

HORTULANUS

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

President: Evelyn Mason (0412 812 824)

Secretary and Editor: Christine Rethers (9449 6245)

Treasurer: Robyn Brown (0408 295 601)

Website: www.khsgardenclub.org.au Email: khs.secretary@gmail.com



SEPTEMBER 2026

COMING EVENTS

- Until Oct. 5** Boongala Gardens, 76 Pitt Town Rd, Kenthurst. Open 10am-4pm Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon.
Sept. 2 KHS Meeting and AGM - Speaker: Ian Thompson - Garden Insects: Friend or Foe?
Sept. 19/20 Plant Lovers Fair, Kariong. Sat. 8-4pm, Sun. 9-3pm. Entry: \$15 Further information: <https://www.plantloversfair.com.au/>
Sept. 19/20 Spring Clivia Show and Sales, Phyllis Ave, Thornleigh. Sat. 9am-4pm, Sun. 9am-3pm Entry: \$5
Sept.12-Oct.11 Floriade, Commonwealth Park Canberra. Open 9.30am-5.30pm daily. Entry free
Sept. 26/27 Bromeliad Society Spring Show and Sale, Federation Pavilion, Castle Hill Showground, Showground Road, Castle Hill. Sat. 9am-4pm, Sun. 10am-3pm.
Oct. 6 KHS Meeting and Trading Table
Oct. 18 KHS Members' Garden Ramble

President's Report 2026

It is my pleasure to present my report for the past year and to reflect on what has been another wonderful year for our Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society. Above all, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to **our volunteers and members**. Our club simply could not achieve what it does without the generosity of people who give their time, energy, knowledge and enthusiasm. Whether you helped as a member presenter, on the trading table, selling raffle tickets, as a supper helper, on the biannual plant sale, being a Facebook contributor, taking photographs, setting up the display tables, contributing to the Hortulanus, to name but a few of the many tasks, your contribution has been greatly appreciated.

Highlights of the Year

This year has been filled with many enjoyable and worthwhile activities, including:

- **The Spring Garden Ramble**, giving members the opportunity to discover new gardens, exchange ideas and enjoy time together
- **Guest speakers** who provided inspiration and practical knowledge on gardening, plants, insects and scientific research.
- **Member presenters**, who shared experiences, observations, travel stories and photos and gardening skills.
- **Christmas luncheon**, bringing members together socially and strengthening the friendships that make our club so special.
- **Sharing plants, seeds, cuttings and gardening advice**, continuing the wonderful tradition of members learning from and helping one another
- **The spirit of friendship and cooperation** displayed throughout the year.
- **Welcoming new members**, whose enthusiasm and fresh ideas have added to the vitality of our club.
- **Enjoying wonderful outings and trips** which included an afternoon at Mt Colah visiting an inspiring Permaculture horticultural treasure trove. This was followed by a visit to a member's eclectic and much-loved garden. In addition, a one-day trip to the Bundanoon Garden Ramble in October 2025 was a riot of spring colour.

I would also like to acknowledge **the committee** for its commitment and support throughout the year. The planning, organisation and many hours of work behind the scenes are essential to keeping our club relevant and successful.

As we look ahead to the coming year, I hope we can continue to grow as a club, attract new members, support our community and, most importantly, enjoy our gardens and each other's company.

Thank you once again to every member and volunteer for making this such a successful and enjoyable year. **Your time, enthusiasm and friendship are what make Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society truly special.**

Evelyn Mason, President

MEMBER NEWS

Membership subscriptions were due on 1st July 2026 - \$25 for a single and \$35 for a double. Please complete the attached renewal form and return it with your payment (cash, cheque or direct debit) in an envelope with your name on it to Helen Gilkes at the next meeting or post it to Mrs Robyn Brown, P O Box 508, Forestville 2087. Please take a moment to fill in the subscription form as it is needed to check we have your details correctly recorded.

Note: This will be your last Hortulanus if we do not receive your renewal. If you are not sure whether you have paid, please send an email to our Membership Secretary, Robyn Brown, medway2@bigpond.net.au.

It was another cool evening for our August meeting but despite this, 52 members and visitors ventured out to enjoy the activities. We were pleased to find that our hall was at a very comfortable temperature throughout the evening.

Don't forget that we will be holding a Members' Trading Table at our October meeting. This means you will need to start **now** to prepare the plants you would like to bring for sale. We will be inviting members of the local garden clubs to this meeting so the potential number of customers will be greater. We will be sending out next month the form with instructions that will be needed to record the plants you bring for sale together with the sale price.

The Society will be holding its Christmas lunch on Friday, 27 November 2025 at the Monash Country Club, 256 Powderworks Road, Ingleside from 12.30pm to 2.30pm. Everyone is invited to attend and the cost will be \$75 per person for a wonderful two-course lunch. A booking form will be included next month with the October Hortulanus.

OUTINGS

The Society's Members' Garden Ramble will take place on Sunday, 18th October. The gardens should be visited in the following order:

1.30-2.15pm	David and Helen Pratt, 86 Grosvenor Street, Wahroonga
2.15-3pm	Patricia Gibson, 16 Tallong Place, Turramurra
3-4.30pm	Sue and Bob Ballinger, 17 Linden Avenue, Pymble

We will have afternoon tea in the last garden and ask that you bring a small plate of something sweet or savoury. The Society will provide tea and coffee plus cups, plates and serviettes. Grateful thanks to the members who have volunteered to open their gardens.

RAFFLE

There were three lovely native plants provided by the Society on the raffle table. The other raffle prizes were donated by members —thank you to all those anonymous members who bring along some very nice prizes.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table had a number of interesting items on offer including a box full of Hippeastrum bulbs and some pots of interesting ground covers. Don't forget to check out the Garden Table each month for some lovely plants.

GUEST SPEAKER AUGUST



Our guest speaker was Daniel Low who showed us a presentation he had made to the International Camellia Society Congress last year. The title of his talk was 'Collecting Camellias for an Australian Garden'. Daniel described how he and his wife purchased a house in Pymble in 1992. The garden already had some camellias but before long Daniel and his wife set about filling the ample back and front gardens with more camellias. The soils in this part of Sydney are ideal for camellias having a constant pH of 5.5 - 6 ie. slightly acidic. Daniel noted that aspect was particularly important for a number of his camellias which resulted in some having to be moved to more suitable locations.

At the start, it was the red-coloured camellias that attracted them both the most. These included *C. japonica* Wildfire and *C. japonica* Roger Hall. Next on their list were some of the many 'sports' - the genetically unstable varieties such as *C. japonica* Elegans that has produced *C. japonica* C.M. Wilson among a number of others. Another genetically unstable camellia is *C. japonica* Aspasia Macarthur which produced the very popular *C. japonica* Margaret Davis.

Daniel next included camellia reticulatas in his collection including the very large *C. reticulata* Dr Clifford Parks. His collection would not be complete without some of the Japanese Higo camellias, also known as the 'Camellias of the Samurai'. These have single flowers of 5-9 petals and a centre of up to 300 golden stamens.

To complete the collection, Daniel has planted a number of species camellias including *C. sinensis* which is the tea plant originating in China. He collects the leaves and makes a version of green tea from them which he says is very refreshing.

Daniel noted that the number of camellias available at present is considerably less than 30 years ago as a number of large camellia nurseries have closed down. He brought a table-top full of camellia blooms from his garden which members were invited to take home if they wished.



Cj Wildfire



Cj C M Wilson



Cj Margaret Davis



Cj Okan (higo)



C reticulata
Dr Clifford Parks



C. sinensis

Main Speaker September: This will be Ian Thompson who will give us a talk on Garden Insects—friend or Foe? Ian worked for 30 years as a Research Scientist and Entomologist in curbing urban insect pests that invade the home and in his latter research years on the control of insects that are vectors of disease and unease to humans such as mosquitoes, bed bugs, paralysis ticks, head lice and dust mites, to name a few. His talk should be of interest to many.

MEMBER SPEAKER AUGUST

Our member speaker this month was Clare Bell who gave a demonstration on taking and striking camellia cuttings. Her demonstration was able to be seen projected onto the wall behind so we could all see how Clare first prepared her cutting and then planted them.

Member speaker September: This will be Denis Tamsett who will give us a presentation which he has called 'Romancing the Nile'. What an intriguing title!

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN SEPTEMBER by Christine Rethers

It is time now to plan for our spring and summer vegetables. Pull out your winter vegetables as they finish up and put them in the compost. Plan now what you would like to grow and then select where in the vegie garden they will be planted. Remember not to plant the same plants in the same place two years in a row but vary what you are growing. It is better for the soil and also helps prevent the spread of pathogens.

Some vegetables will need some support so when you have worked out where your summer vegies will be planted, put in the appropriate supports **before** you put in the plants. Beans, cucumbers and even pumpkins will need the support of a trellis. This can be as simple as a tee-pee of long bamboo stakes, tied at the top. Most types of tomatoes will also need support. A 1½m stake for each tomato plant should be put in before you plant young tomatoes.

Peas will be finishing off now and it is time now to focus on planting beans. There are numerous different varieties to choose from, depending on what you intend to do with them. I like to grow different types - you can choose from bush beans that are low-growing such as yellow ones ('Cherokee Wax'), purple ones ('Royal Burgundy') or green varieties ('Strike'). These do not need to be staked as they only grow to between 60-80cm. Or you can set up a trellis and grow 'Blue Lake' or 'Kentucky Wonder'. Sadly we cannot grow the Scarlet Runner bean as we are too warm for this northern hemisphere favourite. Other type of beans include Borlotti beans which are harvested when the actual beans have grown and matured. They are then dried and stored for use in winter soups and casseroles. Beans can be sown directly and take about two weeks to emerge. Once up, they need to be protected from slugs and snails. A good mulch of sugar cane around them will help protect them.



Blue Lake Beans



Borlotti Beans

A Walk in Sydney's Urban Forest by Virginia Fischer

On 1 August 2026 Richard and I attended the Royal Botanic Garden's Urban Forest Walk. The term 'urban forest' describes the plants chosen over time to fill a city's public spaces – whether that be parks or city streets. A city's forest may include remnant bushland, other native plants and exotics and refers to both trees and shrubs. The Royal Botanic Garden is the most biodiverse part of the city, containing over 65,000 plants as well as associated wildlife. During our walk in the Garden we examined ten trees that are found throughout Sydney. The most commonly used tree in the city is Brushbox *Lophostemon confertus*. This tree is native to northern New South Wales and Southern Queensland and is used as a street tree as it is well suited to the urban environment and needs little maintenance. Another popular native tree is the local Moreton Bay Fig *Ficus macrophylla* which has been planted in the city since the 1890's.

Some of the other native trees we saw were descendants of the original native vegetation around Farm Cove, such as the Sydney Red Gum *Angophora costata* and the Forest Red Gum *Eucalyptus tereticornis*. Other native trees belong to an ancient conifer family and include the huge Hoop Pine *Araucaria cunninghamii*, which originates from northern New South Wales and Queensland. Another native tree, Bloodwood *Corymbia gummifera*, had large cream-coloured, highly staminate flowers which provided a feast for bees, birds and native flying foxes.

We also examined two exotic trees in the Garden. The first of these, the London Plane *Platanus x hybrida* is the second most commonly used street tree in Sydney. It does very well in urban areas as it tolerates pollution and is low maintenance. However, it is problematic because it causes allergies in many people. There is a move to replace

some of the London Planes, but it will take a long time to renew this part of the urban forest. The other exotic was the Maidenhair Tree *Ginkgo biloba* which is believed to be extinct in the wild. This tree is suited to a wide range of conditions and is commonly grown in the urban forest, which acts to conserve the tree. Beneath the trees in the forest grow a variety of shrubs. These plants are important for habitat as they provide food for birds and invertebrates as well as places to hide. They also act as a buffer to winds. A diversity of plants attracts a diversity of fauna.

While looking at these beautiful plants in the Royal Botanic Garden, we learned about the work that trees do for our city. In fact, trees provide a number of benefits:

- Trees remove pollution during photosynthesis and provide oxygen for us to breathe.
- Tree roots hold the soil together.
- Trees filter out runoff when it rains and keep the water underground.
- Trees store carbon in their trunks.
- Trees provide shade and thereby cool the temperature.

The Urban Forest Walk was not strenuous and had great views across Farm Cove to the Harbour Bridge. Highly recommended!

YOUR SEPTEMBER GARDEN by Christine Rethers

This month is just about the last time you can safely move plants around before the hot weather arrives. Moving plants such as perennials and shrubs such as roses, azaleas, gardenias and the like is less likely to succeed once it warms up. They are then approaching their full growth season and it is harder to give them the conditions they need.



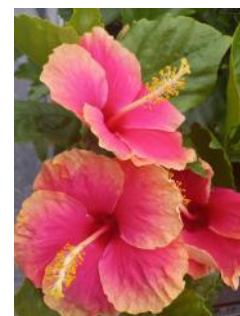
Passionfruit

The same can be said for pruning also. Once new growth starts, only prune if absolutely necessary. However, that said, pruning can be done now on plants such as the passionfruit. This should be cut back hard, even back to half-way, as the fruit will only come on new growth. Don't forget to feed your plants after pruning with pelletised fertiliser and mulch with compost and cow manure. Passionfruit only last well for about five years so if your plant is approaching this age, think about starting a new plant to take over.



Hibiscus syriacus

Another plant that you have hopefully left until now is the hibiscus. Now is the time for pruning and the general recommendation is to take Hawaiian hibiscus down about half-way. (The Hawaiian hibiscus are the ones with the large showy flowers.) Other hibiscus such as the perennial hibiscus and *Hibiscus syriacus* can be pruned now also. This is a good time to take cuttings of your hibiscus. Take a piece you have just pruned, trim it to about 15cm and dip the cut end in a hormone powder or gel. Make a hole in a pot filled with potting mix and place your cutting in the hole. Then firm down around it and water it. If you are taking a number of cutting, place them around the edge of the pot (they seem to do better this way). You can cover the top of the pot with a clear plastic bag to keep the moisture in if you wish.



Hawaiian hibiscus

Don't forget the golden 'rule' when fertilising - water first, then spread your fertiliser, and then water well again afterward.

With roses (which should have been pruned in mid-July), now is the time to start feeding them. It is generally recommended to feed them at least three times a year - spring, summer and autumn. They don't need a feed in winter as they are dormant then. There are a number of excellent rose fertiliser on the market - I like the Sudden Impact for Roses by Neutrog and Black Marvel for Roses by Richgro. After feeding with the pelletised fertiliser, don't forget to mulch well. Lucerne is the preferred mulch for many rose growers but I find sugar cane mulch or home-made compost can do the job as well.



Rosa Bonica

Time to start feeding camellias and azaleas. It is advised to use a fertiliser designed specifically for them as they like to grow in a slightly acidic soil. They can be fed again around Christmas time but in the main they do not need a huge amount of feeding.

As you bulbs finish flowering, cut off the flower stems but leave the leaves to die down naturally. This way they will continue to feed the bulb so that it can develop a flower for next season. Giving them some bulb food at this time will also increase your chances of repeat flowering next year.

Happy gardening!