

HORTULANUS

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

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MARCH 2025

COMING EVENTS

- Mar. 1** NSW Begonia Society Sale, Federation Pavilion, Castle Hill Showground 9am-2pm
Mar. 4 KHS Meeting: Speaker - Dr. Caragh Threfall, 'Innovative Urban Plantings'
Mar. 9/10 'Highfields', 111 John Grant Rd, Little Hartley. 10am-4pm Entry: \$15
Apr. 1 KHS Meeting: Speaker - Bernard Chapman 'The Plant Whisperer'
Apr. 12/13 Collectors Plant Fair, Penrith Showground. Enq. www.collectorsplantfair.com.au.

MEMBER NEWS

The February meeting was well attended with 57 members and 4 visitors. The first item on the agenda was our guest speaker as he was facing a long journey home. After supper this was followed by the presentation of their prizes to the winners of the 2024 Show Bench competition. Many congratulations to them all and to all those who benched their exhibits last year. The Show Bench is a highlight of our Society and we are one of the few societies that still have an active and indeed flourishing show bench.

OUTINGS

The first outing of the year will be the four-day trip to Bright and North-east Victoria from 29th April to 2nd May 2025. This trip is fully booked at the moment but as some people will inevitably drop out, we have established a waiting list. Bookings for this can be made with Helen Gilkes either at the March meeting or by phone on 9144 4826.

We have also made a booking for a one-day trip to the Bundanoon Garden Ramble on Saturday, 25th October 2025. There will be more information about this closer to the date.

SHOW BENCH

At the February meeting the winners of the 2024 Show Bench competition received their prizes. Hearty congratulations to all the winners and to all 32 of those members who took part in the competition.

Unfortunately one half of the winning team, Aubrey Knowles, sadly passed away in December but the other half of the team, Judith William, was present to pick up the President's Shield and the Section awards.

Show Bench Competition Winners 2024:



1. Aubrey Knowles/Judith Williamson
2. David & Robin Stewart
3. Kym Swaby
4. Ted & Nancy Shaw
5. Len Riordan
6. Brenda Zimmerman
7. Evelyn Mason
8. Sue Ballinger
9. Jill & Peter Whitney
10. Bob Ballinger

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Section Winners:

Cultural:	Aubrey Knowles & Judith Williamson
Containers:	Len Riordan
Small crops:	Aubrey Knowles & Judith Williamson
Decorative:	Brenda Zimmerman
Pictorial:	Bob Ballinger
Encouragement:	Denis Tamsett

The new Show Bench Competition for 2025 has now started so if you haven't exhibited before, why not have a go this year. Don't hesitate to ask one of the committee if it is your first time and you are not sure what to do.

GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table was doing very good business at the February meeting with a very large number of different plants on offer. These included some Lycoris and Nerine bulbs, lovely Coleus, Bromeliads, Hippeastrums, Scutellaria, Daffodils, Nasturtiums, pink Crinum lilies, Veltheimia, Crucifix orchids and Tulbaghia (Society Garlic). What a collection for members to choose from!

Note: the Garden Table will not be in operation at the March meeting because we will be holding the Members' Trading Table.

MEMBERS' TRADING TABLE

The Trading Table will be operating at the March meeting. Members may bring in a **maximum of 30 plants** to sell and 10% of the proceeds will go to the Society with the rest to the member.

Traders are reminded of the following requirements:

- * Only plants can be sold,
- * All items should be in good condition, pots should be clean with no soil, roots or stains.
- * The plant must be disease- and insect-free with no damaged or dead leaves and weeds should be removed.
- * The plant should be named with a label or sticker. In addition, a paddle pop stick showing the owner's initials, the plant number and the price required should be put in each pot.

On the form there are two sections, the first half is your record. The first column will be ticked off by the sales team as the plant is received. The second column is for the number of the plant so each plant will have a number from 1 to 10. The third column is for the plant name – if you don't know the name then a short description. The fourth column is the price you wish to receive for this plant and the fifth column is the price that the plant sold for. On the second half of the form you should repeat this information so that the sales team can keep a record which they use to process your payment.

If you want to bring more than 10 plants, then simply use another form but continue the numbering, e.g. the next set of plants will be numbered from 11 up to 20. You will receive your payment at the next meeting. You will be handed back the first half of the form at the end of the meeting. **Please take home any of your unsold plants.** Paddle pop sticks and extra forms will be available at the table. Plants will be checked in on arrival at a table outside the hall and the paper work will be signed off.

As the wonderful team who run the Garden Table will be looking after the Trading Table, **there will be no Garden Table for this meeting only.** The form to be completed is available with this newsletter – just print out a copy, fill it in and bring it with you when you bring in your plants that you want to sell. **Remember - this is a cash only sale and you will need to bring your own bags or boxes for your purchases.**

MAIN SPEAKER FEBRUARY:

Jared Kelly, Curator Manager, Royal Botanic Gardens of Sydney, spoke to us about the health and resilience of the



Living Collections in the three localities administered by the Botanic Gardens in Sydney, Mt Annan and Mt Tomah. Jared began his career at the RBG in 2009, moving through the ranks to his present position in 2023. The RBG comprises 30Ha with 5,000 different taxa (types of plants) and 65,000 individual specimens. These plants come from many different parts of the world and from many (but not all) localities in Australia. At present Jared and his crew's main concerns are to assess and prepare for climate change, review the current and future watering requirements of the gardens including the infiltration of sea water and review the existing infrastructure and layout of the garden beds. To this end, they have prepared an irrigation master plan including the present and future needs of water in the Gardens. At the moment there is considerable work going on to revamp the Rose Garden, including improvement to the layout and providing new garden beds and pathways.

Jared then went on to tell us about his latest venture which involved looking after the now famous plant, 'Putricia', the *Amorphophallus titanum* (the Corpse Flower) as it progressed through to its full flowering stage. This was staged by the Gardens to give the general



public an idea of what a remarkable plant this is. Its progress from a very small bud to an open flower was carefully documented by the horticulturalists charged with looking after this plant. With the long term goal of restoring these remarkable plants to their natural habitats in the rainforests of Sumatra, pollen was collected and will be used on others of this species. It cannot self pollinate as the male and female parts of this plant mature at different times.



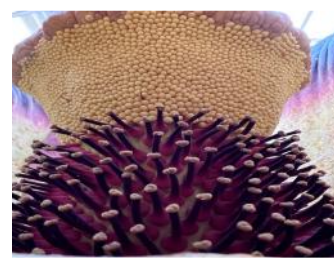
Just starting to open



Scientists collecting pollen



Instruments being used to measure the temperature inside the flower



The male (above) and female parts of the flower

‘Putricia’ proved to be a great attraction, with members of the public queuing for several hours just to get a glimpse of it. A second plant of this species bloomed shortly afterwards but was kept under wraps and used just for scientific observations.

Main Speaker March: This will be Dr Caragh Threlfall who is a Senior Lecturer at Macquarie University in Ecology and Environmental Science. She will speak about ‘Designing innovative urban plantings for nature and people.’

MEMBER SPEAKER FEBRUARY:

This was Bob Ballinger who showed us some of the very lovely photos he took on the Society’s trip to the gardens of Little Hartley last October. This was certainly a trip not to be missed as Bob’s beautiful pictures showed.

Member Speaker March: This will be Philip Sarkies who will show us some of what he does as a Bush Care Officer with Willoughby City Council.

IN THE VEGIE PATCH IN MARCH by Christine Rethers

This month is all about getting ready for your autumn/winter vegetable garden while your summer vegetables are gradually finishing off their growing season. By this time of the year, tomatoes, cucumbers and zucchini are all looking a bit sad with yellowing leaves that may be suffering from downy mildew but just keep them going a bit longer while they are still producing a crop. Beans and lettuce will be wanting to go to seed so you can leave a plant or two to collect seed from and pull the rest out. As each of your summer crops finish their growing season, pull them out and refresh the soil by digging in your home-made compost (if you have it available) with some pelletised fertiliser and cow manure. If you didn’t put dolomite lime on your soil back in spring, do it now, just a light dusting.

It’s time to go to your garden centre and browse through the punnets of the different kinds of vegies available. Look for punnets where the seedlings look young and healthy and avoid punnets that have roots protruding from the bottom (they have been there too long). These can be planted in your well-prepared vegie bed. Don’t forget to water in your new plants to settle them into their new home.

Have you given some thought to root vegetables? These get a bit neglected by many of us but they are worth a try. Carrots and beetroot are best sown straight into your vegie bed. Don’t worry if a lot come up but do thin them out to give them room to develop a good fat root.

Why not try something different this winter? What about celeriac? This is a root vegetable plant that has been around for a long time - it was in fact mentioned in Homer’s *Odyssey*. It is related to celery and can be used in a number of different ways including soups, salads and gratins. However, there are some things to consider before planting. First, they need to be grown from seed. Start the seed off in a seed-raising tray inside on a warmish windowsill. Thin them out as they come up and grow them on for a few weeks until they are big enough to transplant into the garden. You will be aiming to get them in the garden at the beginning of spring. Now for the bad news - they take about six months to fully develop so will not be ready for harvesting until about February or March of the following year. However, in my opinion, they are worth the wait. You harvest them when they are fairly big, fat and round. Don’t leave them in the ground for too long as they will become woody and are not so pleasant to eat. Unfortunately, in my experience, many you buy in the vegie shops are well past their best.



Celeriac root

So what to do with them. For a salad, they first need to be peeled. The flesh inside will discolour quickly so it is a good idea to put them into water into which you have squeezed some lemon juice. For a salad, I slice them finely into batons (julienned) and mix this with a remoulade dressing made of mayonnaise, Dijon mustard, herbs, capers and pickles. A tasty and very different kind of salad!

YOUR MARCH GARDEN by Maureen Smith

It's autumn and time to start thinking about planting for spring. Winter flowering annuals such as violas, pansies and primulas can go in over the next couple of months. It is also time to start planning what spring flowering bulbs you want to plant. Many of the online nurseries that sell bulbs have their new catalogues available now so go and check them out and make your purchases. However, it is a bit early in Sydney to plant them, you are better off waiting until April or May when the soil has had time to cool down.

Freesias do very well in Sydney as do the smaller types of daffodils. The larger varieties will grow here but not as spectacularly as in colder climates. Similarly with tulips - they really need a spell in the fridge crisper before planting (about 5-6 weeks). A nice alternative to daffodils are jonquils and they do well here. However, there are also plenty of other bulbs that we can use to brighten up the garden. Tritonia are great for warmer areas, Dutch iris will take sun or part shade as will anemones (which are technically a corm but treated like a bulb). Another, ranunculus, is technically a tuber but also treated as a bulb and it grows well in the sun. An alternative, not often seen, is the New Zealand lily, *Arthropodium cirratum* (Renga Renga Lily), or perhaps the pretty little yellow *Bulbine bulbosa* lily which is a native.

Now is the time to sweep up all those falling leaves from your lawn and driveway and put them in your compost. Deadhead and liquid feed the summer flowering annuals to keep them going a few more weeks. As they die off, trim back your perennials such as summer salvias, penstemons, achilleas and asters. When they finish flowering, cut back your fuchsias to a good shape and use those cuttings for some new plants.

With the heat and the rain we have been having, it's a good time to check your roses and remove any diseased foliage. Keep them dead-headed to encourage new flowers. Quite often the flowers that come in March and April are better than those in spring as the temperature is a little cooler and the sun does not fade their colour as much.

Finally let's not forget to plant out some beautiful sweet peas on the 17th March, St Patrick's Day. It's a gardener's tradition after all.



Bulbine bulbosa lily



Arthropodium cirratum



Tritonia



Dutch Iris

Just for a laugh!



A priest, a rabbit and a minister walk into a bar. The bartender asks the rabbit "what'll ya have?" The rabbit says "I dunno. I'm only here because of Autocorrect."

