for a tour of their extensive facilities.

## MEMBER SPEAKER FEBRUARY: The Canning Stock Route

Warwick Wilson gave us a wonderful talk on a recent trip he and his wife Yvonne took along the Canning Stock Route in Western Australia. They travelled in heavy-duty 4-wheel-drive vehicles and had to set up camp each night. A cooked meal was prepared for them but everyone had to help with the setting up and pulling down of their camp site. (Most of us in the audience were horrified at the thought of a 15 second shower each day, which was all that allowed!)

The Canning Stock Route runs from Halls Creek to Wiluna and was created to bring cattle from the tick area of the Kimberly region in the north to the gold fields in the central area of WA, the idea being that the ticks would not survive the journey. Early explorers were able to establish some 48 wells along the route to supply water to the cattle approximately one day's walk apart. In 1911, the first cattle drive had been successfully made with the stock gaining condition on the way. However, there was conflict with the Aborigines along the route resulting in some deaths.

There were in total only 37 cattle drives between 1910 and 1959 when the track was officially closed.

As expected, Warwick's photos showed that the countryside was for the most part fairly flat with low-growing trees, scrub and grasses for much of the way. However the scenery was spectacular and the native vegetation interesting.



The camp site at night



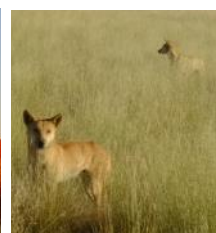
Rock Art



*Grevillea wickhamii*



Thring Rock at sunrise



Dingoes



## IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN APRIL by Christine Rethers

April and May are months when you will be doing a lot of soil preparation in your vegie garden in readiness for the planting of seedlings of your winter vegetable crops. I have sown seeds of spinach, beetroot and lettuce but I can't grow any of the brassica such as cabbage, broccoli and cauliflowers as I have a rat problem which I can't control without a huge amount of baiting. I will also put in a row or two of carrot, radish and some rocket seeds. These are always best grown directly in place from seed. That will just about fill my vegie patch. You might like to also think about some leeks, snow, sugar snap and ordinary peas, broad beans and kale.

Have a look at your rhubarb now and if you want to divide your plants or put in new plants, this is the time to do it. Give your rhubarb a good feed of both pelleted and cow manure as it is a heavy feeder. If you are growing peas, remember that they will require some support as they can grow to well over a metre. I find wire or plastic mesh between some wooden posts will do the trick. When you have got everything in, put on some sugar cane mulch to protect the soil and the young plants as they are establishing. If you are growing brassicas, it is a good idea make a 'cage' with four wooden posts covered with a fine white netting to keep out the Cabbage White butterflies.

Here is an idea for you to try if you find your vegie garden is looking tired and not producing as well as you would like. Why not sow a green manure crop? The idea is to fill the area with a crop of plants such as mung beans, sunflowers, millet, clover, mustard, lucerne etc., let them grow for a couple of months over the autumn and winter and then slash them and dig them into the vegie bed. This way, you will enrich the soil of your vegie patch and provide nitrogen and a good layer of compost to the bed. Plants like mustard provide a great fumigant to help get rid of nematodes and peas and beans are particularly good at providing nitrogen. Your vegie patch will then be ready for planting in spring with your spring and summer vegetables. There are numerous seed companies that have the green manure seeds available so really just take your pick. This is an ideal time of the year to give this a try.



## DAHLIAS - What to do in autumn by Evelyn Mason

What to do between now and the end of the season? Dahlias will stop flowering when the weather cools right off. They do not like frost as it kills the green stems and shoots and a really cold soil will kill the tubers. Sydney's mild winters allow us to leave the tubers in the ground over winter. However, as the clump of tubers gets bigger, it will need lifting and dividing every 2 or 3 years. You can do this annually but it's a lot of extra work! Until then they will keep flowering as long as you keep deadheading them and you have them well staked so they don't snap off in the autumn winds.



*Dahlia leaves affected by mites*

My dahlias have been affected by mites. Mites cause the leaves to curl and deform and shrivel! They also ruin the flower buds. I've tried many things:

- Removing the affected leaves and buds is required. Put them in the green bin, not the compost. However, the mites will come back as soon as the new shoots appear!
- Rose black spot spray helps control this but only about 50% of the time.
- Recently I've treated them as if they have spider mite (which I always have on my azaleas). I used Richgrow Bug Killa (sourced from Elegant Outdoors at Turramurra). It comes in a large tub and I sprinkle it on the ground around every plant and sprayed with Yates Mancozeb Plus. This seems to have worked wonders. However, I'm just not sure how often I need to spray!
- I deadhead frequently and cut flowers for flower arrangement inside.
- When the leaves at the base of the plant start to die back, I remove them to stop mildew. In early winter I let the stems die back completely and only cut down to about 20 - 30cm above the ground when the stems have completely browned off. This allows the tubers to bulk up and become as fat and healthy as possible for the spring growth. Dipel can be used if caterpillars are a problem.

## CLIMBERS by Maureen Smith



*Pyrostegia venusta*

Many climbers seem to thrive in Sydney gardens and with their variety of techniques for moving up and out, they can be a very useful and attractive addition. The way they climb will very much determine their structural or support needs. Twiners: the flexible new stems will twine about anything, including themselves, but can be very robust so any support needs to be strong enough - think about the thickness of a mature wisteria stem. Another form has tendrils which happily wind themselves around a lattice or wire mesh - think Sweet Peas or *Passiflora edulis* (Passionfruit). Then we have the scramblers and the best way to train these is along a cable or over a pergola. The very vibrant *Pyrostegia venusta* (Orange Trumpet vine) is a commonly seen scrambler. This group needs care in positioning as they can damage the surface they climb on. Some have sticky feet or suction caps. A perfect example is the *Ficus pumila* (Creeping Fig). Many prolific climbers are Australian natives. *Hardenbergia violacea* is a twiner around itself and other plants. Its mauve or white



*Ficus pumila*

flowers appear in winter and spring. While it is attractive it is not easy to keep under control. *Hibbertia scandens* (Snake Vine) has yellow flowers in spring and summer. It will climb on other plants or structures but is also effective as a scrambling ground cover. Both the *Pandorea pandorana* (Wonga Wonga) vine and *Pandorea jasminoides* (Bower vine) are another two native climbers. Both will flower prolifically in sun or shade and climb well over themselves or a structure.

Exotic climbers abound in colours and form. Mandevillas will happily cover an arch or scramble over themselves in a pot as long as they get plenty of sun. They come in every shade of pink, plus white, red and yellow. They have a long flowering season from late spring on into summer. Another prolific climber is the Petrea. Its light green foliage is unpleasant to touch, almost like sandpaper, hence its common name Sandpaper vine. However, its spectacular violet blue flower racemes make it well worth considering. It will grow as a small tree, but prefers to climb supported against a wall. Petrea needs sun and will often repeat-flower.

Other sun loving climbers worth considering are what are commonly called Jasmines but are really three different species. *Jasmine polyanthum* is a vigorous fast growing sun loving twiner. It will climb on trellises, over fences, through trees, it is not choosy, and will produce sweet smelling pink flower buds and then white flowers throughout spring and summer. *Gelsemium sempervirens* (Carolina Jasmine) is very different. It has yellow bell-like flowers in spring and summer and is a more delicate plant. It is also toxic and caution is recommended. The third jasmine species are really *Trachelospermum*. They will happily twine over anything including themselves so can form an effective ground cover. Star Jasmine is probably the most frequently seen variety of *Trachelospermum* with its sweet perfume and delicate white flowers and it has been very popular in recent years. Another lovely *Trachelospermum* is the Tri-colour. Not as vigorous as the Star Jasmine but it has pretty pink, green and white leaves and again is a very effective ground cover or climber.

Before choosing a climber it is important to check its habits and vigour but well-chosen, they can be very rewarding.



*Hardenbergia*



*Pandorea pandorana*



*Pandorea jasminoides*



*Petrea volubilis*



*Trachelospermum  
jasminoides*

## YOUR APRIL GARDEN by Maureen Smith

► April signifies the transition between seasons and there is plenty to do in the garden, either by sprucing up or making changes to keep it looking its best.

► There is still time to plant spring bulbs as both the weather and the soil are cooling down. Most bulbs, with the exception of ranunculus and anemone are planted at a depth of twice the height and the same distance apart, pointed end up. Ranunculus and anemones should be planted at a depth of 4cm, about 12cm apart with either the claws or the pointed end down. Most bulbs grow best in full sun to light shade and like the soil moist whilst they actively grow. You can also plant out in pots, but spring bulbs do not really thrive more than one season in a pot.



*Ranunculus*

► I recently saw an article about planting bulbs in pots – it is called ‘lasagna’ style planting. You need a large pot for this and plant the bulbs in successive layers with good composted soil in between. Daffodils or tulips are put at the bottom, medium sized bulbs for the next layer and finally a top layer of small bulbs, crocus or anemones for instance. Reputedly, they will all grow up amongst each other and put on a splendid show.

► Now is also the time to improve your soil quality with the addition of some good compost or well-rotted cow manure. Add a layer of mulch to keep both the weeds at bay and the soil warm. If the weather is as predicted, you won’t need to water too much as the cooler and hopefully wetter conditions move in.

► Now is also a good time for some tool maintenance, cleaning and sharpening being the order of the day. Having done that you could put them to good use by lifting and dividing any clumps of spring and summer blooming perennials that have grown larger than you would like. Every 3 to 4 years is probably a good time to lift and revitalise them. A sharp knife, spade or even nimble fingers can be used for this. Don’t let them dry out before replanting or sharing with friends.



*Tulips*