

HORTULANUS

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

NOVEMBER 2021



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COMING EVENTS

2 Nov KHS November meeting and AGM. Speaker: Andrew Thomas from Plants Plus, Cumberland Forest speaking on indoor plants.

We are not listing any open gardens at this time as most are outside the area we are permitted to travel in. Hopefully this will change fairly soon.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that our Annual General Meeting will be held on Tuesday, 2 November 2021.

The purpose of the meeting is:

- * To confirm the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting.*
- * To receive the President's Reports for 2020 and 2021.*
- * To receive and consider the accounts for the years ended 30 June 2020 and 2021*
- * To elect office bearers and committee members.*

All existing officers and committee members will stand down. Ted Shaw, Christine Rethers, Robyn Brown, Helen Gilkes, Evelyn Mason, Nancy Shaw and Jenny Watsford offer themselves for election. Additional nominations would be welcomed.

If you wish to offer yourself for nomination or would like more information, please phone Christine Rethers on 9449 6245.

MEMBER NEWS

We are pleased to report that we will be having a meeting on Tuesday, 2nd November and have secured a venue. No, sadly it is not our usual hall at St Ives as this is still undergoing building and maintenance work and will possibly not be available until next year as Council keeps discovering new problems with the building. Instead, we have booked the Louise Lennon Pavilion at the St Ives Showground.

The meeting will be at the usual time of 7pm for a 7.30pm start. Please note carefully the following Ku-ring-gai Council and State government requirements:

- The meeting will be restricted to members only as numbers attending cannot exceed 54 people.
- Proof of double vaccination or a doctor's certificate of exemption is required. This is a Ku-ring-gai Council and State government requirement.
- We therefore ask you to book in on a first come, first served basis. Bookings may be made with Robyn Brown by phone on 0408 295 601 or by email to medway2@bigpond.net.au. For your booking you will need proof of double vaccination or a certificate of exemption—a copy of your vaccination certificate or exemption can be forwarded to Robyn when you book or brought to the meeting for checking.
- Masks are required in this indoor setting except when eating and drinking.
- The hall will operate at 1 person per 4 sq.m. Please do not move the chairs provided.
- Please use the Covid Safe QR code check-in that you will find at the entrance.
- Disinfectant wipes and hand sanitisers will be provided for your use.

We will commence the meeting with the AGM which will be a very quick affair, followed by the presentation of the 2019-2020 Show Bench awards that were not given out at our June meeting.

It will then be supper time to be followed by our speaker for the evening, Andrew Thomas. Andrew is a manager at Plants Plus Cumberland Forest on Castle Hill Road, Pennant Hills and his topic will be Indoor Plants. As a bonus, Andrew will be bringing along plants for us to purchase.

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Unfortunately, due to a lack of space, we will not be able to hold our usual Show Bench. The **Show Bench** will start again with the February 2022 meeting when we expect to be back at the St Ives Community Hall.

As a reminder, please note that your membership has been extended a further year at no extra cost so those who have already paid for the 2021/22 year will have their membership extended until the end of June 2023. Those who have not paid for this year will be asked to renew their membership in June 2022.

Don't forget to have a look at our **Facebook** page which continues to have some interesting postings. We now have 50 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>.

The **Garden Table** will be in operation so please bring along any potted up plants or cuttings but we would appreciate it if you would put these in a plastic bag so that we can avoid any soil or debris falling on the floor.

We will also have a **Raffle** with the usual plant provided by the Society. We would also welcome any donations but please ensure that your donation is something that you would want to win yourself.

Outings have been put on hold for the time being. Hopefully we will be able to announce our next outing when the Covid situation becomes clearer, perhaps in the New Year.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN NOVEMBER by Christine Rethers



Hopefully your tomatoes have now been planted. If not, it is not too late but remember not to plant them where you had them last year as the soil can harbour diseases specific to tomatoes for at least 12 months. The tall-growing tomatoes need to be staked so put them in before you plant the seedlings. Tomatoes do best if kept well fed with a liquid fertiliser for flowers and fruit plus a dusting of blood and bone and some lime or dolomite sprinkled around the plants. It is controversial whether the lateral shoots should be removed. My thoughts are that you reduce your crop considerably by doing this so I leave them on. Mulching with sugar cane or lucerne is essential as this stops the

soil from drying out too quickly and prevents soil splashing up onto the leaves which can introduce disease. If planted now you could have ripe tomatoes by Christmas!

Along with tomatoes, why not try some cucumbers - it is a bit late for seeds so go to the nursery and buy some well-grown seedlings. These need support so plant them where you can support them on some kind of trellis. If you would like home-grown zucchini, make sure that when you put in your seedlings you give each plant plenty of space. Eggplants are also worth a try but they are a bit slow, so the sooner you get them in, the better.

Don't forget to put in some basil (the leaves go so well in a tomato dish and basil pesto is simply the taste of summer). Summer is also green bean time so hurry along to get some seeds or some seedlings. If using seed, plant them in place, water once and then not again until they start to come up or the seed will rot. They, like the cucumbers, will need some support unless you are planting bush beans.

Do regularly feed and mulch all your summer vegetables to keep them moving as the hot weather comes along.

HOW TO GROW AND FLOWER HOYAS by Ted Shaw

Hoyas are commonly known as wax flowers and there about 200 species in total originating from tropical Asia and Australasia. Five species are endemic to Australia and can be found on the eastern coastal region from Cairns to further north. While they come from warmer climates, with care we can grow many of them in Sydney as outdoor plants or with the more tropical ones, in greenhouses or in the house.



Hoya australis

Most hoyas are climbers, and some in the wild can reach 6 metres tall or more. Generally, they are epiphytes (grow on trees) and so are used to growing in a well-drained environment. To simulate this, their preferred growing medium is an orchid bark mix. They feature glossy dark leaves of many different shapes and some are variegated. They have fragrant blooms arranged in an umbel inflorescence (shaped like an upside-down umbrella). The flowers are sweetly fragrant, waxy and resemble fine porcelain. Good light and high humidity will encourage flowering indoors.

Hoyas don't require much maintenance. Water every fortnight in the warmer months, and monthly during winter. Feed with slow release fertiliser every six months, and with liquid fertiliser every three weeks during the warmer months. They flower best



Hoya carnosa

when slightly pot-bound so don't be in too much of a hurry to repot them. Whatever you do, don't cut off the flowers as they flower from the same flower stem year after year.



Hoya chimera

They are quite easy to propagate. Take cuttings in late spring, two nodes for the hoyas with small leaves and one node for large leaf varieties. Keep the cuttings moist in an open potting mix until roots form, then pot up into a small container of small-size orchid bark. Alternatively, you can put your cutting into a glass of water on the window-ledge and they will grow roots there. These can then be potted up in the usual way.



Hoya motoskei

The flower types and colours are many and varied and by swapping cuttings you can have quite a collection in no time at all. Bunnings quite often has them for sale in a special Collector's Corner section of the plant nursery, They are also available on-line but here it is a case of 'buyer beware' so go carefully. Garden shows are also good places to find Hoyas and here at least you can talk to the growers.

ALL YOU EVER NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WORM FARMS by Maureene Smith

Have you heard of FOGO (Food Organics and Garden Organics)? Some local councils are changing to this new system of recycling. Basically, the red bin or general waste bin will in future be collected fortnightly and the green waste bin weekly. This is because the contents of your green waste bin can now be used to recycle 40% of the waste that used to go in your red bin. This includes all food scraps including meat plus bones, dairy, tissues, paper towels, pet waste, compostable packaging, soft plastics and all your usual garden clippings. This is all recycled into compost that is then available commercially for a multitude of uses. This is a great idea, it diverts unnecessary items going to land fill and thus reduces emissions.

But if your area doesn't yet have FOGO, you can still divert a lot of your kitchen scraps away from land fill and invest in some worms. These wonderful creatures will devour your unwanted vegetable scraps and produce nutrient rich worm tea and compost very efficiently—and those scraps are not now going to landfill so this has a positive effect on the environment. Worm farms come in all shapes and sizes and its wise to pick one that meets your recycling needs and available space.

The simple multi-tray form generally processes about 2 litres of waste a week. It probably requires the most work of any of the types. The worm tea needs to be siphoned off regularly then diluted down with water generally to a 1:10 mix until it has the appearance of weak tea. This can then be used to water your plants. Similarly, the castings which fall through to the lowest tray need to be spread around your pots and garden after being collected. When you do this, expose the tray to light first so any worms there will migrate to the bottom and you can remove the compost.



A larger sub pod type will recycle approximately 2 litres of scraps per day. It needs more preparation initially as it is buried underground. You will need to dig a hole large enough and deep enough to take it. It automatically leaches out the worm pee into the area of the garden around the pod. Internally, there are couple of bins into which you put your scraps. As one is filled with compost you start feeding the other. The full compost bin is then lifted out and exposed to the light. The worms will migrate to the bottom so when you remove the compost leave the last few centimetres. You can then use the compost where you need it,

The simplest method is the worm tower. This also is buried underground and leaches out the worm tea to the immediate area. A tower however only needs a small hole to be dug which is much easier for the average older gardener to manage. Two worm towers will handle approximately 2 litres of waste per week. When full of castings, remove the lid to let in light so that the worms will dive to the bottom where it is the dark, then remove the tower and distribute the castings where you need them most. You can either replace the worm tower in the original spot or reposition it by digging another hole. This has the benefit of letting the beneficial worm tea leach out to a different spot in your garden. This has the added advantage of probably also being the cheapest method as a simple worm tower can be made by a 300 ml length of PVC pipe (a friendly plumber often has offcuts).



Home-made worm tower



Commercially available worm tower

Drill holes all round and use an old terracotta saucer for a lid. Place a pot of ornamentals on the saucer and nobody knows it is there.

Now neither of the last two types are suitable for balcony or most courtyard gardens and the multi tray form may be too large but there are smaller worm farms available for the space you have. Some are disguised as growing pots.

The worm towers can be used only in a garden so are suitable for balcony or most courtyard gardens and the multi tray form may be too large. There are however smaller worm farms for the space you have. Some are disguised as growing pots.



Whatever the type you choose, a few simple rules for a successful, non smelly worm farm apply. Buy some worms; bait shops or garden centres are good sources for red worms, the best type for a farm. Start by giving your worms some bedding material. Some aged compost, shredded paper (not bleached or coloured) and a few leaves. Let them settle in for a couple of days and then start to feed.

Don't overfill the worm farm as it needs air to circulate through it. It is best to add your scraps bit by bit. Wait for most of it to be decomposed before adding more. Digestion of scraps can be encouraged by chopping them up a bit. Remember to remove all those pesky fruit labels and tea bag tags and worms don't like fruits stones. Go gently with onion or citrus peelings; they will take a little but not too much or too often. No meat or dairy as this encourages other critters and leads to smells. A handful of lime or a few crushed eggshells occasionally helps maintain a healthy pH level. Worms in above-ground worm farms can suffer if it gets too hot or too cold so try to ameliorate big changes in temperature. It is also necessary to avoid direct sunlight. All farms like to be reasonably moist so monitor this and add water or dry material, shredded paper or cardboard to maintain this.

NOVEMBER IN THE GARDEN by Maureen Smith

► One of the first things to do is wander round your garden and enjoy the loveliness that spring can bring. The vibrant colours of the Japanese Maple contrast with the more delicate hues of the Iris now coming into flower. The first flush of roses is underway—our Gold Bunny is almost finished but the Pierre de Ronsard is just spectacular. And the contrasting mauves of the Mackaya Bella and the Jacaranda are a delight.

► Waratahs are ready for a light prune in order to deadhead them and keep them in a good shape. This applies to other natives that are finishing flowering including the Grevilleas and Callistemons. Unless you want to change the shape of your plant, just cut them behind the flower heads. If you are reshaping, don't forget to cut back to a node.

► It's probably the last chance now to tip prune your Fuchsias to encourage bushy growth as you need to leave them now to bud up and flower.

► It's time now to move vulnerable potted plants onto a shadier spot ready for the harsh heat of summer that we are now getting in Sydney.

► It is still not too late to plant out some summer colour in your garden. The Royal Botanic Gardens have tested over 200 plants, both edible and ornamental, and come up with a top 40 which they believe will grow well in a Sydney garden. You can get full details on their web site but most of their top 40 are available in local garden centres and include a beautiful apricot Agastache, a pink Nemesis and some bright orange Tagetes. This last one is a great companion plant for the vegetable garden as it helps to keep pests at bay. Don't forget next time you are in the RBG to visit their trial garden and see them all growing.

► As spring-flowering shrubs and climbers finish blooming, they can be pruned to encourage compact new growth. These include Azaleas, Camellia, Brunfelsia, Callistemon, Diosma, Eupatorium, Lavender, Prunus, Jasmine, Rondeletia, Spiraea, Viburnum and Wisteria. After pruning don't forget to fertilise with a general purpose fertiliser and then mulch well.



► Finally there are always those pesky weeds, so unless you find weeding therapeutic (and some people do) when you next take a stroll to enjoy your garden just pull a few out each time and you will keep on top of this job.



Summer colour in your garden

