

HORTULANUS

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

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MAY 2025

COMING EVENTS

- May 3/4** Bromeliad Autumn Show and Sale. Castle Hill Showground Sat. 9-4pm, Sun. 10-3pm
- May 6** KHS Meeting: Speaker is Madeline Ward from the Sydney Botanic Garden and her topic is the Garden's Native Meadow Project
- May 10/11** Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St. Gordon. Mothers' Day Afternoon Tea Sat. 1pm and 3pm, Sun. 11am, 1pm and 3pm. Bookings: <https://events.humanitix.com/mothers-day-teas-eryldene>
- May 23-25** Orchids Out West Show and Orchid Sales, Hawkesbury Showgrounds, Clarendon, Fri. & Sat. 9am-4pm, Sun. 9am-2pm. Entry: \$10
- May 24** Cactus & Succulent Show & Sales, Hawkesbury Showgrounds, Clarendon 9.30am-3pm Entry: \$7
- June 3** KHS Meeting: Speaker is Ann Goeth and her topic is Brush Turkeys

MEMBER NEWS

It was a very pleasant evening when some 57 members and friends gathered for our April meeting to hear Kathy Bradfield speak to us about weeds in our local area. Christine would like to remind members about the procedure when it comes time for the Show Bench judging. At 7.15pm the lights will flicker on and off which is a signal for members to finish putting their exhibits on the Show Bench and move to their seats. At 7.20pm the judges will commence judging and this should finish at 7.30pm when Evelyn will start the meeting. For the judging to be completed on time, the judges need free access to the exhibits, hence we ask members to move away from the Show Bench during this time.

OUTINGS

Some 39 members and friends will soon be on their way to view the autumn colour on their four-day trip to north east Victoria. It is purported to be an excellent year for colour and we have been promised a photo presentation of their full trip when they return.

We have also booked a one-day trip to the Bundanoon Garden Ramble on Saturday, 25th October - more on this trip closer to the time. We suggest you put this date in your diary.

As some of our members will remember, the Society has in the past organised a Garden Ramble in spring to visit some of our members' gardens. We are planning to do a ramble again this year on Sunday, 12th October, when we will visit three member's gardens, ending up in the last garden for afternoon tea. Again, we will give you more details closer to the time. This is another date to put in your diary.

SHOW BENCH

It is change-over time on the Show Bench as roses give way to camellias as the main flowers to be exhibited. However, at the April meeting the most striking flowers on the Show Bench were the magnificent dahlias. Of particular note in the Container section was a very nice exhibit of a tuberous begonia. These don't tend to grow well in Sydney as our temperatures are generally too warm for this type of begonia. They also die down completely in winter so have to be kept relatively dry during this time so as not to rot the tubers. The flowers can grow to quite a large size (up to 20cm across!) and are generally produced in abundance during their flowering season which is autumn. The Vegie section was very bare as again it is changeover season also in the vegie garden. The Decorative section had some very nice exhibits - a lot of thought and effort goes into these exhibits which is very much appreciated by us all.

Those new to Show Bench exhibiting often wonder how best to present their exhibits. The advice to exhibitors is to present their exhibits as attractively as they can. For example, make sure that the judges can see the flowers without having to move the exhibit. Stand back and look at your exhibit after putting it on the Show Bench. Make sure your exhibit does not have dead or dying material on it or have some flowers that are past their best. If putting an exhibit on the Show Bench which asks for three stems, try to make sure that they are of equal quality. Should your exhibit be hidden by another exhibit, please ask Christine to move it into a better position.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table had a number of interesting plants for members to buy at very reasonable prices. These included some *Haemanthus albiflos* in flower as well as belladonna lily bulbs, begonias, succulents and variegated agapanthus and liriope. Don't forget to check out our Garden Table each month as you are sure to find some unusual plants that you will rarely find in nurseries and garden centres, all at very reasonable prices.

RAFFLE

There were three very nice plants donated by the Society. 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 APRIL



The main speaker was Kathy Bradfield. Kathy has a great interest in bush care and coordinates Ku-ring-gai Council bush care in her local area. She also has a great interest in identifying weeds that have spread into areas of bushland and eliminating them where possible. Kathy brought along a table-top full of weeds for us to inspect and gave us an interesting pictorial presentation of these various weeds in situ.



Kathy posed the question: What is a weed? The answer given by Muyt in 2001 is 'Any non-indigenous plant that establishes within a local ecosystem to the detriment of the indigenous flora and fauna.' Currently, of the 29,000 plants introduced into Australia, 2,700 are classified as weeds. A large number of these weeds are introduced ornamental plants that have escaped and spread into the bush. Some areas have been completely overgrown by weeds so the native vegetation has completely disappeared. The Formosa Lily is a great



example of a garden plant that has escaped. It will be found all along Mona Vale Road, flowering mostly during November. It is a prolific seed producer and also a great survivor of harsh conditions. Onion weed is another scourge of our gardens and is really hard to get rid of, especially if it gets into our lawns.



Kathy also singled out Spanish Moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) as a particular problem as it hangs onto tree branches and can weigh them down enough to break them or cover them

so that it hinders the tree's growth. (It comes from the Americas and grows prolifically in our climate.)

Animals, birds, bats and ants all contribute to the spreading of weed seeds. The broad-leafed and small-leafed privet is prolific in its seed production which is spread by birds feeding on it. Water also contributes to the spread of weeds as seeds and plant pieces are washed into drains, creeks and rivers. Human activity also contributes to the spread as we inadvertently carry or distribute weed seeds when we walk in the bush.

Kathy pinpointed some particularly nasty vines that can quickly smother trees. These include the Balloon vine and the Madeira vine as well as Morning Glory vine and the Moth vine with its avocado-looking fruit. These are all very difficult to get rid of and require cutting the stems and painting the cut ends with glyphosate.

However, Kathy pointed out that some weeds are particularly valuable to our insects and animals. For example, Onion weed is valuable to bees because it carries large amounts of pollen but we need to remove the seed heads before the seeds are dispersed. Tradescantia is valuable in that it provides a resting place for lizards and a moist environment for frogs.

The answer here is to severely control the spread of this weed and keep it confined.

Kathy finished by showing us how to attract bees, lizards and beneficial insects to our gardens. Evelyn thanked Kathy on behalf of members and gave her a gift and a very large bunch of native flowers kindly donated by Nancy and Ted Shaw.



Main Speaker May: This will be Madeline Ward who will tell us what is going on in the Sydney Botanic Garden's Native Meadow Project.

MEMBER SPEAKER APRIL

Bob Ballinger gave us a very interesting talk on his and his wife Sue's visit with the Heritage Rose Society in June/July 2024 to Scandinavia. His talk centered on their visit to see roses in Finland, not a country one would normally associate with the growing of roses. Their first stop was a visit to the botanic gardens of Turku University in south west Finland where they were introduced to some of the plants growing in this part of Finland including the various types of pines, the beautiful Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), clematis and a propagation area full of annual ornamental plants. The predominant trees in this part of Finland are the oaks whereas further north it is solely the various species of coniferous trees (pines, spruce and juniper). From there it was on to see roses in gardens and nurseries further north. There were almost no rose varieties that could be found in Australia as the roses in Finland are solely those varieties that can cope with the very cold winter temperatures and snow covering.

Some of the gardens visited included Wohls Gard, 35 minutes from Helsinki, which has a manor house dating back to the 17th century and an extensive rose garden. It contains an area where the first Nordic rosarium is taking shape. This is a project where the rose societies in each of the Nordic countries feature 10 varieties growing in their respective countries. There is a map showing where each rose is growing. In a suburb of Helsinki is the Meilahti Arboretum where there are examples of the many conifers that grow in Finland.

It would appear that some roses are grown under glass and planted out each year when the weather warms up. Bob and Sue also visited a number of private gardens which were in full flower with a wide variety of plants, not just roses. Although the summer season is relatively short, gardeners in Finland certainly make the most of it.



Kalmia latifolia



Rose de Resht



Konigen von Danmark



Juniperus communis



Lavender Ice



Iitin Tiltu



Four standard Bougainvillea flowering in Helsinki



A typical Finish garden in winter



Flourishing vegetable garden

Member Speaker May: This will be Ted Shaw showing us some of the highlights of his trip to India last year.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN MAY by Christine Rethers

It is time to get to your favourite garden centre and choose your winter vegetable seedlings. Vegie seedlings that grow well in Sydney include spinach and silver beet, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, broccoli and broccolini. However, there are some vegetables that must be grown from seed straight into your vegie bed as they do not transplant well. These include carrots, beetroot (soak the seed over night before planting as they have a hard, corky coating), rocket and coriander. These should all be thinned out once they are around 5cm tall.

Peas, snow peas and sugar snap peas can also be sown straight into your garden bed but I usually sow them in seed raising trays and let them get to about 5-8cm before putting them into their permanent position. This is because pea seeds sown straight into the garden bed are prone to rotting or the emerging tender shoot gets eaten by slugs or snails. Don't forget to have your supporting trellis set up and ready for the new seedlings.

There is debate as to when to sow broad bean seeds, whether in autumn or in winter. They will not produce beans until they have flowered and been pollinated and that usually happens in early spring. They are very prone to an infestation of the black aphid and last winter I ended up pulling them all out as I did not want to use chemicals to control them on a food crop (they were particularly bad, probably because we had a relatively dry winter).

Once your vegie seedlings are on their way, make sure you keep up a good fertilising regime - a dose of a liquid fertiliser once a fortnight is the way to go. Also it is important to provide some protection from slugs and snails (use a 'safe' snail bait that doesn't contain metaldehyde which can harm pets). A light mulch with sugar cane or lucerne hay is also beneficial.

A vegetable that you might not have thought of for your vegie patch is the globe artichoke. They are expensive to buy in the vegie shop but relatively easy to grow in Sydney. You can buy young plants from your garden centre or get a sucker from someone already growing them. They need a sunny location with well-drained soil and plenty of space (plant about 1 metre apart). They are quite an architectural plant and are sometimes used as an ornamental planting at the back of a border. They will grow to about 1.5m tall but don't need staking. Harvesting for the table takes place in spring and the flower heads should be picked before they get too big. If you let them go, they will produce a flower resembling a Scotch thistle flower (only bigger).



Preparation: Artichokes are often steamed or boiled and then eaten by pulling off the leaves and scraping the edible flesh with teeth or dipping them in sauces like aioli or melted butter. The heart is also often eaten, either cooked or served in marinated form. Watch out for the 'hairy' part around the centre which is not edible and should be removed.



YOUR MAY GARDEN by Maureen Smith

It may be May, but it has been unseasonably mild and not yet time to think of hibernating indoors. Time to get out into the garden! Why not scatter some seeds of cornflowers or snapdragons to fill up any empty spots with their vibrant colours. They are good for attracting pollinators and beneficial insects which is another plus. It's also time to think about planting some winter annuals, either in containers or in the garden. Pansies, violas, primulas, petunias and alyssum are all available at the nurseries.

If you are planning on putting in some bare rooted trees or shrubs, now is the time to prepare for that, so that when you buy them in June or July you are ready to plant straight away. Bare rooted plants, basically deciduous plants that are in their dormant stage, are not only an economical way to buy, but they tend to grow better and quicker than a potted up variety. They adapt to new soil more easily and are lighter, easier and less costly to transport. Their faster adaption and faster growth gives you healthier results. You need to dig a hole that is deeper than it is wide and about twice as wide as the root ball. Enriching the soil you intend to use will make for a better result, so add some compost and blood and bone to the mix you back-fill with. There is a large choice of plants available, either from a local nursery or online. Flowering fruit trees, maples, silver birch, claret ash, roses and magnolia (to name a few) can all be bought bare rooted.

A regular job in the garden is topping up the mulch. It keeps the weeds at bay and as it breaks down, enriches the soil, so is well worth doing.

We have successfully been growing schlumbergera (formerly called zygocactus) in pots and baskets outdoors and they will be flowering soon. We don't suffer from frosts here in Lane Cove because although liking the cool to help them bloom, they do not tolerate frosts. If you are in a frosty area, think about putting them on a balcony or patio where they can have some protection.

The mild weather has meant summer flowering shrubs have flowered for longer so deadheading or trimming back to shape are jobs still on the agenda.

The autumn leaves are now falling from our deciduous trees and these should be raked up to put in the compost. They break down quickly and will produce wonderful compost by the end of winter.

It is just about time for planting bulbs. These often do better in pots than in the ground here in Sydney as our climate is a bit too warm for many bulbs to do well in a second season. We often treat bulbs such as hyacinths and tulips as 'one season wonders' and discard the bulbs at the end of their growing season. Hence the use of pots. Most of our bulbs come from Victoria or Tasmania where conditions in winter are quite a bit colder. Planting instructions usually come with the bulbs you buy. Make sure you use a good potting mix and add in some blood and bone or similar fertiliser into the potting mix before you plant your bulbs. Put the pots into a cool place until the bulbs emerge when you can bring them out into full sun.



Schlumbergera



Japanese Maple



Snapdragons



Spring bulbs—daffodils, tulips, hyacinths

Repairing the downspout!

A friend's wife said to her husband, "Honey, get off your rear and fix that gutter downspout! And, I want it done before the end of the day!" Well, as you all know, at my age, my friend, and most of our friends, are retired and have the time to address such "Honey do's".... So, he invited some of his neighbourhood chums over to help with the project. One was a sheet metal fabricator. One brought his welder. One brought beer and Nachos. One brought a grill and burgers. Took them about 6 hours and 30-40 beers but we got it done just as we finished off the last of the beer and burgers. As usual, the wife was still not happy! Can't understand this, 'cause all us guys loved it! Personally, I cannot wait for it to rain.

