

HORTULANUS

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

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NOVEMBER 2022

COMING EVENTS

- Oct, 29-Nov.6 **Royal Botanic Gardens—Artisans in the Gardens at the Lion Gate Lodge.**
Nov. 1 **KHS Monthly Meeting: Speaker - Kerry Marston ‘Gardens of Ireland’**
Nov.12 **African Violet Association - Display and Sale, Burwood RSL, Shaftesbury Rd, Burwood from 10am to 3pm Entry: \$5**
Dec. 6 **KHS Christmas Meeting: Speaker: George Hoad plus the Christmas Supper**

MEMBER NEWS

The Members' Trading Table at the October meeting was a wonderful opportunity to obtain plants that you rarely see in garden centres and the variety of different plants available was wonderful to see. Hopefully you were able to secure some nice little treasures that evening. The Society would like to encourage more members to try their hand at propagating and to that end we hope to have some talks and demonstrations early next year to get you started. The next Members' Trading Table will be at the March 2023 meeting.



The Society has a fun Christmas meeting planned with a very popular guest speaker, George Hoad. George is a past president of Garden Clubs of Australia and has a wonderful and eclectic garden up on the Mid North Coast at Killabakh which the Society visited some years ago. He is a very entertaining speaker with interests in a number of different areas. He is even known to sometimes break into song! This plus a yummy Christmas supper table will make it a meeting not to be missed.

Don't forget to have a look at our [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/groups/2273344029640713) page which continues to have some interesting postings. We now have 52 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

Our self-drive outing on 20th October to three lovely gardens in the Hills District was well supported by both our members and members from the Wahroonga Garden Club. We gathered at the first garden belonging to Tracey Fleischner and Tracey's husband kindly organised the parking as the nature strip was too boggy for cars. Although threatening, the rain held off and we enjoyed the lovely garden full of roses, poppies, fuchsias, maples and a host of other flowering plants and shrubs. The garden felt really relaxed and the plants were all just doing their own thing. Jenny Watsford then provided morning tea for everyone which was very welcome and quite delicious. We then moved on to Guestlands, the lovely garden of Jenny and Peter Guest. They have built adjacent to their house a row of Tuscan-inspired terraces which they use as accommodation for their Airbnb. However, we were there to see the amazing garden with a semi-formal layout, featuring many different kinds of maples, roses and rose arbours, shrubs and water features and a large dam with camellias and azaleas in the shadier parts of the garden. Unfortunately, we



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had to put up with some heavy showers so didn't get to see the garden on the other side of the dam. We then moved on to the garden of Esther Ronco. This was another very large garden that Esther was still in the process of creating and planting out. It had several distinctly different areas—a large section with very tall and well-established trees that Esther had under-planted with large patches of yellow Clivias and plectranthus. The garden near the house was filled with roses, lavenders and fuchsias as well as numerous bedding plants including some deep-blue delphiniums. As it was still drizzling when we arrived, Esther very kindly invited all 41 of us into her home to eat our lunch and to get a welcome cup of hot tea or coffee. All in all, a very lovely day all round!

Planning will start soon for outings for 2023. The Society tries to have at least two outings each year with one of them being for one or two nights. We have had these longer outings on hold during the Covid crisis but hope to be able to recommence them next year if the Covid situation allows. We would very much like to have input from members as to where they would like to go, so please have a think and send an email to khs.secretary@gmail.com with your thoughts.

SHOW BENCH

It was wonderful that two members have come forward and offered to help with the Show Bench judging. Grateful thanks to Judith Barry and Jenny Percy. We hope they enjoyed their experience judging for the first time and will be happy to continue. We ideally would like to have six judges available at each meeting so that judging can be completed in the time allotted. As not everyone on the judging panel is able to be at every meeting we are still looking for one or two more members who would be willing to try out as a judge. To be a judge you would have a good knowledge of plants in general and have read the Show Bench rules as set out in the booklet each member receives. You would then serve an 'apprenticeship' with one of the experienced judges until you feel confident about judging. If this is something that interests you, please let the Secretary, Christine Rethers, know.

The highlights of the October Show Bench included some lovely early roses and what will no doubt be the last of the camellias. Spring flowers were on show including irises, pansies, some lingering daffodils and pots of Dendrobium kingianum, the native rock orchid. The Succulents and Cacti class had many lovely and interesting exhibits. In the Vegie section, the Spinach and Rhubarb stood out and were of very good quality. As usual, the Decorative section had some excellent and well thought out exhibits. There are two more meetings before the Show Bench competition closes for this year with the winners to be announced in the February Hortulanus and the prizes given out at the February 2023 meeting. The new Show Bench competition will start at that February meeting.

RAFFLE

The October raffle included four very nice plants—a Hippeastrum, a Pimelea, a Scabiosa and a Cyclamen. Also on the table was a heating pad for propagation, a nice vase and some chocolates. Thank you to all the anonymous donors; their donations are always gratefully received.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table will be operating at the November meeting so please remember to bring in any plants you have propagated as well as cuttings from your garden. This is the last Garden Table for the year, so let's make it a good one. There will not be a Garden Table at the Christmas meeting so the next one will be when we return from the Christmas break at the beginning of February.

MAIN SPEAKER OCTOBER

The main speaker was Judith Watson, Secretary of the Tropical Gardens Society of Sydney, who recounted her memories of several trips she has made to Singapore's Gardens by the Bay. Judith noted that construction of the gardens started in 2007 and they were opened in 2011. The total area of the park is just over 100 ha. and consists of outdoor gardens plus two innovative glasshouse structures that are considered the largest in the world. They are built without any additional inner supports. The largest is the Flower Dome which houses thematic gardens with plants from various parts of the world including Australia. The smaller dome houses the Cloud Forest which showcases mostly plants from tropical regions. This dome is truly spectacular as it is possible to take an elevator to the top of the central 'Cloud Mountain' and then



take a circular path down the outside to ground level. The 'Mountain' is completely planted with orchids, ferns, Medinilla, bromeliads and the like. There is also a spectacular 30m waterfall. In the outdoor gardens there is the Supertree Grove—metal structures that resemble trees and are completely planted on the outside. They light up at night to give a fairy-tale look to the area.

If you have not yet had a chance to visit these gardens, it will hopefully now be high on your 'must-do' list.

Main speaker November: This will be Kerry Marston who will take us on a garden trip to Ireland.



MEMBER SPEAKER OCTOBER: Christine Rethers took us on a pictorial visit through the three lovely members' gardens that were open in September.

Member speaker November: Christine Erratt will speak about 'The Dolomites and Beyond'. Sounds intriguing!

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN NOVEMBER by Christine Rethers

It is not too late to plant some summer vegetables but buy seedlings from the nursery as opposed to sowing seeds at this time of the year as it is getting a bit late for them to mature before we start to go into autumn. Most vegetables such as tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, eggplant and pumpkin will require a nice bright and sunny position but lettuce, rocket, spinach and most herbs can handle a shadier spot.

When it comes to tomatoes, make sure you are using a fertiliser suitable for flowers and fruit. Fertilisers with a lot of nitrogen in them will tend to produce a lot of leafy growth as opposed to flowers and these are better suited to leafy vegetables. You can start now taking out lateral growths (growths off the main stem in a leaf axil) as these rarely produce fruit and rob the main plant of vigor. Make sure that the soil is heavily mulched as this will protect the bottom leaves from soil splash and keep in soil moisture. Remember to use stakes for tall growing plants and tie them on as the plant grows. Regular liquid feeds (say every two weeks) and removal of any yellowing leaves should keep your plants growing well. Protection from fruit fly and other beasties is best done using fine white netting, making sure that it comes down to the ground.



One of the best salad greens for summer is rocket (also known as arugula). It is quick-growing from seed, can take either sun or shade and does not suffer from pests—even slugs and snails stay away! It should be picked young and can be dressed with different types of salad dressing. A classic dressing for rocket uses olive oil and balsamic vinegar with shaved or grated parmesan cheese scattered over.

If you have cucurbits (cucumbers, zucchinis and pumpkin) coming into flower, be aware that the male flowers always come first. You will have to wait a bit longer (maybe as much as two to three weeks) until it is warmer for the female flowers to appear (those with a little 'bump' behind them). As many of our city gardens are suffering from a distinct lack of pollinating insects, you may have to do the job yourself. Use a fine paint brush to dip into the centre of a male flower. The yellow pollen from the anther will adhere to the fibres of the brush and you can then transfer this pollen to the female flower by gently rubbing it over the stigma at the centre of the female flower. This should produce fruit but if for some reason it doesn't take, the female flower will simply fall off.



REPOTTING CYMBIDIUM ORCHIDS by Christine Rethers

October and early November is the best time to repot Cymbidium orchids. This should only be done if the pot is overcrowded as these orchids do best when they are just snug in their pot. If you follow these steps you should be able to do this repotting successfully.



- Remove the whole plant from the pot. Sometimes it may be necessary to break the pot in order to free the orchid.
- Take a knife or another strong tool and use it to lever between the bulbs (pictured). Separate the clump into two or more sections.
- Remove any leafless, dead-looking or squashy bulbs but make sure you leave a single row of these back bulbs next to the new leafy bulbs. These will provide food for the actively growing bulbs. You should always have several bulbs (three or more) that are joined together on each division.
- Shake out as much of the old bark as you can and check the roots for damaged, rotted or tangled sections which should be removed.



- Take care not to damage new and emerging growths. These will be the new bulbs for the year after next year's flowering. (If you leave the repotting until autumn, these new shoots will most likely be emerging flower stems.)
- When you select your new pots, make sure they have plenty of drainage holes. Good drainage is critically important for orchids.
- Using medium-sized orchid bark, put some mix into the base of the pot. Sit the orchid in the pot and fill around it with the mix. Make sure that each bulb is sitting above the mix.
- Put the new pots in a shady location and water when required. They can be



moved out into a sunnier position once they start growing again. You can put a few fertiliser pellets such as Dynamic Lifter on top of the bark. After Christmas, start a regular liquid feed (once every two weeks) with a flower-promoting fertiliser. However, newly repotted Cymbidiums may not flower the first year after repotting.

- If you wish, any of the firm but discarded back-bulbs can be saved and planted into a small pot with some bark and put into a shady spot. Some of these will eventually shoot and provide you with new plants.



YOUR NOVEMBER GARDEN by Maureen Smith

▶ We have reached the last month of spring, but who would know it by the weather? The only consolation is we won't have a summer of water restrictions. Even with all the rain, it's still a good idea to keep your mulch levels up as it suppresses weeds and as it breaks down, it nourishes your soil.

▶ If you put aside dahlia tubers last season, they should be shooting by now so are ready to go into the ground. We have given up lifting ours unless the clump gets too big. Our winters are just not cold enough to warrant it. We just cut the plants to ground level and cover with some lucerne mulch. Don't forget to put in strong stakes if you are growing the tall dahlias and make sure you tie them on as they grow. Otherwise, you could find them all on the ground if we get some strong wind. If you don't want them to grow too tall, you can pinch out the top when they get to the height you want. They will then develop multiple flower heads. It is important to deadhead dahlias to keep the flowers coming.

▶ If you would like to increase the intensity of the bracts on your Christmas Bush, a light dusting of sulfate of iron this month will deepen the colour.

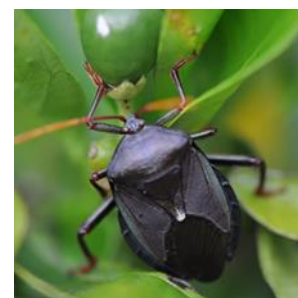
▶ A sometimes-tedious chore, but well worth it, is dead heading especially of your annuals like petunias and the like. It will reward you with repeat flowerings. If a plant, for instance many of the daisy family, has too many flower heads to prune individually, a light haircut all over will do the job just fine. Don't forget to do the same to your lavenders to keep them flowering well. It also helps to keep the bushes nice and neat.

▶ As the weather warms up, our native bees become more active so don't forget to provide not only flowers for them but also a home. It doesn't have to be an elaborate bee hotel. A block of wood with several holes drilled in it suits many of them just fine.

▶ Have you ever thought of planting turmeric? If so, now is the time. Just get a fresh young tuber from your greengrocer and plant it just like ginger. It will also grow in a pot and that has the advantage that you can move it around. You will be rewarded with a very attractive plant and about next May, you will be able to harvest a large clump of turmeric. It is purported to be very good for you as well as being an essential ingredient in many Asian dishes.

▶ One final job is to replace those pots of spring annuals with some summer ones. Petunias are hard to beat and the spreading variety will soon fill a large pot.

▶ If you are growing any kind of citrus, keep your eyes open for the dreaded citrus bug—the bronze orange beetle. When they emerge from their eggs they are small and green but as they develop they go through a second stage when they emerge as an orange beetle and then in their final stage they are black and have reached 25mm in size. In all stages, they attack the new foliage and leave it limp and wilting. Control is difficult but if there are not too many, removal by hand obviously works but take great care not to be 'sprayed' by the insect especially anywhere near your eyes (they are not called 'stink bugs' for nothing!) Rather than using any poison sprays, try spraying, starting early in the season, with Eco Oil on a regular basis (every 2-3 weeks) as this deters them greatly. Eco-Neem is also recommended, again sprayed regularly, and this has a slightly residual effect.



Citrus bug



Petunias



Turmeric



Christmas Bush



Native Bee Hotel