

HORTULANUS

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



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COMING EVENTS

This month we are again not able to report on any coming events and the October meeting has been cancelled. Your Committee has both a members' Garden Ramble and an Outing in the planning stages but we are not able to confirm any dates due to the present Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. It is possible that we may be able to hold our November meeting with reduced numbers but that is impossible to confirm at this stage. Hopefully the way forward will become clearer in coming weeks.

MEMBER NEWS

As a reminder, please note that your membership has been extended a further year at no extra cost so those who have already paid for the 2021/22 year will have their membership extended until the end of June 2023. Those who have not paid for this year will be asked to renew their membership in June 2022.

Garden Clubs of Australia is often mentioned in our newsletters and members may be wondering just exactly what this group does. To begin with, KHS is just one of around 750 garden clubs from every state in Australia which is affiliated to it. It was established in 1950 to provide encouragement and support to groups of passionate gardeners all round the country. It does this in a number of ways including providing a very low cost public liability insurance for these clubs and societies. Its primary objective however is 'to extend the culture of gardening into the wider community'. Many of you will be familiar with its excellent quarterly magazine, entirely sourced from and written by club members. It also runs an annual photographic competition and provides a lovely calendar with pictures of gardens from all around Australia. GCA also sponsors Zone meetings which get all the clubs in an area together for gatherings to discuss the gardening activities applicable to their area.

GCA recently had their Annual General Meeting and two of our members featured prominently. Judith Williamson was given a Life Membership, an honour very well deserved after many years of service on the committee in a number of different roles. Many congratulations, Judith! We can also report that Penny Whipp was elected onto the committee and we wish her every success in her new position.

Did you see Ted and Nancy Shaw's beautiful garden featured on Gardening Australia recently? You may have noticed that KHS was not mentioned among the gardening organisations that Ted and Nancy support. Ted assures us that he did mention it to Costa and when Costa visited them again recently, they told him it had been left out to which he apologised profusely. The good news is however that Costa will come to a Society meeting, possibly as early as our December meeting if this is able to go ahead.

Don't forget to have a look at our Facebook page which continues to have some interesting postings. We now have 47 contributors and it has proved very useful in answering questions such as finding out plant names and helping members with problems with their gardens. There have been some very lovely garden scenes posted which show that our members have not been idle during this lockdown period. It would appear that our gardens are getting a great deal of attention at the moment. Don't forget that this is a private group and can only be accessed by members of our Society so nothing of what you post is distributed to the public at large.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2273344029640713>.

KHS AND A BRUSH WITH FAME

A phone call recently sent your President and Secretary scurrying to our archives to find some important information for the caller. The caller was Alicia Powell who is a theatre buff and long-time supporter of the Marion Street Theatre. She is also a huge fan of Vivien Leigh, actress of both stage and screen (Scarlett O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind*) who was married to Sir Laurence Olivier for 20 years from 1940 to 1960. During the years after WWII, KHS had raised a great deal of money for the Food for Britain campaign. The Oliviers came to Australia in 1948 under the auspices of the British Government to thank the Australian people for their noble fund raising efforts. They came

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with a troupe of actors from the Old Vic theatre company for the purpose of putting on plays for the enjoyment of Australian audiences. At the time, KHS had Justice Markell as its president and Professor E G Waterhouse as its patron. It transpired that Vivien Leigh had some time between performances in Sydney and Prof. Waterhouse asked her if she would conduct the opening ceremony at a Camellia Show, to which she readily agreed. The show was held on 7 July 1948. In the meantime, Prof. Waterhouse got busy organising the Society to set up this show in their regular meeting hall, the Soldiers Memorial Hall in Marion Street (now the Marion Street Theatre). Not much was recorded about the actual show except that all the trestle tables had a fresh coat of green paint and members were co-opted to provide helpers to take the entrance money and serve the afternoon tea—the opening ceremony was at 3pm. We can only assume that Prof.

Waterhouse provided the flowers from his home in Gordon, Eryldene. The Society asked the local constabulary to provide one or two policemen as they anticipated there may be quite a few people attending and traffic might be a bit of a problem.

On the day, the numbers attending had been vastly underestimated as around 8,000 people turned up and tried to get into the hall. The streets around the hall were grid-locked and the number of police provided turned out to be totally inadequate. However, Vivien Leigh did arrive and duly opened the show at the appointed time. She was presented with a cellophane box of camellia flowers and a copy of Prof. Waterhouse's book on camellias. Only 500 copies of this book were printed and she kept her copy until she died. It was eventually sold when her estate was disposed of by Sotheby's after her death in 1967. The opening of the KHS Camellia Show became headline news in Sydney and made the front cover of the Australian Women's Weekly. Sadly the Camellia Show itself ended up being a bit of a shambles with flowers knocked off tables and tables displaced due to the crush of people.

Alicia Powell is in the process of writing a play about this event which is to be called *The Scarlett Camellia Quest* which will be performed at the Marion Street Theatre when it opens again. We will let you know when that will be.



(How's that for a brush with fame! Ed.)

IN THE VEGIE PATCH in October by Ted Shaw

Now is the time to be preparing for and planting out seeds and seedlings for spring and summer vegetables.

All my winter vegetables have finished except for Brussel Sprouts which I tried for the first time to see how they'd go. It seems I planted the seedlings too late, in March instead of January. The sprouts had started to form in the leaf axils by mid-September but were going to take too long to get to harvest so I've pulled them out so I can use the space ... my lesson for 2022 planting!



Kent Pumpkin



Eggplant

At the start of September I planted seeds in seed-raising mix for tomatoes (Grosse Lisse and Tiny Tom), lettuce (Green Mignonette), egg plant (Black Pearl) and capsicum (Californian Wonder). They are coming along well and should be ready for planting out by the end of September. Bean seeds (Banjo Dwarf) and cucumbers (Crystal Apple and Lebanese) were planted directly into the garden in mid-September along with pumpkin (Queensland Blue) and zucchini. Don't forget that pumpkin and zucchini need a fair bit of space.

A friend gave me 20 advanced tomato seedlings of 9 different varieties. Half have been planted in the soil and the others I have planted into large pots as a trial to avoid planting them in the same place where I had tomatoes last year. I'm utilising the pots to provide a form of crop rotation.

Here's a tip that I was given about matching levels of N:P:K elements with the crops planted. Leafy greens (e.g. lettuce) need higher N (nitrogen) and chicken manure is a good source. Root crops (e.g. carrots) need higher P (phosphorous). Flowering crops (e.g. tomatoes, corn, cucumbers, zucchini) need higher K (potassium) and potash and wood ash are good sources. The N:P:K figures are always printed on the containers that contain fertiliser so have a look next time you are in your garden centre. It is worth having more than one type on the shelf in the garden shed.

Good luck with your vegies. Bon appetit!

CLIVIAS



Clivias in Esther Ronco's Garden in Arcadia

get red-coloured flowers and if it is yellow, you will probably get yellow-coloured but this doesn't always hold true so it is always a bit of a guessing game until your seedling flowers which can take up to about three years.

This is what we would have seen if we had been able to go on our October outing!

Clivias do so well in Sydney's climate that everyone with a shady spot will hopefully be growing them. They are almost a 'set and forget' plant that requires little maintenance, little by way of fertilizer or water and can get by on almost total neglect. For a long time these plants were regarded as boring as they came in single shade of orange. However, these days there are some wonderful new and improved hybrids readily available with a wide variety of different coloured flowers ranging from yellow, peach, deep red and everything in between. There have even been some that flower with a greenish tinge to the almost white flowers.

The most exciting thing about clivias is just how easy they are to grow from seed. If you have a bed of mixed flowers, you may well get a new colour. If the seed pod is red, then you will most likely



Clivia Pests and Diseases by Ted Shaw

Clivias are quite robust plants but they can suffer from a number of pests and diseases, especially at this time of year. Early treatment is the key to reduce the need for harsher treatment later on.

Good garden hygiene will help minimise attacks on plants. Remove weeds, old yellowing leaves and other rubbish that can harbour pests. The main pests to watch out for are slugs and snails, mealybugs and caterpillars. The lily caterpillar with black and yellow stripes (pictured) can be quite devastating on leaves.

The best way to prevent disease is to keep your plants as healthy as possible. Ensure they are well fed, are not over- or under-watered, and have adequate ventilation. Fungal diseases such as red leaf spot and rust are the normal culprits affecting the leaves.

The cause of any problem needs to be accurately identified so that the proper treatment can be applied. Google is a great source of information if unsure of the best treatment and control.



The lily caterpillar (*Spodoptera picta*) is the most dreaded pest of clivias as it is hard to get rid of and will completely defoliate and kill a plant if not caught in time. If you have large clumps of clivias, the affected plant is hard to spot until it is too late. You can sometimes pick off the caterpillars but you can never be sure that you have got them all. They will be affected by some sprays, the two best (and most safe for the environment) are Dipel and Yates Success which should be applied according to directions as soon as you see an attack. Eco Neem is another totally organic solution but all these sprays should be applied at least twice, usually ten days apart.

Another common problem is rotting, either root rot, crown rot or leaf rot. Usually you don't discover this until a plant starts to wilt and collapse and by then it is often too late. Rot is caused by the plant sitting in saturated soil which can happen during very wet weather, with over watering or when there are changes to the garden drainage conditions. To save the plant, strip off the outer leaves until you come to some firm material. You will most likely have lost most if not all of the roots too. Leave this stump in the open air for a day or so to dry out completely and then repot it in coarse sand or sphagnum moss (supporting it with some small stakes). With a bit of luck your plant will grow some new roots and in a month or two be on its way again. Once recovered, it can be replanted into a pot or into the garden.

Slugs and snails can be handled with a safe snail bait but usually they aren't too much of a problem. Mealy bugs are sometimes hard to detect until they are in plague proportions. They can be treated with Eco Oil (an organic control) or with a spray of pyrethrum. Watch out for ants as the ants feed on the honeydew secreted by the mealy bugs and are a sure sign that your plant has been affected.

OCTOBER IN YOUR GARDEN by Maureen Smith

► It is warming up, so time to think about mulch. Mulch does three things for you. It suppresses weeds which at this time of the year seem to come from nowhere. It keeps the moisture in the ground so best to mulch after a good downpour or a heavy soaking with the hose if you can. It slowly breaks down and enriches your soil. Some councils supply free mulch so check and see if yours does. However, you usually have to collect it yourself. If you need a lot, tree loppers often advertise they will drop a load or half a load off to you. There is a risk here because you don't always know what you will be getting.

► Another major job in early spring is to aerate and feed your lawn. First, you mow making sure to pick up the clippings. Then aerate. There are various ways to do it from the special spiked shoes, to mechanical gadgets or just the tines of a garden fork—pretty arduous if you have a lot of lawn. After this, spread some good quality top dressing and fertiliser and water in well. Stand back and wait for your lush green lawn to appear.

► There are so many things to plant at this time of year. In the vegetable garden green beans, leeks, lettuce, beet-root and spring onions can all go in now. Also in the allium family is garlic. It is slow to crop but well worth the wait if you can afford the space—it will take up to about 6 -7 months to grow and mature. Try to get hold of some organic garlic as much of what is available to buy in the vegie shop has been fumigated and is not suitable. Also in the vegetable garden you should soon be able to start cropping your rhubarb and it is time to let those last few asparagus spears go to seed and die back to feed the crowns for next year's delicious crop. Your herb garden could now be planted with some of those soft herbs such as sweet basil, coriander, chervil, parsley and tarragon. Do get French tarragon as its flavour is so much better than the Russian tarragon you quite often see for sale. Be aware though that it dies down completely in winter.



Garlic

► In the flower patch it's almost "the world's your oyster" as regard to what can be planted. The nurseries will be full of seedlings, many of them new varieties for this season. Last year the spreading petunias were particularly good as were some of the new agastaches. Dahlias are another eye-catcher that withstand a hot Sydney summer well. Dahlia tuber can still be bought on-line but hurry as they are about to sprout. Pop on your mask and hop along to the local nursery to see what they have to delight the eye and gladden the heart.



Dahlia tuber

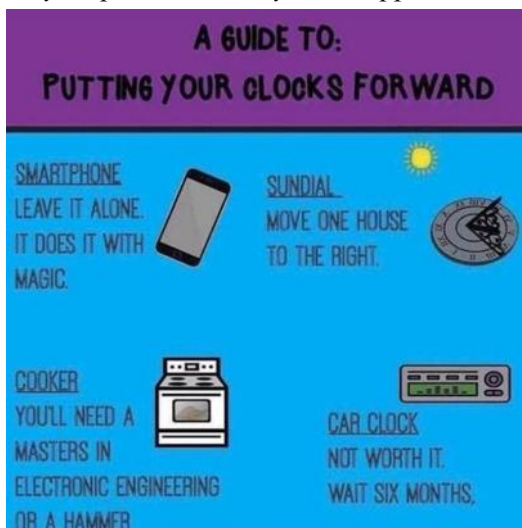
► As always there are those endless maintenance chores that have to be done to achieve a good garden. Watch out for slugs and snails and aphids too. Your native shrubs might need a light prune to ensure good continual flowering. Late flowering perennials, like some of the salvias should be cut back hard if you have not already done this so that they are ready for the coming season. Let the foliage of your bulbs die away naturally. It can look a bit messy but it feeds the bulbs to give you a splendid show next winter.

SOME GARDEN PROBLEMS AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT THEM

This is the place for you to ask your questions. Send in your questions either direct to khs.secretary@gmail.com or put them on our Facebook page.

Question from Beth: *At the last meeting of our group I was fortunate enough to win quite a large bottle of worm tea. I haven't ever used it before and it didn't have any instructions as probably I'm the only one who doesn't know how to use it. Anyway I would appreciate any advice from you as to use. I mostly have pots and very minimal ground soil. But I have bougainvillea, jonquils, privet bonsai, Little Ruby Alternanthera, miniature agapanthus, enough !!*

Any help would be very much appreciated?



Answer (from Christine): Nice to hear from you. Worm wee should be diluted to the colour of weak tea - this is usually in the ratio of 10 parts water to 1 part worm wee but depending on the strength of the wee, could be a bit more or bit less. Absolutely wonderful for pots especially but applied probably not more than once every couple of weeks. Worms are very efficient and worm wee is usually a very balanced fertiliser and has everything a plant should need. Apply with a watering can if the plant is big. Don't forget though, everything in moderation.

(In a future edition we will give some advice on setting up your own worm farm—something that is extremely useful but not difficult to do even if you only have a small space. Ed.)

Daylight Saving starts on Sunday, 3 October 2021