

# HORTULANUS

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

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## OCTOBER 2025

### COMING EVENTS

- Oct. 3-6** Leura Gardens Festival, 8 Gardens open from 9.30am - 4.30pm.  
Info: [www.leuragardensfestival.com](http://www.leuragardensfestival.com)
- Oct. 4-5** Bromeliad Society Spring Show and Sale, Federation Pavilion, Castle Hill Showground  
Sat. 9am-4pm, Sun. 9am-3pm.
- Oct. 7** KHS Meeting and Trading Table. Speaker - Bernard Chapman.
- Oct. 11** Cactus & Succulent Society Spring Show and Sale, Hawkesbury Pavilion, Hawkesbury Showground, Clarendon. 9am-3pm.
- Oct. 12** KHS Members' Garden Ramble. Three gardens open from 1.30pm-4.30pm (see below)
- Oct. 16-19** Berry Gardens Festival. Enq. <https://www.berrygardens.org.au/berry-garden-festival>
- Oct. 17-19** Orchids Central Show and Sales, 178 Eldridge Rd, Bankstown, Fri./Sat. 9am-4pm, Sun. 9am-2pm.
- Oct. 18-20** Galston Open Gardens. Tickets and map available at the Galston Club, 21 Arcadia Road, Arcadia. 9.30am-4.30pm. Seven gardens open.
- Oct. 25** KHS trip to the Bundanoon Garden Ramble.
- Oct. 25/26** Hartley Valley Garden Festival & Plant Fair, Little Hartley 10am-4pm. Four gardens open.
- Oct. 25/26** Bathurst Spring Spectacular. Tickets available from Bathurst Visitor Centre. Cost \$25. 9am - 4pm. Eight gardens open.
- Nov. 4** KHS Meeting. Speaker: Libby Birley on garden design.

### MEMBER NEWS

At the AGM held at the September meeting, the Officers and Committee of the Society were returned as follows: President - Evelyn Mason, Vice-President - Ted Shaw, Secretary - Christine Rethers, Treasurer - Robyn Brown, Committee - Helen Gilkes and Jenny Watsford.

The Society's **Members' Garden Ramble** will take place on Sunday, 12th October. The gardens should be visited in the following order:

- 1.30-2.15pm Paul Gratiaen, 10 Kalista Avenue, St Ives  
2.15-3pm Vered Waggmann and Guy Vissel, 14 Romney Road, St Ives  
3-4.30pm Christine & Theo Rethers, 1 Wolsten Avenue, Turramurra

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.

**Christmas Lunch:** All members are invited to attend the Society's Christmas lunch which will be held on Thursday, 20 November 2025 at the St Ives Bowling Club, 100 Killeaton Street, St Ives starting at 12.30pm. The cost will be \$75 per person and the lunch will include a glass of wine and canapes on arrival, followed by a delicious two course buffet lunch. An invitation to this event which contains instructions on how to book and pay is included with this newsletter.

### OUTINGS

**The outing to the Bundanoon Garden Ramble, 25 October 2025.**

At the present time we have had to close the bookings for this trip as we have as many people already booked as we are able to take. However, we have opened a waiting list and it is quite likely that we will have a few people drop out. If you would like to be on the waiting list, please let Helen Gilkes know at the October meeting or phone her on 9144 4826.

### RAFFLE

This month's raffle consisted of three lovely native plants sourced for the Society by Nancy Shaw, as well as a number of anonymous donations. Many thanks to all the donors. The cost is only \$2 for 3 tickets.

## GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table was full again this month with some lovely plants and cuttings (Tree Dahlias!) on offer. Next month (at the October meeting) there will not be a Garden Table in operation as we will be holding the Members' Trading Table.

## SHOW BENCH

Azaleas took pride of place this month which is often difficult as the flowers are so quickly affected by adverse weather conditions. A very lovely example of the *Pieris* 'Temple Bells' graced the table as did an unusual plant, *Albuca spiralis*, the 'Sizzle-Frizzle' plant. This plant grows from a bulb, has very curled grass-like leaves and nice, yellow-green flowers—most unusual. It is dormant from late spring and through the summer months. The Veggie section was quite well represented and included some harvested coffee beans and a lovely cauliflower. The Decorative section looked particularly lovely with the 'Celebration of Spring', Australian native flowers and a couple of amusing 'Father's Day' arrangements.

## MEMBERS' TRADING TABLE

**The Trading Table will be operating at the October meeting.** Members may bring in a **maximum of 30 plants** to sell and 10% of the proceeds will go to the Society with the rest to the member.

Traders are reminded of the following requirements:

- \* Only plants can be sold.
- \* All items should be in good condition, pots should be clean with no soil, roots or stains.
- \* The plant must be disease- and insect-free with no damaged or dead leaves and weeds should be removed.
- \* The plant should be named with a label or sticker. In addition, a paddle pop stick showing the owner's initials, the plant number and the price required should be put in each pot.

On the form there are two sections, the first half is your record. The first column will be ticked off by the sales team as the plant is received. The second column is for the number of the plant so each plant will have a number from 1 to 10. The third column is for the plant name – if you don't know the name then a short description. The fourth column is the price you wish to receive for this plant and the fifth column is the price that the plant sold for. On the second half of the form you should repeat this information so that the sales team can keep a record which they use to process the payment you will receive.

If you want to bring more than 10 plants, then simply use another form but continue the numbering, e.g. the next set of plants will be numbered from 11 up to 20 and if you bring more the plants will be numbered 21 up to 30. You will receive your payment at the November meeting. You will be handed back the first half of the form at the end of the meeting. **Please take home any of your unsold plants.** Paddle pop sticks and extra forms will be available at the table. Plants will be checked in on arrival at a table outside the hall and the paper work will be signed off.

As the wonderful team who run the Garden Table will be looking after the Trading Table, **there will be no Garden Table for this meeting only.** The form to be completed is available with this newsletter –just print out a copy, fill it in and bring it with you when you bring in your plants that you want to sell. **Remember - this is a cash only sale and you will need to bring your own bags or boxes for your purchases.**

## MAIN SPEAKER SEPTEMBER



This was Paul Nicholson who is the manager of the Volunteer Programs at the Sydney Botanic Gardens. Paul has had extensive experience as a horticulturist both here and in the USA and we were delighted to have him as a speaker on an intriguing subject which he called '*Perfect Partners—stories of mutualism and symbiosis in the garden*'. In Paul's reasonably scientific presentation, he took us through the role of insects, animals, fungi and plants themselves in the various roles of pollination, plant protection, soil enhancement and showed us how this mutualism serves to bring benefits to each party that is involved. We mostly think of bees as being the main pollinators but in fact many different insects also play a role. For example, fig pollination is a complex, symbiotic relationship where tiny female fig wasps pollinate the flowers of the fig tree,



which is technically a fleshy fruit containing inverted flowers. The wasp enters the fig through a narrow opening, pollinates the female flowers, and deposits its eggs, dying in the process. The fig's internal plant tissue provides the wasp larvae with food. After developing, male wasps emerge first, mate with the female larvae, and then the now preg-

nant females emerge, carrying pollen from the fig tree to find new figs to repeat the cycle. The cycle continues when possums and bats eat the figs and then poop the seeds. These fall to the ground and some will eventually emerge as new plants.

Paul pointed out that there are two types of mutualism - obligatory (where two very different organisms can't live without each other eg. coral and a certain type of algae). The other is facultative mutualism (where two different organisms benefit from their relationship but are not dependent on it (eg. bees pollinating a flower—other insects



Rhizobium root and nodules

and even birds can perform this role just as well).

Symbiosis also occurs underground - where mycorrhiza fungi and plant roots interact with and feed each other. There is much still to be researched about this relationship but it has been shown that groups of trees can be linked together by this relationship between mycorrhiza 'fungus + plant root'. Still underground, it has been shown that bacteria in the form of rhizobium, actinomycetes and cyanobacteria fix atmospheric nitrogen to produce nodules on the roots of trees and plants and thus feed the soil.



A dissected Ant Plant caudex

One of the most fascinating examples of symbiosis would have to be the Ant Plant. This plant grows on a tree in the form of a caudex (swollen woody stem) which is colonised by a particular species of ant. The ant makes chambers inside the caudex which are used for nurseries, storing waste and as ventilation chambers. Paul gave us more examples of symbiosis and mutualism - this remarkable phenomenon which goes on quietly all around us and which most of us are oblivious to. There is still so much more to be discovered and understood.

**Main speaker November:** This will be Libby Birley who will speak to us on Garden Design. Libby offers a range of design services that can be tailored to the client's needs.

**Member speaker October:** This will be Guy Vissel who will speak to us about keeping bees in the backyard.

### IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN OCTOBER by Christine Rethers

Now is the time to get serious about your summer vegie garden and make your selection of what you want to grow. The choice is endless and includes tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchinis, eggplants, beans (bush beans or climbing beans), silver beet and corn. Remember that tomatoes, beans and cucumbers all benefit from having something to support them. It is advisable to put in the structure and then plant your plants with the appropriate spacing. Zucchinis and eggplants need to be given a minimum of 75-100cm between plants as they can grow quite big. Silver beet plants can be grown fairly close together with a minimum of about 30cm between plants.

Ted Shaw has written the following article about growing cauliflowers (which he does very successfully as can be seen from his Show Bench offerings).

Cauliflowers are an easy maintenance crop to grow from autumn to early spring, to be harvested in time to make the vegie patch available for planting of other spring to summer vegetables.

First select a variety suitable for the Sydney climate. I choose Quickheart but there are other good temperate climate varieties. Ideally, plant some seeds in January, more in February, and again in March, aiming to have them ready to harvest over a three-month period rather than all being ready at about the same time. Sow cauliflower seeds in punnets, about 1 cm deep, using a quality seed-raising mix. Keep in a warm spot and water regularly. Germination takes about 10 days. After about 6 weeks, after the seedlings get their first true leaves, harden off the plants by placing them in a safe spot outside and then transplant into the garden about 50cms apart. Water them regularly, fertilise



often as they are hungry plants, and dust or spray regularly to control caterpillars. Cauliflowers can take 10 to 12 weeks from transplant to harvest. Harvest when heads are firm and tight.

Jenny Watsford has kindly supplied this delicious quick and easy way of using a cauliflower:

#### Easy Cauliflower (serves 4 as a side dish)

##### Ingredients

½ large cauliflower cut into small pieces  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
1 clove garlic finely chopped  
2-3 pinches of sea salt  
Zest of 1 lemon  
3 tablespoons chopped chives  
Grated Parmesan to taste

##### Method

Heat the oil to medium high, add the salt then the cauliflower, stirring to coat with oil. Let the pieces brown while stirring. Continue approximately 10 minutes until they are golden and stir in the garlic at the end.

Take off the heat and mix in chives, lemon zest and Parmesan. Add more sea salt if desired. Serve up.

*Happy cooking!*



## YOUR OCTOBER GARDEN by Maureen Smith

After a winter hibernation, the garden is really moving and there is plenty to do.

Before your deciduous shrubs and trees burst into new growth, it's time for some pruning. Most deciduous shrubs and trees handle a one-third pruning well and they come back with renewed vigour and denser growth. As well as trimming into a desired shape, also look to remove any dead wood or crossing/rubbing branches.

Deadheading any spent annuals to encourage new blooms is a good idea.

To support this new growth, that will soon come if it hasn't already started, a good dose of blood and bone or some other all purpose fertiliser will help new and healthy growth to develop.

Another task at this time is thinning out or removing plants that have spread further than you want. In our garden Japanese windflowers are a good example as left alone they will tend to take over. In early spring new seedlings that have come up in the garden have spread far and wide. Fortunately at this size they are easy to remove. Another genus which can become quite rampant is *Persicaria*, perhaps that's why it's called knotweed. However, not all species are bad. For example, *Persicaria virginiana* 'Painters Palette' is a very attractive small shrubby plant which dies away and returns in spring.

There are so many plants you can add to your garden or balcony at this time of the year, both annuals and perennials. Interestingly many annuals act almost like perennials. One that I can think of is *Orlaya*. It produces such a huge amount of seed that you never have to replant it, it does it for you. *Browallia americana* is another one. If you are thinking of something daisy-like, it's hard to go past *Osteospermum*. Their infinite variety, their colour range and their toughness make them hard to beat. When they finish flowering, just cut them back hard and they will come again. They are happy either in containers or in the ground.

The wide range of seedlings available right now makes it easy to brighten up a dead corner of your garden with a pot or two of snapdragons, petunias, pansies, marigolds or lobelia, to name a few.

Treat yourself to a visit to your local nursery or garden centre!

*Happy gardening!*



*Persicaria virginiana* 'Painter's Palette'



Snapdragons



Osteospermum



Orlaya

*As cauliflowers are such good value in the vegie shops at the moment, here is another of Jenny Watsford's recipes.*

### **Cauliflower Cheese Bake** (serves 4 as a side dish)

#### **Ingredients**

½ large cauliflower cut into small pieces  
30 gm butter  
30 gm plain flour  
500 ml milk (may need a bit more if too thick)  
½ teaspoon mustard  
100-150 gm grated cheddar cheese, depending on preference

#### **Method**

Prepare the cauliflower and sauce in the microwave because it is quick. Cook cauliflower pieces covered in lightly salted water for 5 minutes, drain. Do not overcook.

To make the sauce, melt the butter, add the flour, cook for 1 minute. Add the milk gradually, stirring and checking frequently until sauce is thickened. Add mustard, salt and pepper.

Put the cauliflower in a greased baking dish suitable for a conventional oven and pour over the sauce. Top with cheese and bake in a moderate oven for approximately 20 minutes or until the top is nicely browned.