HORTULANUS

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

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JUNE 2025

COMING EVENTS

June 3 **KHS Meeting: Speaker is Dr Ann Goeth and her topic is Brush Turkeys**
June 8 **Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. Camellia specialist Bill Parker will discuss pruning, propagating, pest and growing tips –10am-3pm. He will have camellia plants for sale.**
June 13 **Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. Open garden 10am-12.30pm.**
June 28/29 **Mingara Orchid Fair, Mingara Recreation Club, Mingara Drive, Tumbi Umbi. Sat. 9-5pm, Sun. 9-3pm Entry free.**
July 2 **KHS Meeting: The main speaker is Judy Horton and her topic is Roses**
July 11 **Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. Open garden 10-12.30pm Enq. www.eryldene.org.au**

MEMBER NEWS

It was our Society's 92nd Anniversary and a very pleasant evening when some 68 members and friends gathered for our May meeting. They heard Madeline Ward give a very passionate talk about the Native Meadow Project at the Sydney Botanic Gardens which she has seen through from its inception several years ago.
However, before this, your poor unsuspecting Secretary was given a great surprise - she was presented with the Garden Clubs of Australia's Ann Williams Clark Medal for Long and Outstanding Service to her Club as well as Life Membership of our Society, in the presence of two former presidents of the Society and the President and Committee. The Committee then gave the following citation:

Most of us cannot remember a time when Christine Rethers was not an integral part of the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc (KHS). Christine has fronted the monthly KHS meetings, speaking as Secretary, commenting on the Show Bench, sharing fellow judges' feedback, and informing us of gardening events happening in our community. Christine is generous with her expertise, whether she is patiently explaining to a novice green thumb in layman's terms or comparing notes in horticultural Latin with fellow experts. Further, Christine has both edited and authored interesting articles for the Society's regular monthly magazine, Hortulanus.
Christine's contributions to KHS go beyond statistics, however, and we are sharing some here by way of acknowledgment; also knowing that she is unlikely to talk about her accomplishments herself. We counted on Christine's wry sense of humour to forgive us KHS members for putting her under a spotlight, but credit must be awarded where it is due.
Christine has been a member of this Society since 1999; and in 2001 she became a member of the KHS Committee and took on the role of Secretary, a role which she still holds today in 2025. Since 2011 she has planned and organised many outings for members of KHS to private and public gardens within Sydney and further afield to the Blue Mountains, the Southern Highlands, northern Victoria and Toowoomba. Together with the other dedicated committee members (such as our current President, Evelyn, and vice-president Edward 'Ted') Christine forms the backbone of the KHS society.
KHS publishes Hortulanus*, our well-read monthly newsletter, that Christine edits and distributes. Christine has also applied her writing talents to publication of the KHS Show Bench Guide (with updates in 2012) as well as updating the history and constitution of KHS.*
Keeping up with the modern trend for an internet presence, Christine supports the KHS website. During Covid, Christine voted for the creation of a KHS members-only page on Facebook, which has over fifty participants. The Show Bench is a highlight of our Society and we are one of the few gardening societies that still has an active and indeed flourishing show bench. KHS is indebted to Christine for her passion for the Show Bench.
Christine herself has a well-established garden in Turramurra that is a superb blend of cottage and tropical styles. Christine, together with her son, Theo, has frequently opened her home and their beautifully maintained garden to KHS members for propagation classes and Society garden rambles. Over the years many members and visitors have been the fortunate recipients of healthy and sometimes rare collector plants from Christine's garden.

Left to right: **Ted Shaw, Robyn Brown, Jenny Watsford, Helen Gilkes, Ian St Clair (past president), Evelyn Mason, Doreen Clark (past president), Christine Rethers**

Needless to say, Christine was more than a bit overwhelmed and thanked the Committee and members for this recognition but as she said, she has enjoyed every minute of her involvement with the Society. We then all adjourned to enjoy the celebration cake beautifully cooked and presented by Committee member, Jenny Watsford.

OUTINGS

Some 38 members and friends went on a most enjoyable trip to North East Victoria from 29 April to 2 May. By all accounts, they saw some wonderful autumn colour, interesting gardens, visited a nursery or two as well as the renowned Broom Factory where quite a number of brooms were purchased. Some retail therapy was enjoyed in towns like Beechworth and Bright and the weather assisted by being mostly sunny and quite warm during the day. If you haven't been on one of our trips before, think about coming along on future trips as we all do have a really good time! If you are at our June meeting, Stuart Clark will be showing us some of the lovely photos he took on the trip.

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

We had some very nice camellia blooms exhibited as well as some excellent roses in very good condition considering all the wet weather we have been having. Surprisingly, the hibiscus exhibits were in good condition also as were the azalea flowers. Surprisingly, there was an exhibit of *Hippeastrum papilio,* the beautiful burgundy and green species hippeastrum flowering at least two months earlier than would be expected. In the Container section there was a nice pot of *Paphiopedilum insigne,* a reasonably easy to grow slipper orchid. A beautifully coloured cordyline brightened up the large Container section. In the Vegie section, a bunch each of home-grown turmeric and ginger were surprising additions. It was nice to see that one of our members is still picking tomatoes! The Decorative section was a real delight with some lovely basket displays as well as autumnal leaves and some displays with foliage, fruit and driftwood.

GARDEN TABLE

A very bare Garden Table this month! Let's all try to do better at the June meeting and bring along some plants you have propagated or some cuttings. This is the time of year when we dig up and divide our herbaceous perennials so why not bring along a few of your spare plants

Don't forget to check out our Garden Table each month as you will usually 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 included an African Violet in full flower, some fertiliser and a broom from the Broom Factory. These were donated anonymously 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 MAY

The main speaker was Madeline Ward from the Sydney Botanic Gardens. Madeline showed us the location of the newly developed Native Meadow project which she has been working on since its inception. It is located between the back of the Art Gallery and the Domain motorway which is a very steep sloping site. The object was to turn this area into a wild meadow made up of local species of grasses and flowering plants. As the site was covered with weeds and introduced vegetation, it first had to be cleared and very laboriously hand-weeded. To make sure all the weeds were destroyed, solarization was used. Black plastic was laid on the slope so that the heat of the sun killed of the remaining weeds and weed seeds. This took about three months of hot summer sun. Once the site was cleared, it was landscaped by putting in coils of jute to prevent runoff on the steep slope. It was then planted with native grasses and feature plants such as *Isopogon, Epacris* and *Crowea.* Madeline says that maintenance is relatively easy and consists of about five hours a month of weeding. However, there are plans to turn more areas of this part of the Domain into a Native Meadow, so Madeline's work is not yet complete.

The completed project

Steps to achieve this:
The uncleared site

Solarising the site

The site planted with native grasses

MEMBER SPEAKER MAY: No member speaker this month.

Member Speaker June: Stuart Clark will show us some of the lovely photos he took on the Society's trip to Bright.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN JUNE by Christine Rethers

Not much to do in the vegie garden his month except water it when required and liquid feed once a fortnight. The biggest battle will be with caterpillars and sometimes larger critters such as rats and possums. Hopefully you will have provided some protection from these in the form of a 'cage' of netting or chicken wire. So far the weather has been relatively mild but should we get a cold snap after you have planted out your seedlings, you can protect them by mulching well around them and if you are in an area that gets frosts, throw over some horticulture fleece at night time (but remember to take it off during the day). Once your plants are over about 10cm they should be strong enough to withstand a bit of cold weather.

This month I am featuring potatoes. Why, you may ask? Well, in the supermarkets and even vegie shops, there are always only the plain white or red potatoes which don't even get to have a name whereas if you grow your own, you have numerous varieties to choose from, and you will soon find that the taste is quite different and often much more delicious. The other advantage of growing your own is that you can harvest some when they are still quite small and eat baby new potatoes with just a good slathering of butter—nothing better! The first thing you need to know is that it is essential to start with certified seed potatoes from a reliable company. It is not advisable to use potatoes you buy in the shops as there is no guarantee that they are disease-free. Potatoes do suffer from a number of diseases and these can be spread to other solanaceous plants such as tomatoes and capsicum. When you get your potatoes, you will then need to 'chit' them, that is lay them out in a dark place until they start to sprout. This will take several weeks. The advantage of this is that they will take off much quicker once you plant them. Planting time in Sydney is usually July or August and they will be ready to harvest by Christmas.

Plant the potatoes in a sunny position that has about 6 hrs of sun per day, in soil that has had compost and cow manure added. They should be planted in holes or trenches 10-15cm deep and space about 30-40cm apart. Keep the water up to them during the growing period and feed with liquid fertiliser about once a fortnight. Harvesting can take place once they have reached maturity and the top growth starts to go a bit yellow and dies down. Potatoes can also be planted in fairly deep containers usually with good results as long as they containers have good drainage. Tip - check out the Diggers Club for a wide selection of interesting and different potato varieties.

CURL GRUBS - FRIEND OR FOE by Ted Shaw

Curl grubs are the larvae of several scarab beetles with common names such as Christmas Beetles, Rhinoceros Beetles and introduced beetles such as African Black Beetle and Argentinian Scarab. They feed on plant roots which can damage lawns, vegetables and ornamentals especially if they are in large numbers. Signs of curl grub damage including wilting plants or patchy yellowing grass, and if the damage is significant, they're doing more harm than good. On the other hand, small populations may not cause much damage and can even contribute to soil aeration and be a food source for birds and other beneficial wildlife. We see them when we are digging in the garden or when removing plants from pots.

If you find them in plant pots and their numbers need to be controlled, there are a number of options:

- Manual removal – remove the plant from the pot, shake off the soil, pick them out by hand and dispose of them in a sealed bag or feed them to the birds that visit your garden.
- Repot with fresh soil – after removing grubs, repot the plant in fresh, high-quality potting mix. Sterilised mixes are less likely to contain any eggs or larvae.
- Beneficial nematodes – apply microscopic beneficial nematodes to the soil. These worms kill grubs without harming plants or beneficial insects and they're safe for indoor and outdoor plants.
- Neem Oil soil drench (organic) – mix Neem oil with water at the product dilution rate and pour this into the soil until saturated. Neem Oil disrupts the grub feeding thus acting as a control.
- Confidor soil drench (chemical) – contains Imidacloprid which is a systemic insecticide and mix and apply as

Christmas Beetle

Rhinoceros Beetle

African Black Beetle

Argentinian Scarab Beetle

Curl Grubs

YOUR JUNE GARDEN by Maureene Smith

Forget the cup of tea and a good book, there is still plenty to do in the garden even though winter is here. Actually, don't forget the cup of tea, take it with you and wander round your patch. Does it need brightening up? For most things, it is too late for this year but now is the time to plan ahead, so that next winter you can have some warm, eye-popping colour.

Look for plants in the yellow/red spectrum - they are just the thing for a winter garden. One such plant is *Tagetes lemmonii* (Mexican Marigold), an evergreen, strongly aromatic shrub which will grow to a couple of metres but can be cut back firmly to keep it in shape. It has bright yellow daisy-like flowers that attract bees and butterflies. Sun loving and drought tolerant, it is definitely easy care. A similar but slightly smaller shrub is *Euryops chrysanthemoides* (African Bush Daisy). Another favourite in the yellow spectrum is *Reinwardia indica*, an evergreen shrub with an open habit and sprays of clear yellow blooms. If the cooler colours are more your thing, the Salvia family can provide some lovely winter colour. *Salvia bullulata* (Winter Blue) is a small shrub with pale blue flowers while *Salvia rubiginosa* is larger but be warned, it will spread very easily. A truly vibrant blue is *Salvia* 'Costa Rican Blue', again it has a spreading habit but is more easily controlled.

Australian natives can also provide good winter colour to your garden. *Hardenbergi*a, in either the white or purple form, is a quick growing climber or scrambler. There are also a wide range of Grevilleas flowering at this time. These include Grevillea Honey Gem which basically flowers all year round and *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* 'Crimson Villea' which is a new hybrid that is winter flowering. Crowea and correa, both of which come in a range of flower colours, are good smaller shrubs for winter gardens.

You don't have to wait to add colour to your garden though. Cyclamens love the cold and potted up, can really improve a dull spot, as of course can any of the other winter flowering annuals such as pansies, violas, primulas and marigolds.

Whilst on your walk around, check for powdery mildew on your roses and other shrubs. The humidity and warm conditions of the summer and autumn have encouraged this pest. If you can prune it out that is a good solution as is a lime sulphur wash for dormant plants.

Last month we talked about preparing for bare rooted trees and shrubs. This month and next month are really the last months to get them in the ground so that they are well established and ready for their spring growth.

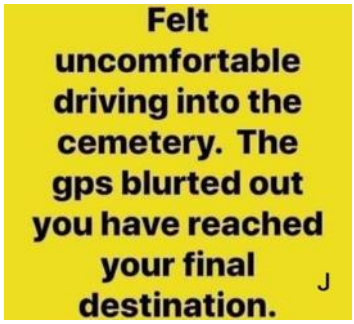
Do you grow hellebores? If so, consider giving them a good prune to get rid of all the old leaves. What you are left with is the new growth which will bear the flowers in a month or two's time. At the same time, give them a good feed of fertiliser pellets and a mulch with cow manure. In the northern hemisphere, hellebores are cut right down to ground level in autumn and then the new growth in spring bears all the flowers without old leaves obscuring them. If the clumps are getting rather big, think about lifting and dividing them. This is the only time of the year you can do this safely without setting them back. If you have spare divisions, bring them along to the Society's Garden Table and share them with fellow members.

Last but not least, your garden would appreciate an extra layer of mulch as this will help keep the soil warm and suppress those pesky weeds.

Tagetes lemmonii

Salvia bullulata

Salvia rubiginosa



Euryops chrysanthemoides

Reinwardia indica

Hellebore