

# HORTULANUS

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

JUNE 2021



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## COMING EVENTS

**1 June** **KHS Meeting**, Turramurra Uniting Church Hall, 10 Turramurra Ave, Turramurra 7pm for a 7.30pm start

**6 July** **KHS Meeting**, St Ives Community Hall, Memorial Avenue, St Ives. 7pm for a 7.30pm start

**10/11 July** Annual Camellia Show, Ravenswood School, Henry St, Gordon Sat 1.30-4.30pm, Sun 10am-4pm.  
Enquiries: [nswcamellias@hotmail.com](mailto:nswcamellias@hotmail.com) or Ph. 0418 200 139

**18/19 Sept** Plant Lovers Fair, Kariong. Sat. 8am-4pm Sun. 9am-3pm. Enquiries: [www.plantloversfair.com.au](http://www.plantloversfair.com.au)

## MEMBER NEWS

### **\*\*Please note the change of venue for the June meeting\*\***

The change of venue is due to the continuing unavailability of the St Ives Community Hall which has not yet had all the defects from its refurbishment rectified. We are very hopeful that we will be back in the St Ives hall for our July meeting. For the June meeting we have secured a large meeting area in the Turramurra Uniting Church so we will be able to hold our meeting but unfortunately not our Show Bench. However, we will be able to have our Garden Table and the Raffle. The Show Bench awards for 2019-2020 will be given out at the commencement of the meeting so if you are involved, we do hope you will be able to be there to receive your award.

For our first meeting since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, we ask you to observe the following requirements:

- If you are feeling at all unwell, please do not attend.
- Please sign in at the front desk, preferably using your own pen. This is for insurance purposes.
- If you are able, please use the QR code that is displayed on the way in.
- The chairs in the hall will be spaced at 1.5m. Please do not move them.
- Hand sanitisers will be supplied at several places in the hall—please use them.
- The wearing of masks is not mandatory but you are welcome to do so if you wish.
- Please make sure you observe social-distancing at all times.
- At supper, we will serve tea or coffee at the counter and individually-wrapped cakes and biscuits will be available on the table. Please observe social distancing while waiting to be served and around the supper table.

As required by the NSW Government, we have drawn up a Covid Safety plan, a copy of which is being sent with this newsletter. Our Covid Safety Officer is Doreen Clark.

With the recommencement of meetings, we are looking for volunteers to help with a variety of activities. Please let Christine know if you are able to help out with any of the following:

Front desk—give out name badges, help receive money for events, membership fees, etc.

Supper—set up, serve and clear away

Set up of the Show Bench and/or judging

Garden Table—set up and serve

Show Bench Point Score recorder (some knowledge of Excel desirable but not essential)

Trading Table (twice a year) - check in plants, set up and serve

For some of these jobs you would need to be available before the official start of the meeting (say between 6.30 and 7pm). Don't forget, if you are new to KHS this is a very good and quick way to get to know your fellow members and we can't function the way we would like without your help. If you would like to be involved, please email Christine ([khs.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:khs.secretary@gmail.com)) or phone on 9449 6245.

Don't forget to have a look at our Facebook page which continues to have some interesting postings. We now have 47 contributors and it has proved very useful in answering questions such as finding out plant names and helping members with problems with their gardens. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2273344029640713>.

### Speakers:

For our first meeting in over 15 months, we have two guest speakers coming. The first will be Lorraine Emerson who is the new president of Garden Clubs of Australia. She will bring us up-to-date on the big restructuring of the organisation that has taken place in the past few months and also tells us about the GCA Biennial Convention which will be taking place in Townsville in September.

The second speaker will be Helen Wallace, secretary of the Camellia Research Society. Many of us have camellias growing in our gardens, so Helen's talk will be of particular interest especially as our camellias this year look like they are going to put on a spectacular show, thanks to the very favourable weather conditions we have had.

## OUTINGS

After the successful visit to the Hunter Valley Gardens, we are now planning a 1-day trip in the Sydney area in late August/early September to Auburn Botanic Gardens to see the beautiful Japanese garden and cherry blossoms, the E G Waterhouse Camellia Garden, Caringbah and a visit to one or two private gardens in the area. We will be able to give more details closer to the time.

## SHOW BENCH

There will be no Show Bench at the June meeting but we expect to commence the Show Bench Point Score Competition with the July meeting when we are back to our usual venue at St Ives.

## GARDEN TABLE

This will be operating at this meeting so please bring along your plants and cuttings. However, we do ask that you put these in plastic bags so we don't leave any mess (the Church has a carpeted floor where we are meeting). These will be for sale very cheaply and the proceeds go to help your Society.

## RAFFLE

We will be having a raffle. The Society always provides an interesting plant for the raffle but we encourage you to contribute also by bringing in something nice from your garden, plants, books, garden accessories and the like. However, please remember these should be something you would like to win yourself so should be of good quality. The tickets are 3 for \$2 and the proceeds go to help your Society.

## AUTUMN COLOUR by Maureene Smith

A recent visit to the Kosciuszko National Park and other parts of the Snowy area made me appreciate how much a burst of autumn colour is able to lift the spirits and what a joy this can bring to a home garden. Of course, not many suburban gardens are large enough for a Poplar or Quercus Scarlet Oak but there are still plenty of smaller varieties to choose from.



One that gives joy three seasons of the year is a Malus (Crab Apple). There are several varieties available that provide abundant blossom in spring, apples for jelly in summer and then beautiful vari-coloured foliage in autumn. Prunus Nigra (Flowering Cherry) and Pyrus (Flowering Pear) will also add an abundance of blossom in spring and ever changing foliage in autumn.

Cercis canadensis (Forest Pansy) is another flowering tree with great autumn foliage and growing to 5metres, it is still manageable in

many suburban gardens.

Other small trees providing autumn colour are of course the Acers. There is an infinite variety of the Acer palmatum (Japanese Maple) coming as they do in every shade and shape. Lagerstroemia (Crepe Myrtle) are known to many of us and as you can now buy miniature varieties, they will fit in just about



anywhere. They have the added benefit of their beautiful bark when leafless. Of course, it is not only the autumn-colouring trees that can enliven our gardens with that pop of colour in autumn and winter, there are many shrubs and plants that can do that, some of which give you bright colour all year round.

In my own garden, *Iresine herbstii* 'Beefsteak' is one which, together with a *Cordyline fruticosa rubra*, lifts a dark corner, together with an old favourite, *Iresine* 'Chicken gizzards' for contrast. Many *Salvias* flower throughout autumn and far into winter. *Salvia involucrata* 'Timboon' will give you a brilliant red or for a beautiful splash of gold, the easy to grow *Tagetes lemonii* (Bush Marigold) would be a good choice.



Iresine



Salvia involucrata



Tagetes lemonii

Whatever you choose, now is the time to be planting them out, before the winter ground is too cold to give them a good start. Some of the best places to see autumn colour are well worth a visit, even if you are not planning to grow some yourself. The Royal Botanic Gardens, either in Sydney or Mount Tomah have lovely displays, as do the Botanic Garden at Auburn or Wahroonga Park. Even the trees in our local streets are colouring up nicely.

**HUGH'S CORNER**  
**WHAT SHOULD I**  
**BE DOING IN**  
**MY GARDEN?**



▶ Winter has finally arrived in our gardens, the grass has slowed right down and almost stopped growing so give it one more going over with the mower and edger. This is not so much to tidy up the lawn but to make it easier to spot the weeds that the mower cannot reach like oxalis and early winter grass. If the lawn is damp, they will be easy to pull

out so down on your knees and look for those young weeds that are just getting a start in your lawn. Get them out now before they get a good start in your lawn.

▶ Have a look at your concrete or stone paths and driveway. Are they turning green with mould? That mould can become very slippery so you need to get rid of it. If you have a water blaster such as Karcher, use it - they usually do a good job. Chemicals are available to do the job but there is always the chance of the chemical running off and damaging your lawn or garden. Burning it with a heating torch will get rid of the mould for a relatively short time only.

▶ When was the last time you turned over your compost heap? If you have not done it for a while, step to it with your garden fork. By aerating your heap, you will speed up the composting process. While you are at it, check the heap for moisture content. It should be nice and damp but not wet.

▶ June is camellia time. Camellias are ideal for a shaded spot where sun-loving plants will not flourish. The shiny foliage enlivens shady areas by reflecting light rather than absorbing it. In fact, any shiny leafed shrub adds an extra dimension to a garden with the gleams of light and a real sparkle in the sun. When planting camellias, make sure they are planted where they do not receive direct early morning sun in the winter as this can burn any wet or frost-touched buds or flowers which causes them not to open or to go brown. This applies particularly to doubles.

▶ Do you have water tanks that you installed during the last long dry period? When was the last time you had a look at the entry filter? It is about time to have a look at it. Those old dry leaves will break down and eventually get into your tank and it won't take too many to block your outlet tap which is not a good thing at all. They can also get into your irrigation system so get rid of anything lying in the filter and shine a strong torch inside the tank and see what is going on. You might just save yourself a lot of trouble.

▶ Keep your eye on any Cape Honeysuckle (*Tacoma capensis*) that you have and don't hesitate to cut it back. It will come back again quite quickly. The Cape Honeysuckle is a vigorous plant and can get out of control quite quickly. Strangely enough, It can also be cut as a hedge or even as a large pot plant but it should always be kept under control. It has a very nice red trumpet-like flower but when planted in the ground, it can send a runner along the ground where you usually can't see it and next time you look there is a new plant heading for the sky two metres or more away from the parent.

▶ Many of us have small electric shredders that we use to shred vegetation for the compost heap where it breaks down quickly. The circular saw in these machines is usually not of a particularly high quality. When your saw blade wears out, take it along to Bunnings's and match it to a new blade but make sure the new blade's teeth are tungsten tipped. The new blades will not be cheap but they will stay sharp a lot longer and will also cut much better. The hole in the centre and the diameter of the blade are the two main dimensions to check and should match your old one. Thickness of the blade is usually not a problem.

▶ If you are operating garden tools or for that matter any electrical equipment from the 240-volt mains, make sure you have an Earth Leakage Circuit Breaker plugged into the power point. I have mentioned this before but it is safety first at all times when using 240v. It is too easy to cut the cable with a power garden tool. They are readily available at Bunnings and cost around \$40.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



**Question?** What is the difference between sulphate of potash and sulphate of ammonia?

**Answer:** Sulphate of potash is a form of potassium whereas sulphate of ammonia is mainly nitrogenous although it does contain some sulphur. Sulphate of potash is used to enhance the colour and quality of flowers, fruit and vegetables as

well as providing some measure of resistance to disease. Sulphate of ammonia is used to correct any nitrogen deficiency and promote leafy growth.

**Question?** The other day I noticed some little blue and red wasps flying low over my lawn and my neighbour said I should spray them as they were lawn grubs and that my lawn would die if I did not get rid of them. Is this right?

**Answer:** Your neighbour may be right on one point and that is that parts of your lawn may die shortly after the appearance of the little red and blue wasps but not because of the appearance of the wasps. On the contrary, these ichneumon wasps are predators of the army worm, a lawn grass caterpillar. The wasps lay their eggs on the caterpillars and once the eggs hatch, the caterpillars are slowly eaten by the wasp larvae. The presence of the wasps usually is a sign that the caterpillars are about so it would pay you to have a look around your lawn. Ignore your neighbour's advice and wait till late in the afternoon when the wasps have returned to their nest before attempting to spray your lawn for the caterpillars. Under no circumstances try to kill the wasps they are indeed the good guys.

**Question?** I have been told I should top dress my lawn with good soil every year. I don't know why this is done. Is it really necessary?

**Answer:** No, it is not necessary. It is an old practice that has gone by the board these days. Best practice is to spread out new soil over the lawn only to level out holes and bumps. Applying gypsum in the spring and autumn will do a good job of opening up clay and any compacted soil.

**Question?** Should I raise the mower blades during the winter or leave them where they are?

**Answer:** The function of the grass blades is to capture the light and convert it into energy in the form of carbohydrates which become food for the grass. As the day length shortens during the winter it would be a good idea to raise the blades of the mower and increase the length of the grass leaf to capture a greater amount of the available light.

**Question?** I am a bit puzzled as to what is the difference between sulphate of potash and muriate of potash.

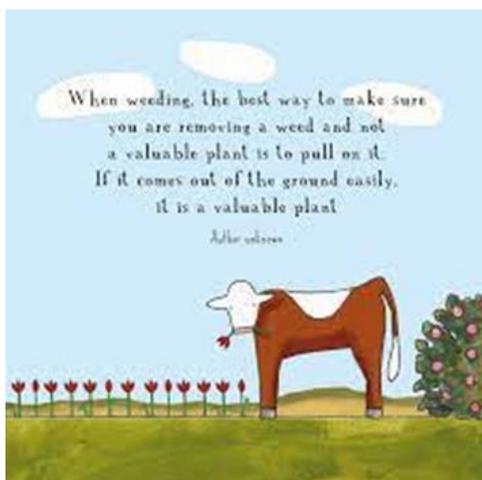
**Answer:** Sulphate of potash is better known as potassium sulphate and is a combination of sulphur and potassium. Muriate of potash is potassium chloride, a combination of potassium and chloride. Although potassium chloride contains 46% potassium and is cheaper than potassium sulphate with its 40% potassium, the latter is preferred because an excess of chloride in the soil can be quite harmful.

**Question?** The time has come to feed my citrus tree so I decided to use reasonably fresh horse manure which I spread rather thickly around the tree. The tree subsequently died. I did not think that horse manure was strong enough to kill a tree. So, what killed the tree?

**Answer:** Unfortunately, you did. Although organic fertilisers and manures are generally less likely to cause problems than chemical fertilisers, fresh horse manure is fairly high in available nutrients so when used excessively, it will cause damage or death to the plant. Horse manure should be left to mature in a corner for from 4 to 6 months. That will take all the bite out of it.

**Question?** I have used one of the seaweed extracts for years and it has been quite successful but I recently heard that liquid seaweed products are not fertilisers. Is this right?

**Answer:** Yes, that is right. Seaweed extracts when applied to the soil, stimulate the millions of soil organisms and these in turn make whatever nutrients that may be available in the soil more readily available to the plants. The resultant improvement in plant growth might give the impression that the seaweed has some fertilising ability but in fact it serves to demonstrate that good healthy soil on its own can produce good strong growth in plants.



**Question?** I have heard about zeolite but do not know how to use it or how it works.

**Answer:** Zeolite is a mineral that is mined in Australia and because of its honeycomb structure, when mixed in the soil or potting mix, attracts and retains fertilisers and releases them when plant needs them, thus preventing soil nutrient leaching. It is suitable for virtually all plants.

Regards  
Hugh