

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 Email: khs.secretary@gmail.com



JUNE 2024

COMING EVENTS

- June 2** Artisans at the Coal Loader, Waverton. 9am-3pm. Robyn Kennedy will have a display.
June 4 KHS Meeting: The main speaker is Kathy Potter (aka 'The Frog Lady')
June 7 Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. 10-12noon Enq. www.eryldene.org.au
June 29/30 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 Richie Griffith and his topic is Camellias
July 5 Eryldene, 17 McIntosh St, Gordon. 10-12noon Enq. www.eryldene.org.au

MEMBER NEWS

There were 54 members and friends at the May meeting. Unfortunately, the main speaker, Jill Richardson, was taken ill with Covid the day before the meeting and was unable to be present. Our Secretary, Christine Rethers, filled in.

Don't forget to have a look at our [Facebook](#) page which continues to have some interesting postings. We now have 53 contributors and it has proved very useful in answering questions such as finding out plant names and helping members with problems with their gardens. Remember 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>.

OUTINGS

We have 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

Another very nice Show Bench this month! Surprising really, now that the weather has turned distinctly cooler. There were still some very nice roses but camellias were the dominant group this month and will continue to be for the next few months. A couple of exhibits of hydrangeas, one looking particularly new and fresh, were a surprise. A vase of vivid red-coloured gerberas stood out, as did the hibiscus. There were more fruit and vegetables on display than last month with the citrus particularly prominent. There was even a tray of Jerusalem artichokes, something which has not been seen before on the Show Bench. Also a first, I think, were three nice-looking turnips. There were some excellent examples of members' own compost and it was hard for the judges to give the first and second award as they were all really good. The Decorative section was well filled with some very fine exhibits and again it was difficult to choose the winners as they were all so good.

Christine again asked for one or two more volunteers to help as judges. So far we have one new volunteer but would like at least one more. The main requirement is to have a good knowledge of the information contained in the Show Bench booklet which all members are sent when they join. We judge mainly by appreciation which means that we are looking for a good example of the exhibit which should be as free as possible from faults such as petal damage and discoloured leaves. In potted plants, we watch out for weeds and any 'beasties' - we don't need those on the Show Bench.

On the whole, it would appear that members have listened to the advice about taking more care when putting their exhibits on the Show Bench as the judges reported an improved display. Please remember to remove dead and/or dying flowers and leaves when bringing in potted plants. This will particularly apply to Schlumbergeras which will no doubt feature on the June Show Bench.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table was very full at the May meeting with lots for members to choose from. This is a great time of the year to either cut back or divide many of your plants so think about bringing in some that you can spare. Don't forget to check out the Garden Table each month where you will often find some of those much sought-after plants.

The opinions and recommendations published in this newsletter are those of the authors and the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc. takes no responsibility for any losses or damages that may be attributed to the use or misuse of any material or opinion in this publication. Its contents are protected by copyright and no part may be reproduced without permission of the authors.

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.

GUEST SPEAKER MAY:

This was Christine Rethers who filled in for the scheduled speaker, Jill Richardson, who had been taken ill with Covid the day before the meeting. Christine's talk was based on showing members different ways to grow plants such as orchids, bromeliads, hoyas and the like rather than in a conventional greenhouse or shade house. This involves either hanging pots on the branches of trees, pergolas or fences or growing them directly on the trunks and branches of the trees.



A conventional shade house with a polycarbonate roof

She was motivated by quickly running out of space in the shade house (which is also used for propagating seedlings and cuttings) as her orchid collection grew. The next thing to do was to hang suitable plants on the space available on a large pergola. This was quickly followed by using the branches of trees in the garden that were accessible. Before long, some of the more suitable plants were tied to the trunks and branches especially where the branch and main trunk of the tree formed a natural resting place. Christine then showed us examples



Using a pergola

around her garden where these plants have now taken hold and are thriving.

Christine emphasised that this application only applies to selected plants. She found that selected orchids such as soft cane dendrobiums and the Australian native dendrobiums are particularly good at fastening themselves to branches and then blooming well at the appropriate time. An oncidium, *Onc. flexuosum*, also does well on the trunk of a large eucalyptus. The smaller bromeliads such as the stoloniferous types (they produce new plants on elongated stems rather than close to the mother plant) are also flourishing. One type of orchid that does particularly



Onc. flexuosum

well are the Stanhopeas which grow well in hanging baskets on a callistemon. Christine finished her talk by outlining the advantages and disadvantages of growing these plants in this way.

Advantages: For the most part they grow very well and enhance the beauty of your garden. Plus they are definitely less prone to fungal infections, scale and mealybugs.

Disadvantages: More easily attacked by insects – especially the dreaded dendrobium beetle; they need frequent watering on hot or very dry days; it is not easy to bring your beautiful flowering orchid to a meeting show bench; only selected plants are suitable for growing this way.



Stanhopea wardii



Soft cane dendrobium



Bromeliads and dendrobiums



Dendrobium kingianum



Miltonia Bluntii

Main Speaker June: This will be Kathy Potter. Kathy is a PhD candidate at Macquarie University where she is studying the use of flash colours in antipredator behaviour. She is also the Exhibitions Officer for the Frog and Tadpole Study Group of NSW. Kathy has worked as a frog specialist at the Australian Museum Research Institute and appeared on radio and television, as well as working with schools and at educational events. She has no problem with people calling her 'the crazy frog lady', as long as she gets the opportunity to teach them something about frogs.

MEMBER SPEAKER MAY:



Our member speaker was Alison Wood who shared with us some of the lovely scenery she saw when she visited Japan during the autumn season. Alison and her husband, Jim, travelled quite extensively round the different parts of the Japanese islands but wherever they went, they encountered the brilliant colours of the autumn foliage. The colour came mainly from the various types of maples. The colours ranged from a deep red through to orange and then to yellow.

Japanese gardens are to be found often around Buddhist temples and the homes and palaces of warlords and rulers. They comprise three main elements: water, rocks and plants. Zen gardens are composed only of rocks and gravel and are places of repose and reflection. Most gardens had water in the form of large ponds or lakes, many with large and colourful Koi carp which enhanced the display.

Alison showed us some wonderful gardens with all these elements and it was remarkable to see just how well cared for they were. Plants in particular were groomed meticulously including some of the bigger trees. After viewing these lovely pictures, many of us were ready to hop on the plane!



Member Speaker June: This will be Ted Shaw who will tell us about the Stony Range Regional Botanic Garden in Dee Why. Ted has been one of the leading volunteers there for many years and there is not much he doesn't know about it.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN JUNE by Christine Rethers

Not much to do in the vegie garden this 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.

If you would like to branch out, this month and next month are the very best times to plant Asparagus and Rhubarb. Please don't bother with seeds or seedlings of these two - the only way to go is to get bare-rooted plants. These are called 'crowns'. This way you will save yourself several years of waiting before you can harvest anything.

Asparagus: First prepare your bed, remembering that this will be their permanent position for as long as you want to grow them. Prepare the bed well with compost and cow manure. Next, make trenches that are about 20-30cm deep and 30-40cm apart. I like to plant in a square as the mature plants will be up to 1m tall when fully grown and having them in a group helps to stop them from falling over in a strong wind. Your plants, which will be one-year old, will come bare-rooted from the supplier. Place them in the trenches and gently spread out the roots, making sure that the growing tip is upright. Fill in the trench or trenches and water in well.



When the stems start to come up, you can mound some extra soil up around them as this encourages the part you are going to eat to grow longer. Harvesting is just a matter of selecting a spear about 10cm tall and using a sharp knife, cut it off under the soil about another 3-4cm down. You are advised not to harvest the spears during their first year (but taking one or two to taste will not hurt). It is advisable to mulch the soil round them with sugar cane mulch to keep down the weeds and retain moisture. In the second year, it is advisable to pick daily if possible for

about a month and then let whatever comes up develop into a mature plant. At the end of summer, the stems will die off and go yellow. They can then be cut down and the patch given a top up of cow manure and compost to take them through winter.

Rhubarb: Prepare the area well where you are going to grow your plants with compost and cow manure. They will develop into largish plants so allow plenty of space between plants—around 1m. The plant will come as a rhizome with a bud at the top. Plant it so that the bud is just above soil level. Water in your plant and then mulch around it well with sugar cane mulch. Rhubarb are very hungry plants so be prepared to top up around it with cow manure every season. Some pelletised fertiliser would not go astray either. Again it is best to wait until your plants are in their second year before harvesting. Harvesting is done by pulling off the outer leaves - do not cut them as this leaves a stump that rots and harms the plant. Don't take more than two or three leaves off each plant at any one time. Compost the leaves—they are toxic to eat. Towards the end of summer, the plant will send up a flower stalk—this should be cut off as it serves no purpose for the home gardener and takes energy out of the plant. A plant should last in place at least five years before it is time to lift it and divide it up, ready to replant the divisions in a new position.



PLANTING A NEW ROSE by Christine Rethers

June and July are the best rose planting months, so if you have not bought the rose yet, make your way to your favourite garden centre where, with luck, you will find your rose, most likely as a bare-rooted plant. Alternatively, all the major rose nurseries have websites where you can browse through their catalogue and pick the plants you want. It will come as a bare rooted plant in a large plastic bag. This is not a pot and there is not a lot of moisture in there so don't unwrap it until you are ready to plant it. Take it home and plant it in the next few days, don't leave it until following week. Dig a hole about 40cm wide and deep enough so that when you build a mound in the centre of the hole to drape your rose roots over, the budding joint will be 4-5cm above ground



level. Shorten any long roots to about 16cm then plant the rose on the mound. Fill the hole to a bit over half full with soil and compost and firm it but don't compact it. Fill the hole with a seaweed solution and let it drain then fill the hole up with more soil and compost mix but don't fertilise or water for the next month or so until the plant shows signs of growth.

As roses are generally top heavy and shallow rooted plants, they can be shaken by a strong wind. This often results in broken roots which will send up useless suckers so put a short stake in alongside your plant and tie your rose to it - not too tight or you will kill it. If you are planting a standard rose, usually on a 1m long stem, it is a good idea to put a good strong stake in place before you plant and secure your rose to the stake as soon as it is planted.

YOUR JUNE GARDEN by Maureen Smith

► Brrr - it is certainly cooling down but still a good time to be in the garden. The great thing about winter is that the absence of a lot of foliage gives the opportunity to easily inspect trees and deciduous shrubs. Now is a good time to prune out dead branches and prune to a desirable shape. This advice does not apply, of course, to the spring flowering plants such as azaleas, camellias and rhododendrons, and to blossom trees such as any of the prunus. They can wait until after flowering, most likely by October and November.

► Late June to the end of July is the time to prune your roses. They are dormant then and most will have lost their leaves. Most of the hybrid tea and shrub roses can be cut back by about 2/3rds. Then remove any dead or diseased wood and any spindly wood or branches that are crossing. Each year you should also take out the oldest wood—this is usually a thick and brown-coloured branch, leaving the newer branches which should be green in colour. This will rejuvenate the rose and keep it performing well. Next it is important to apply Lime Sulphur which will help to control scale and Black Spot. Spray all the branches and stems and even the soil at the base if you can. Check the dilution rates on the bottle and make sure you follow them to the letter. Climbing roses and pillar roses are slightly more complicated in their requirements and it is a good idea to consult a good rose book or suitable You Tube to show you how to go about it.

► If you are thinking of camellias as an addition to your garden, now is a good time to decide which variety you will have as they are all coming into full bloom. Will it be a Sasanqua, a Species or perhaps a Japonica like this spectacular *Camellia japonica* 'Black Tie'?

► It is also an opportune time to plant a flowering native or two. There are some beautiful Correas and Croweas in selected garden centres at present. *Correa alba* and *Crowea exalata* are a couple to look for. Both will grow to about 80cm by 80cm and flower for a long period.

► It's also time to get in some spring flowering annuals and perennials. There's Alyssum, Foxgloves, Dianthus and Nemesis. The Nemesis hybrids are available in some stunning colours this year.

► Although we have talked about planting in the garden, all of the above can be used in containers, as feature plants either in a garden or on a balcony, given the right conditions. Talking of balconies, the cyclamen are all blooming right now and in a myriad of colours. Just remember, cyclamen like to be kept fairly cool so don't keep them in a heated room. Some people even put them outside at night. Water them from the bottom as watering from the top can induce rot in the tuber. They will naturally die down when the weather warms up so put the pot outside in a shady spot until the following autumn.

► One bonus at this time of year is that the upkeep chores are reduced, there is less need for watering and certainly fewer weeds about so more time for just sitting back and enjoying your garden.



Camellia japonica
'Black Tie'



Crowea exalata



Correa alba



Cyclamen



Nemesis

***"The best time to plant a tree was 25 years ago;
the second best time is now!"***