

HORTULANUS

Official Publication of Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc.
APRIL 2022



President: Evelyn Mason, 7 Deakin Place, East Killara (0412 812 824)
Secretary and Editor: Christine Rethers, 1 Wolsten Ave, Turramurra 2074 (9449 6245)
Treasurer: Robyn Brown (0408 295 601)

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

COMING EVENTS

- 5 April** KHS Monthly Meeting: Taylor Harrison, Active Seniors Health Centre - Staying Active for Gardening
- 9/10 April** Collectors' Plant Fair, Hawkesbury Race Course, Clarendon.
<https://www.collectorsplantfair.com.au/>
- 10 April** Keith and Maureen Smith -Plant Sale in support of the National Breast Cancer Foundation, 45 Parkland Ave, Lane Cove North from 10am to 3pm (Covid regulations permitting)
- 23 April** KHS Trip to the Southern Highlands (details see below)
- 30 April/1 May** Roses by the Seaside -Aust. National Rose Championships and Conference, Kiama
Enq. rsnswsecretary@gmail.com; Phone: 0422 157 353
- 3 May** KHS Monthly Meeting:

MEMBER NEWS

What a wet and horrible evening greeted us for our first meeting back in the St Ives Community Hall! Notwithstanding the weather, some 54 intrepid members and friends met up and enjoyed the activities provided. The Members' Trading Table was very well stocked with all kinds of plants, many of which will never be found in the local nurseries. Trading was brisk and a large number of plants changed hands.



Don't forget to have a look at our **Facebook** 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

Your society is planning to visit the **Southern Highlands on Saturday, 23 April 2022** for the Autumn Gardens Weekend and Plant Sale at the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens. We will visit the Plant Sale first, as soon as we arrive, followed by three of the open gardens. Morning tea will be provided but we ask that you bring your own lunch so that we can keep the costs down. The cost of the coach and garden entries is \$75. A booking form is included with this Hortulanus. Bookings may be made with Helen Gilkes at the April meeting or by mail to 20A Norramurra Avenue, North Turramurra 2074. Don't wait too long to book as we will close the bookings on Friday, 8 April.

SHOW BENCH

Following the enormous amount of rain that Sydney has experienced over the past month or so, the Show Bench was a little sparse but still held some lovely surprises. Pride of place this month went to the roses and the dahlias with some splendid exhibits. Of special note in some of the other classes were the Grevilleas in the native flower class and the cut flower classes had some interesting exhibits. Unfortunately, there was not much in the vegie section although the Spaghetti Squash was unusual and not something that we have seen before on the Show Bench. As usual the decorative section had some lovely exhibits as did the pictorial section.

RAFFLE

There were quite a large number of prizes this month with the Society providing a lovely pink hibiscus, a fuchsia and some Garden Clubs of Australia magazines. Thank you to the members who donated the other prizes.

The opinions and recommendations published in this newsletter are those of the authors and the Ku-ring-gai Horticultural Society Inc. takes no responsibility for any losses or damages that may be attributed to the use or misuse of any material or opinion in this publication. Its contents are protected by copyright and no part may be reproduced without permission of the authors.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table will be operating again at the April meeting so bring along the plants you have been propagating and any interesting cuttings. Sales from this table will be used to help the Society.

MARCH MAIN SPEAKER



Libby Cameron, President of Mosman Garden Club and a tour leader for Ross Garden Tours, took us through many of the fabulous gardens she has visited in India with her tour groups. From what she described, Libby has travelled the length and breadth of India and visited many of the famous palaces with their amazing and often historic gardens. Apart from flowers in these gardens, what was very apparent was the use of flowers for the decoration of houses and people. Flowers are especially important for the many religious festivals and special family celebrations. Blooms of flowers especially marigolds are picked and threaded into garlands, to be worn or to decorate rooms. Many different flowers are used but roses, carnations, lotus, and jasmine are frequently favoured. The flower heads are often laid out in colourful patterns on the floor of rooms and terraces and displayed in very large



shallow bowls as house decorations.

Libby took us to some of the great gardens of India. A number of these date as far back as the 16th century and are known as Paradise gardens. They are of Iranian origin and are often referred to as Islamic gardens. They are formal, symmetrical and are often enclosed. The most traditional form is a rectangular garden split into four quarters with a pond in the center, a four-fold design called *chahar bagh* (four gardens). One of the most important elements of paradise gardens is water with ponds, canals, rills, and fountains all being common features. Scent is an essential element with fruit-bearing trees and flowers selected for their fragrance. The Amber Fort in Jaipur is a good example of this.



Sheesh Mahal—the Crystal Palace
By Roshanrajverma

The design of the garden in one of the wings (Sheesh Mahal—the Crystal Palace) dates back to the 16th century. Libby also took us to the Taj Mahal which was completed in 1643 by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan and also has a formal Paradise garden. The garden is divided into four and in each quarter there are 16 flower beds planted with 400 plants. (The number 4 was believed to be a lucky number in Islam).

The trees of the garden are also symbolic with the lines of cypress trees resembling death and the fruit bearing trees depicting joy and life. Libby also visited some modern Indian gardens including the Gupta garden which regularly won their local garden competition. She also took her tour party to the Bangalore Botanical Gardens and to



Taj Mahal

the Ooty Botanical Gardens. Both these gardens were established several centuries ago, later supervised and maintained by the British and now in local government hands. The Ooty garden is at an elevation of over 2,000 m and experiences frost. The gardeners use twigs to cover tender plants during the winter.

KHS members all enjoyed being taken on this wonderful and very colourful trip round India.

Main Speaker April: Taylor Harrison from the Active Seniors Health Centre in Gordon will be helping us to keep active and show us how we can stay safe and well while in our gardens.

Member Speaker April: Nancy Shaw and Christine Rethers will lead a forum on how best to deal with the problems of a very wet garden after the prolonged rain that Sydney has experienced recently.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN APRIL by Christine Rethers

April and May are months when you will be doing a lot of soil preparation in your veggie garden in readiness for the plantings of seedlings of your winter vegetable crop. I have sown seeds of spinach, beetroot and lettuce but I can't grow any of the brassica such as cabbage, broccoli and cauliflowers as I have a rat problem which I can't control without a huge amount of baiting. I will also put in a row or two of carrots and some rocket seeds. That will just about fill my veggie patch. You might like to also think about some leeks, radish, snow, sugar snap and ordinary peas, broad beans and kale. Have a look at your rhubarb now as if you want to divide your plants or put in new plants, this is the time to do it. Give your rhubarb a good feed of pelleted and cow manure as they are heavy feeders. If you are growing peas, remember that they will require some support as they can grow to well over a metre. I find wire or plastic mesh between some wooden posts will do the trick. When you have got everything in, put on some sugar cane mulch to protect the soil and the young plants as they are establishing. If you are growing brassicas, it is a good idea make a 'cage' with four wooden posts covered with a fine white netting to keep out the Cabbage White butterflies.

DAHLIA MUSINGS by Evelyn Mason

I started growing one dahlia many years ago when I was working full time. It died from neglect or was it the wallabies that invaded my back yard and ate it out? I bought a new pink one which I believe was called Pearl of Heemstede and I am still growing it today. It reminded me of my mother's love of dahlias – I can only remember her growing one but she tendered it with great care. One dahlia was all I could cope with until I 'almost' retired. Then I planted a couple more and in the past 3 years I've become somewhat addicted to these showy blooms. They come in all shapes and sizes. From my heritage, Pearl of Heemstede, to a new acquisition, Granite Queen Bee, shown in the photo (right) with a delightful single, Lipstick.

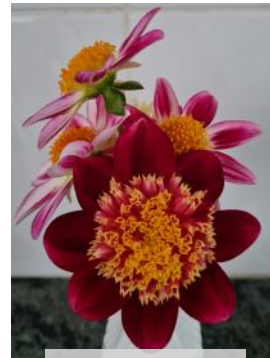


Pearl of Heemstede



Gay Bright Eyes

The grey skies, high rainfall and lack of regular sunshine this summer have resulted in several of my dahlias flowering unusually late. My Pearl of Heemstede is at least 2 months late and the carefree, happy Gay Bright Eyes still hasn't flowered in my southwest garden bed (definitely not its favourite position) even though it has been showing off since November in Rosemary Wade's northeastern location. The following photo is courtesy of Rosemary. One of my best flowering dahlias from last summer didn't even produce a shoot – I think the tuber must have rotted from all the rain.



Granite Queen Bee and Lipstick

So late into the summer and I am still getting surprises. This morning I went outside to be rewarded with the following regal beauty – Kenora Wildfire – which finally burst into flower.

I've used several descriptive words above so when I read about the myths, magic and language of flowers, it's fascinating just

how many of the everyday descriptive words I would apply to my dahlias are in the lexicon of Floriography. While you can pull out different meanings based on dahlia flower colour and tradition, there are some general meanings tied to all dahlia flowers:

**New beginnings and fresh starts; *Diversity amidst a boring world; *Enduring kindness and grace, even when things are hard; *Commitment to what is good.*

And then there are meanings associated with the different colours. Red dahlias symbolise perseverance and the ability to overcome. They are associated with every individual's inner strength. Pink dahlias symbolise kindness and beauty. Yellow dahlias are so cheerful they symbolise joy and childlike glee. I could continue but I think I have convinced you – **I have become a dahlia tragic!**

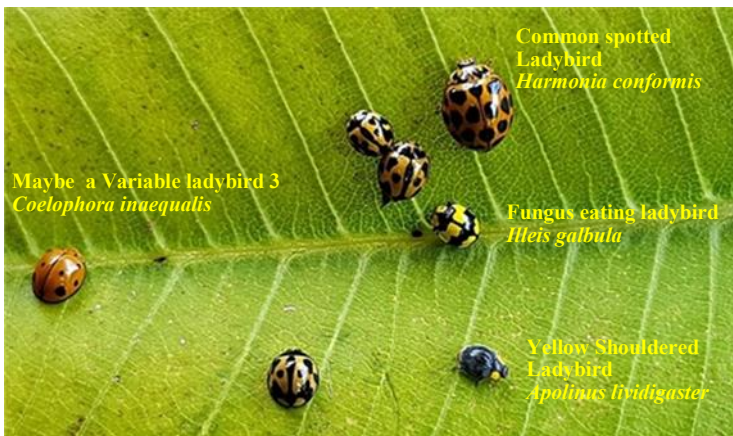


Kenora Wildfire

HAVE YOU SEEN A LADYBIRD WITHOUT SPOTS? by Jenny Richardson

This is about a special little garden companion, the ladybird. If you are an avid gardener, Mother Nature provides an array of non-chemical means to help control the nasties in our garden and the ladybird is one such helper. Ladybird beetles belong to family Coccinellidae. Worldwide there are nearly 6,000 species of ladybirds. Whilst there are a few species you don't want in your garden, most of Australia's 500 species of ladybird are beneficial. Both the larvae and adult of beneficial ladybirds feed on aphids, scale, insects and mites - so what orchid lover would not like to see these little cuties frequenting our gardens!

So what piqued my interest in ladybirds? Way back at the onset of the whole coronavirus pandemic, after not being allowed to visit anyone for weeks due to the initial lockdown, I was really happy to be able to visit my brother for the first time in what felt like forever, once the restrictions were lifted. My brother has several crepe myrtles in his back garden which were suffering from a bit of an aphid infestation and we spent the afternoon chatting and exploring the life cycle of the ladybirds that had come to feast. As shown in the left photo, a variety of ladybirds were enjoying the aphid smorgasbord during the afternoon.



Apart from photos noted as being from the internet, the rest are from my brother. I am no expert, just an interested observer, so I have used Mr Google to identify the different types.*

My brother and I didn't find any intact eggs but the photo to the right, from the [*FieldGuide](#) shows the small, yellow, oval eggs of the common spotted ladybird, on the underside of a leaf of an infested plant – dinner (green aphids) would be ready and waiting when the larvae hatch.

When I first went to sit down in the gazebo, my brother asked me to make sure I didn't sit on any of the ladybird larvae – I looked down and they were every-

where! Different types are shown in the photo to the left.

I don't recall specifically seeing these larvae before, if I have, I did not realise what they were. Considering the beautiful form they take as adults, the larvae are really quite intimidating looking little critters.

Photo to the right from the [*FieldGuide](#) shows a larvae eliminating pesky aphids. So we had an array of larvae and adults and went searching for the penultimate stage, the pupae. My brother knew where to look, and before long he found a strip of bark that was providing protection for a selection of different pupae.



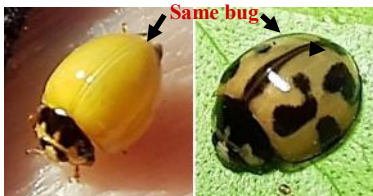
Ladybird larvae



A variety of pupae

Then, for the first time in my life, I saw a plain yellow ladybird – no spots!

I had never seen a ladybird without spots before so I was intrigued. My brother collected little spotless and put him carefully in a container. A few hours later he was spotless no more! A live show - no technology required. Mother nature in action – fascinating! What a transformation, ugly duckling to cute little ladybird - beauty and the beast in one.



Same bug

Whilst most Aussie ladybirds are beneficial, there are some that are phytophagous i.e. both larvae and adults feed on plants and you don't want these! The 28/26 spotted ladybirds can be up to 1cm in length, light orange and as the highly imaginative name suggests, have 26-28 spots – *if they will sit still long enough for you to count*. It may be easier to identify

them based on whether or not they are decimating the leaves of your plants leaving them with a rather sad looking, shredded, peek-a-boo effect. The colouring on the 28's (bad guys) is similar to the common spotted ladybird (good guy) but the spots on 28 are smaller and the elytra (hard cover over wings) is much less shiny. Another you don't want is the leaf-eating ladybird, it has four large orange-red and four yellow square spots on a dark brown body. The preferred food of phytophagous ladybirds is from the cabbage, potato and bean families but their favourite plant is the



28-spotted Ladybird



Leaf-eating Ladybird

black nightshade, so if you can, remove this weed from your garden and you will reduce a reason for them to visit. However, if you see one like the last photo above – lucky you, it's known as the **Mealybug Destroyer Cryptolaemus montrouzieri*, these have been exported to many countries as an effective biocontrol agent. If you want to attract ladybirds to your garden, plant herbs like coriander, fennel & dill and brightly coloured flowers such as zinnia, sunflower, calendulas and marigolds.



Mealybug Destroyer
Cryptolaemus montrouzieri

**Ref: http://www.brisbaneinsects.com/brisbane_ladybirds/LadybirdFieldGuide.html*

(This article is published here with kind permission of the author. Ed)

YOUR APRIL GARDEN by Maureen Smith

► Now that the deluge has abated it is time to get back out in the garden and assess the damage. Shrubs and perennials that may have received too much water may need to be pruned to remove damaged parts or, unfortunately, some may be too damaged to revive and need to be replaced.

► On a more cheery note, it is a good time to plant some winter annuals. Many people, including myself, don't bother with annuals in the garden. Too much work replacing them every year. However, a few suitable pots filled with pansies, violas, primulas or marigolds, scattered about the garden can give it a great lift during the winter months. The last two years we have found the spreading violas and pansies quickly fill quite a large pot for very little cost. Pansies and marigolds are also good companion plants for your vegetable patch.

► The rain and humidity have also brought rust, particularly to pelargoniums. The only effective chemical treatment I know of is particularly toxic so the solution seems to be to remove the leaves. It doesn't take long for new ones to grow. If rust has invaded your Frangipani, it is probably too big to remove leaves or for spray treatment but as the leaves drop, don't use them for mulch or compost as you will only spread the rust spores

► If your Dahlia clump is a few years old, it might be time to lift and divide. Reduction in the number of blooms is a good indicator of this. As the foliage dies down, lift the tubers and store in a dry airy space until next September/October when you can plant them again about 15-20cm deep. If you have too many, they would be a welcome gift for a friend or bring them to the Society's Trading Table.

► Now is a good time to check your Camellia japonicas and remove any of those excess buds, just leave a couple on each stem. Of course, you will want a profusion of flowers on your Sasanquas so leave those buds alone.



Decorative— Pretty as a Picture

