

HORTULANUS

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

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APRIL 2023

COMING EVENTS

- Apr. 4** KHS April Meeting - Speaker: Libby Cameron
Apr. 15/16 Collectors Plant Fair, Hawkesbury Racecourse, Clarendon Sat. from 8am Entry: \$18
Apr. 16 The Bath House Garden, 2 Forest Hill Dr. Oakhampton Heights. 10-4pm Entry: \$15
Apr. 22/23 Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens Open Gardens and Plant Fair, 9am-4pm Entry: \$10 for each garden and the Plant Fair or \$45 for combined entry. Enq. <https://shbg.com.au/open-gardens-plant-fair/>
May 2 KHS 90th Anniversary Meeting -Speaker: John Siemon, Director of Horticulture, RBG

MEMBER NEWS

Our numbers at the March meeting were greater than usual due to members from other local garden clubs joining us to take part in the members' plant sale. Plants to the value of \$638 were sold on the evening and many people went home with one or more of the interesting plants that were on sale. Special thanks to the Garden Table committee



comprising Alison Wood, Patricia Gibson and Viv Lowther, who worked tirelessly all evening to keep the plant sale running smoothly. The next Members' Trading Table will be at the October meeting so let's get propagating!

A warm welcome to our two newest members, Beth Edwards and Richard Fischer. We hope they enjoy their time with the Society.

We have put an updated version of the Society's History on the website (www.khsgardenclub.org.au), just in time for our 90th Anniversary. You will find it under 'Society Info'. It is interesting to read as it gives readers a history not only of the Society but also a glimpse of the life and times in our suburbs in the years leading up to World War II and the years following this. Certainly worth dipping into.

90th Anniversary: This year, on Tuesday 2nd May, we will celebrate the 90th 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. We would like to have some indication by the April meeting. We have already three members who are willing to take up the challenge and the Committee will give them whatever support they need.

Our guest speaker, Professor Michelle Leishman, has unfortunately had a clash with conflicting engagements and has had to cancel. However, she has agreed to come to us for our October meeting so all is not lost. In her place we have been able to engage John Siemon, Director of Horticulture at the Botanic Gardens of Greater Sydney. John is a horticultural scientist and has worked in various capacities with the Botanic Gardens for over 20 years. We have asked him to speak on a topic of his choice so I am sure he will give us a very interesting talk. We will finish the evening with a catered supper and an anniversary cake—not to be missed!

OUTINGS

The first outing of the year will be to Daffodils at Rydal on Saturday, 9th September. The Society has visited Rydal

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before but not for quite some years. Those who went on our previous excursion were very impressed with the wonderful displays of daffodils and other early spring flowering plants such as Forsythia. We will follow this a month later with an outing to Wollongong and Berry on the 12th/13th 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

There were some interesting exhibits on display at the March meeting. Of special mention were the Dahlias that came in different shapes and colours and the Roses that were putting on what is likely to be their last good display for the season. The Hibiscus too were in very good condition and looking splendid considering the current run of hot weather. The Decorative section had some lovely displays, especially in the Cup and Saucer class.



GARDEN TABLE

This will be back in operation again at the April meeting so have a look round your garden and see what you can spare. You may be dividing up some perennials and can spare a plant or two to bring along. This is the best time of the year to split up Irises and replant them in soil that you have improved with some compost and fertiliser. You are sure to find some pieces you can bring along for the Garden Table.

MAIN SPEAKER MARCH:

This was Chris Smallbone, President of WildThings, who spoke to us on how we can promote, protect and enhance native wildlife in our local Ku-ring-gai area. He showed us pictures of nature strips in our local area that had been replanted with trees and shrubs native to the area. These encourage the local wildlife to repopulate some of our suburban areas. With the growth in housing and unit development in our area of Sydney, many of the older trees that have in the past supplied nesting hollows for our local wildlife, have been cut down by developers. His group, with the help of a grant from Ku-ring-gai Council, also supply nesting boxes for the local birds and animals like the pygmy possums that live in our area. His other interest is metal artworks and he showed us some of the lovely things that have recently been exhibited. If you would like to know more, you can contact Chris at <http://www.wildthings.org.au/>.

Main speaker April will be Libby Cameron who will speak about some lovely Adelaide gardens she has visited.

MEMBER SPEAKER MARCH:

Christine Rethers showed some pictures from past Society anniversaries in order to give members some ideas for setting up a table top display for the upcoming 90th Anniversary.

Member speaker April: Bob Ballinger will show us some gardens he and wife Sue visited in Juneau, Alaska,

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN APRIL by Christine Rethers

Time to get your summer vegetables out of the garden as they finish and replenish the nutrients in your vegie patch with generous amounts of cow manure and pelleted fertilisers. A dusting of garden lime or dolomite won't go astray either. If you haven't had time to sow seeds of your next crops, it's time to visit your local garden centre and see



what looks good there as far as seedlings go. A word of warning - whatever you do, don't go for seedlings that are elongated and have yellowing leaves. They have been hanging around for too long and are often well past their best. By the same token seedlings that are too small are difficult to successfully plant.

Last month I gave you a comprehensive list of vegetables seeds and/or seedlings to plant which included cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, silverbeet, lettuce, broad beans, peas and snow peas. Some like radish, carrot, beetroot and parsnip, are best sown directly into a well prepared patch.

Don't forget to protect your new plantings by putting a mulch such as sugarcane mulch around them and covering them with a light white netting to keep the dreaded cabbage white butterfly from laying eggs on the brassicas especially. It is also necessary to keep them growing strongly with regular applications of liquid fertiliser suitable for vegetables. Those high in nitrogen will keep the green leafy vegetables growing very happily indeed.

A protective cover for your vegetables can be quickly and easily constructed by using four sturdy posts, either of wood or star pickets. Protect the tops by putting a cut up tennis ball or small pot on them and cover them with white netting. The netting is easily purchased from your local garden centre or from Bunnings. This construction can be as big or as small as you want and is easily dismantled and either moved or stored until it is next needed. Most importantly, make sure that the netting comes right down to the ground and then hold it in place with a tent peg or a brick. The unwanted critters have a habit of finding their way in through the smallest of gaps.

BUCKINGHAMIA CELISSIMA by Maureen Smith

Though not common you may have noticed this beautiful tree around your neighbourhood. They come into flower in March with long showy spays of fragrant cream blossoms. Hence its common name of Ivory Curl tree.



It is an Australian native from far northern Queensland rainforests but also grows well even as far south as Melbourne. In the southern areas it has the added advantage of only growing to medium shrub or small tree size.

Evergreen and autumn flowering, they are just coming into their own. The birds and bees love them and they are well worth considering for your garden or nature strip.



WHAT IS A COTTAGE GARDEN?

The history of cottage gardens stretches back to when people started growing flowers alongside medicinal herbs and vegetables. During the Elizabethan period, prosperous cottage dwellers acquired enough assets to change their habits from growing plants purely for practical use, to planting for aesthetic purposes as well. More beautiful flowers and fewer medicinal and edible plants were grown around the cottages. Today, a cottage garden is usually a blend of colourful flowers of varied heights mixed in with different aromatic plants and edibles. The traditional English cottage garden often has a chaotic look to it, which creates its wild personality. But achieving this look through the seasons actually takes planning and structure to get it just right. It's important to note that the 'cottage garden' style is constantly being reinvented.

Design: At its simplest, a cottage garden is any outdoor space densely packed with flowering plants. This style can be recreated in any space, from a large suburban block to a container. There aren't any rules you need to stick to when designing your outdoor space, but there are a few tips and tricks to help achieve the cottage garden style.

- Cover all the soil. Avoiding areas of bare soil is important in traditional cottage gardens. This is what gives a space the wild and charming aesthetic. Find out the mature size of plants and plan to fill garden beds without any large gaps. Fill temporary gaps in planting with spring bulbs, containers or ornaments.
- Winding paths. Cottage gardens often have a mysterious and magical charm. Creating a path that you can't see the end of achieves this unbridled energy and an informal feeling. If you already have straight paths, make sure they lead to a focal point such as a seating area, water feature or a stunning rose arch.
- Plant to soften hard landscaping. Planting to cover fences, retaining walls and the edges of paths is a great way to achieve an untamed garden look. Lobelia and nasturtium, for example, are sprawling plants that will tumble over the edge paths while adding a bright pop of colour at ground level.
- Add vertical height. Many cottage garden plants are low-growing or mounding annuals and shrubs. Plants with vertical flower spikes, such as lily, foxglove, hollyhock and delphinium, provide a contrast and act as accents. Plant them at the back of borders to bring much-needed height to a planting design. Vertical height can also be achieved through garden structures like tripods and arches. Climbing roses and sweet peas, for example, fill arches or tripods with colour while adding floral scent to your outdoor space.
- Accents and features. Features such as bird baths, sundials and statues add interest and structure in busy garden beds. These are perfect to add at the end of a path to provide a focal point, and they become the main garden features during winter, when there are fewer flowers blooming.
- Repeat colours and plants. While cottage gardens do have a busy look, picking a few key colours will help tie the whole garden together, giving it a cohesive look. The same goes for plants. Picking one plant to repeat in each space of your garden or pots will tame the chaotic look slightly and add unity to the design.

Planting: There are plenty of traditional cottage plants that will thrive in Australian conditions as long as you provide them with good soil and make sure they get adequate water. Mixing annuals and perennials is the traditional approach to cottage garden planting. Including self-seeding annuals can reduce maintenance, as each year more and more plants pop up without you lifting a finger! Traditionally, cottage gardens incorporated fragrant herbs, some vegetables and at least one fruit tree alongside flowering plants. While these may not be required for sustenance, if room permits include a few herbs or veggies on the planting list for their fresh foliage and aroma. You don't have to stick to traditional English cottage plants either. There are many beautiful native Australian, South African and Mediterranean plants that can be used to create a wild and rambling feel.

Some plants suitable for cottage gardens include:

- Low-growing: alyssum, candytuft, brachyscome, armeria, catmint, lobelia and viola.
- Medium height: cosmos, snapdragon, sweet william, lavender, cornflower, Californian poppies, nigella, phlox, incusion flower, yarrow and marigold.

- nigella, phlox, pincushion flower, yarrow and marigold.
- Vertical accents: delphinium, hollyhock, foxglove, lupin, dahlia and lily.
- Climbers: sweet pea, nasturtium, clematis, rose and thunbergia.
- Herbs: parsley, rosemary, thyme, oregano, tarragon.
- Edibles: potatoes, carrots, radishes, turnips, beetroot, gooseberries, raspberries, fennel, lettuce, silverbeet, kale, broccoli, cauliflower, rocket, and mustard greens.

With a little planning put into layout, structures, features and plants, it's easy to achieve a cottage-style garden space.



Ultimately, if a plant makes you happy, you can make a place for it in your cottage garden.

YOUR APRIL GARDEN by Christine Rethers

► It is time to start thinking about your spring bulbs. Most of the suppliers will have their catalogues on-line now for you to browse through. Some of the biggest include Tesselaars, Garden Express, Van Dieman Quality Bulbs and Red Earth Bulbs. Bulbs can of course be bought at your local garden centre and the upcoming Collectors Plant Fair will have some of the suppliers there also. So what do you need to know and what will you buy? First, it is important to note that the temperate winter climate in Sydney is not conducive to growing many of the bulbs you will find listed. However, you will always get at least the first year of flowering so all is not lost. Just don't expect successful repeat flowering of tulips, hyacinths and many daffodils. Anemones, ranunculus and Dutch iris are a bit more reliable. Tulips, hyacinths and daffodils will benefit from being stored in a paper bag in the vegetable draw of your refrigerator for about six weeks. This will initiate the flowering process in the bulb. Don't be in a hurry to plant your bulbs, rather wait until late April or May to put them into a well composted and fertilised garden bed. If putting them in pots, get the best potting mix you can find and plant them generally at a depth that is twice their width. Keep the pot in a shady place until the bulbs pop through when you can move them out into a nice sunny position.



► Spring-flowering annuals like primulas and pansies can now be found at your local garden centre and can be planted into a well prepared garden bed. Also flowering in spring are the cinerarias, forget-me-nots, lobelias and calendulas. Most of these like a bright and sunny aspect in your garden and benefit from fortnightly waterings with a liquid fertiliser.

► If you have citrus fruiting in the garden, think about protecting them from attack by cockatoos. The best protection is by using a net. There is nothing more disheartening than to see all your ripe and sometimes half-ripe fruit lying on the ground after a surprise visit from these birds. They especially like to target cumquats and calamondins, so be warned!

► If you are growing dahlias, you can prolong their flowering by making sure that you take off the spent flowers (dead-heading). This will keep them producing buds for new flowers well into autumn. If you don't do this, the plant will think it has reached the end of its flowering cycle and start to shut down for winter.

► As the weather cools, think about what perennials you would like to split up. Now is a good time to do this. Suitable plants include asters and daisies, day lilies, irises, echinacea, some salvias, hellebores, convulvulus, catmint, etc. You can use a spade to simply chop the plant into half or even smaller pieces. These can then be replanted into improved soil and any left-overs can be given away or even better, brought to the Society's Garden Table to be sold for a very modest price to fellow members. The soil is still warm enough for the new plants to get settled well into their new location before winter comes along.

