

# HORTULANUS

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

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## NOVEMBER 2023

### COMING EVENTS

- Oct. 2-Nov.11** Royal Botanic Gardens—'Entangled' exhibition at the Victoria Lodge. 10am-5pm Entry free. Artworks for sale.
- Nov. 1** KHS Monthly Meeting: Speaker - Ross Rapmund from Harvest Seeds and Native Plants
- Nov. 11** African Violet Association - Display and Sale, Burwood RSL, Shaftesbury Rd, Burwood from 10am to 2pm Entry: \$5
- Dec. 6** KHS Christmas Meeting: Speaker - Mark Schuster, Technical Bushfire Officer, plus the Christmas Supper

### MEMBER NEWS

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Gloria Myers on 8th October 2023 at the Northern Beaches Hospital after a short illness. Gloria and her husband Hugh were stalwarts of the Society for so very many years (at least over 30 years) and were much loved by us all. Gloria kept us well fed and watered at all our meetings over this time and her calm efficiency was appreciated by the many who passed through our doors. The Society has sent flowers. Her funeral service was held on 17th October 2023 and it can be viewed at this link for up to two months: <https://gregoryandcarr.com.au/live-streaming/client/?nid=4240d707-ca44-4a09-80b0-f5922367aaf3>

Members, family and friends are invited to the Society's Christmas lunch which is being held at the Terrey Hills Golf and Country Club on Tuesday, 21 November 2023. We have been going to this venue for around 10 years now and have never been disappointed with either the food or the service. In addition, it is in a delightful location overlooking the greens. If you would like to join us, just let Helen know at the next meeting or send in the attached form. You are welcome to make up a table or sit with your particular friends, again just let Helen know. The invitation gives details of the menu and the cost will be \$75 per person. We need to receive your reply by 14 November.

The Society's Christmas meeting will include this year the 'Great Agapanthus Seed Guessing Competition'. This has been devised by none other than Bob Ballinger who will give us a heads-up on the competition at the November meeting. A lovely prize awaits the winner of this competition. More on this at the November meeting. All this plus a yummy Christmas supper table will make it a meeting not to be missed.

Have you ever read or seen a copy of *Our Gardens*? It is a 40-page magazine published quarterly by the Garden Clubs of Australia with which the Society is affiliated. The editorial team is comprised entirely of keen gardeners who devote their time on a voluntary basis to ensure we may all have an interesting and informative magazine to enjoy each season. Judy Horton OAM, a well-respected horticulturalist and a member of the Horticultural Media Association of Australia, leads the editorial team as the magazine's editor and so you can be assured of a high quality publication. One of our own members, Virginia Fischer, is also part of this excellent team as the proof-reader. At an annual subscription rate of \$15 to Society members, it represents excellent value for money. If you have never subscribed before, please consider investing in yourself and your gardening knowledge in 2024 and become a subscriber! The cost of \$15 for four magazines delivered directly to your door is a small price to pay for such a professional publication.

Subscriptions should be paid by direct deposit to the KHS CBA account:

BSB 062-173, Account No. 00900110, noting your name and OG (for *Our Gardens*).

Penny would appreciate an email from you when you have done that. We are hoping

to finalise all payments by Friday, 10 November 2023. If you have any questions, please direct them to Penny Whipp at [nita1523@bigpond.com](mailto:nita1523@bigpond.com) or phone her on 94814401.

### Our Gardens



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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

The outing to Berry was very successful and further on in the newsletter there is a full report. Luckily the weather was perfect. Planning will start soon for outings for 2024. The Society tries to have at least two outings each year with one of them being for one or two nights. 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](mailto:khs.secretary@gmail.com) with your thoughts.

## SHOW BENCH

The October Show Bench was very colourful this month with a lovely collection of Roses, Pansies, Irises and Native Plants as some of the highlights. There were also a number of very nice photos in the Pictorial section. The vegie gardens must be doing well as there were some excellent exhibits on display. This year's Show Bench competition is drawing to a close with the December Show Bench being the last meeting before the finalists will be known. The awards will be given out at the February 2024 meeting when the new Show Bench competition will start for 2024. If you didn't participate this year, think about having a go next year—it's a lot of fun to join in and in addition it gives everyone so much pleasure to see the lovely flowers and vegetables you bring from your own garden.

## GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table will be operating again 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.

## RAFFLE

The Society provided three very nice plants. A special 'thank you' to all the anonymous donors; their donations are always gratefully received.

## TRADING TABLE

The Trading Table did brisk business at the October meeting. Seven members brought in plants they had propagated and quite a few of these found new homes. The Trading Table is where you will find some rare and unusual plants and you may end up going home with a real treasure. We would like to encourage more of our members to propagate some of their more special plants so that they can share them around. The next Trading Table will be at our March 2024 meeting so there is plenty of time to get some new plants started.



## MAIN SPEAKER OCTOBER



Our speaker was Prof. Michelle Leishman from the School of Natural Sciences at Macquarie University. Her current research focuses on understanding the success of invasive plants, plant and vegetation responses to climate change, plant conservation and adaptation under climate change, and urban green space. Michelle showed us a map of urban green space where remnant native vegetation still exists. Other green spaces are made up of parks, street trees and gardens. These urban green spaces provide a multitude of benefits including energy savings from shaded buildings, habitat for a diversity of insects and animals and reduction of the heat island effect, reduction of pollution from particulate matter, reduced runoff and increased infiltration.

However, as Michelle pointed out, Australia's climate is getting hotter and drier, with more extremes of weather conditions. Built-on surfaces such as housing estates, roads, factories, etc. contribute to this heat island effect. Vegetation has the ability to reduce these temperatures by 6°C on a very hot day. Urban greening projects are being set up in cities around Australia and targets are being set to increase the amount of trees in urban areas including here in Ku-ring-gai. The aim is for Sydney to be cooled by an extra five million trees by 2030.

However, there is competition from the need for more urban housing and from developers for the available urban open space. Much of the pressure comes from the failure of planning departments of State and Local Councils to place a proper value on trees.

In addition to the above mentioned pressure, quite a large percentage of the existing tree canopy comes from trees planted many years ago that are now not coping very well with the increasing heat. Up to 10% of street trees have suffered already from heat damage and this will only increase. Michelle pointed to the importance of species selection and increasing diversity of vegetation to cope with reduced water availability, increased heat and pests and path-

ogens. At Macquarie they have built a climate-ready species selection tool. The data they have collected will be available to the general public shortly at <https://whichplantwhere.com.au>. This covers more than 2500 species and shows the suitability of plants according to postcode, gives information on canopy area and calculates the shade area provided plus environmental tolerances, appearance and uses.

To finish her presentation, Michelle pointed out that in greening cities not all plants are of equal value and it is important to not grow invasive plants such as privet and lantana and to be aware that some plants such as figs will seek out leaking water infrastructure and cause major blockages with their invasive root systems.

**Main speaker November:** This will be Ross Rapmund from Harvest Seeds and Native Plants who will speak to us about Propagating Indigenous Plants.

**MEMBER SPEAKER OCTOBER:** This was Bob Ballinger who took us on a pictorial visit to the Daffodil Festival at Rydal. What a pretty place this is at Daffodil time! Bob's photography was excellent as usual and he really captured the feel of the place. Those who went on the Society's trip in September to Rydal no doubt enjoyed reliving this lovely visit.

**Member speaker November:** Bob Ballinger will give a short presentation on Agapanthus.

### **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 rather than flowers so these fertilisers 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.

One way of ensuring a good supply of bees in the vegie garden is to use companion planting. This means planting flowering plants like marigolds, borage, calendula, cosmos, lavender and (my favourite) Thai basil. Just scatter some of these through your vegetables and they should make a difference to the pollination success rate.



*Thai Basil*

### **KHS TRIP TO THE BERRY GARDEN FESTIVAL by Maureene Smith**

Leaving Sydney on a warm sunny day, we first travelled to the Botanic Garden at Wollongong for a short visit and morning tea, of course. The gardens are beautifully laid out with very clearly defined areas over 27 hectares. The blossom trees were in full flower in the Flowering Trees and Shrubs section, home to many different exotic plants. The Camellia section includes many varieties not commonly found and as there is now a restriction on importing camellias into Australia (something I did not know), this makes them extra special. Our visit here was only short as we soon moved on to Berry and the purpose of our trip, a visit to the Berry Gardens Festival.

Over the two days we visited 6 gardens in Berry and its surrounds, all very different but all having something of interest to make them worthwhile visiting. Our first was a small cottage-type garden literally packed full of different plants. The tiny front garden was dominated by a mature *Cercis* 'Forest Pansy' whose lovely burgundy foliage provided shade for many typical cottage garden varieties, aquilegias, poppies and lavenders to name a few. Purple Bearded Iris growing around a tiered fountain were a feature of the backyard, the borders of which were crammed with perennials overlooked by a large *Acer rubrum* and an old persimmon tree.

After a picnic lunch in a nearby park, we visited a very different garden. The owner was a Thai who loved to cook her native cuisine and the garden reflected this. It abounded in plants for culinary use. Several types of chili, a lot of large Thai eggplant shrubs in flower but not yet in fruit. Many different herbs were planted throughout and a thriving beehive had taken over an old treehouse.

Variety was certainly the order of the day for the gardens we visited. The last of the day was a large property with an amazing collection of plants, a lot of which are for sale. Large stands of clumping bamboo lined the entrance walkway and wandering paths led to rare bromeliads in one direction to mature native grass trees in the other direction. You could take one home for \$1,800.00 but we all declined. Yuccas, cordylines, cacti, in fact everything for a dry or tropical garden were available. After this extraordinary garden, we repaired to our hotel for a welcome shower and feet up before dinner as it had been unseasonably hot, but a cool change was promised for the morrow.

Next morning after a little free time in Berry, we went to a large forest garden built around an 1870's school. The earlier owners had planted many trees which had matured beautifully and now many are surrounded by gardens generously filled with different plants such as scadoxus, hippeastrums and neomarica. A series of garden rooms, many containing quirky garden ornaments to suit the plantings, were another delightful feature of this lovely garden. The icing on the cake was that we also had morning tea here prepared by the local CWA, a choice of slices or scones with jam and cream!

Another large but very different garden was next. It was outside Berry, on a road to Kangaroo Valley. It operated as a luxury retreat with private lodges for guests. Apart from around the main residence, the gardens were mainly spacious lawns with small planted areas. There were 2 dams, one of which had a large water feature.

After lunch at the local Bowling Club, we went to visit our final garden before starting home. This garden featured an old 1862 cottage on an acre of land on the Broughton Mill creek. The front garden was a mix of ornamental and native plants dominated by a large old red cedar. At the rear before a steep descent to a paddock was a terrace with a series of wicking beds (self-watering), heavily planted with vegetables and herbs. Southern European spinach seemed to attract a lot of attention as no one seemed to recognise it. The owner assured us it was the best spinach she had ever planted, both for taste and productivity. You can get seeds at Quality Garden Supplies in Chatswood. In the paddock were chickens, citrus plants and a series of compost bins. No food waste on this property goes to landfill, they proudly claim. There was also a large rose picking garden so all in all, an interesting garden to visit.

A great visit to Berry and time now to hop on the bus and safely home, thanks to our excellent driver, Jimmy.



## IN YOUR NOVEMBER GARDEN by Maureene Smith

Now is a great time to plant hydrangeas. They like a shaded spot in well drained soil and need you to keep the water up to them. With *Hydrangea macrophylla* your soil type will determine the continuing colour. That means that if you want a blue flower, treat the soil with aluminium sulphate. Alternatively for pink flowers, give the soil some lime. White usually stays white. If you like white hydrangeas, you might like to think about Oakleaf Hydrangeas as these have the added bonus of beautiful autumn foliage after flowering. Having said they like a shaded spot, there are now some new *Hydrangea paniculata* that are more sun tolerant.

Other plants to think about planting now are petunias and calibrachos. These spreading types of petunias will quickly cover a wide area. They come in beautiful showy colours and flower for many weeks if deadheaded when needed. Calibrachoa, also of the Solanaceae family, looks like a small petunia. The plant is often sold as a 'Million Bells'. It trails beautifully so is good for pots or baskets and comes in many colours. It has the advantage over petunia in that it does not require deadheading quite as frequently to produce more flowers.

It's probably time to remove the last of the dying foliage from your bulbs. Hopefully, they will have provided sufficient nutrition for next year's flowers and you can now get rid of their unsightly leaves. A good trick I only learnt this year is to grow your bluebells in the same bed as your summer flowering salvias. When you cut back the salvias to the ground as we do, the bluebells are just ready to come forth. Now the bluebells are over, the new growth of the salvias is covering up those unsightly leaves.

It's warming up so don't forget to check your mulch so that you don't have areas of bare soil that will dry out quickly. Have some shade cloth handy to throw over those special plants, even umbrellas will help on particularly hot days. Think about moving potted plants to a shadier position.

Make the most of the native orchids—they have been blooming so beautifully this past month but will soon be finished. If you brought them out into more light while they were flowering, now is the time to find them a cooler and more shady spot. This goes for your cymbidium too. If your orchid pot has become very crowded, now is the best time to divide them up and replot the pieces into a nice new bark mix. Debcos has a good mix that is readily available at your garden centre. Remember, when dividing orchids, always leave one or two of the old pseudobulbs on the piece you are replotting as these will continue to feed the new emerging pseudobulbs.

Give your roses a boost and water in some rose food. While you are about it, check for aphids and rub or hose them off. As your natives finish their spring flowering, give them a light prune to keep them tidy. Your azaleas and camellias will appreciate a good feed with a suitable fertiliser at this time of the year and they will thank you for it with beautiful flowers next year.

Trying to keep the water up to your garden during this run of particularly dry weather is not an easy task. As we are often being told now, this is the 'new norm' so we will need to accommodate it as best we can. Have a think about what you could change in your garden so that you do not end up with stressed and dying plants during these hot spells. Some suggestions:

- ▶ Think about providing more summer shade by perhaps using a screen or planting some hopefully fast-growing trees.
- ▶ Make sure you put a deep layer of mulch over your garden at the end of winter each year.
- ▶ Provide a watering system—these range from a plumbed-in professional system that can be operated from your mobile phone to simply laying soaker hoses in those places that are quick to dry out.



*Hydrangea paniculata*



*Hydrangea quercifolia*  
(Oak Leaf Hydrangea)



*Calibrachoa*