

HORTULANUS

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

JULY 2021



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COMING EVENTS

26/27 June Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens—Sogetsu Ikebana Demonstration and Workshop in the Calyx from
3/4 July) 11.00am, entry free
10/11 July Annual Camellia Show, Ravenswood School, Henry St, Gordon Sat 1.30-4.30pm, Sun 10am-4pm.
Enquiries: nswcamellias@hotmail.com or Ph. 0418 200 139
3 August KHS August Meeting
18/19 Sept Plant Lovers Fair, Kariong. Sat. 8am-4pm Sun. 9am-3pm. Enquiries: www.plantloversfair.com.au

MEMBER NEWS



Due to the current Covid restrictions, we are sorry to advise that the July meeting has had to be cancelled. We were due to have our first meeting back in the hall at St Ives but this is now not possible. However, we are hopeful that our meeting on 3 August will be able to go ahead and we will keep members fully advised on this.

Membership renewals are now due: \$25 - single membership, \$35 - family membership. You can pay now by direct debit as well as by cheque or cash at a meeting. The renewal form is attached and we ask you to return this to Helen Gilkes either at a meeting or by post to her at 20A Normurra Avenue, North Turramurra 2074.

Don't forget to have a look at our Facebook page which continues to have some interesting postings. We now have 46 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>.

It was particularly pleasing to note that two people who have been closely associated with the Society were awarded honours for their contributions to all things horticultural in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours List. They are George Hoad AM and Hazel King OAM. George has visited the Society (who will forget his marvellous song recital) and the Society has visited his interesting garden in Killabakh on more than one occasion. Hazel was a member and contributed to the Society for many years when living in the area. She not only wrote monthly articles for the newsletter and but also gave talks to the meetings. She retired to Berry but still keeps in touch and is an Honorary member of the Society.

OUTINGS

Plans for our proposed outing to Auburn Botanic Gardens in August have fallen through unfortunately, due to ongoing Covid restrictions. However the Society has planned a one-day outing to three of the lovely gardens in the Hills District in October. The date will be Thursday, 14 October and details of this outing and a booking form will be in the August Hortulanus.

GARDEN TABLE

At the June meeting in the Turramurra Uniting Church meeting centre, the garden table was positively groaning under the weight of the goodies that were on offer for this, our first meeting in 15 months. These goodies included some rare and unusual plants and seeds that would seldom be found in nurseries. Don't forget to put any contributions you bring into plastic bags to avoid spilling soil, leaves and moisture on the table and floor. We expect to have another garden table at our next meeting, hopefully in August, so bring along any spare plants you have propagated and your money to purchase some of these bargains, all going cheap.



SHOW BENCH

Congratulations to all the prize winners of the 2019/20 Show Bench Point Score Competition!



Aubrey Knowles, winner of the 2019/20 Show Bench Competition, receiving the President's Shield from the Society's president, Ted Shaw.



Show Bench Winners Left to Right: Aubrey Knowles, Sue & Bob Ballinger, Ted & Nancy Shaw, Brenda Zimmerman, Smila Smithers, Len Riordan, Colleen Lukey. Absent: Evelyn Mason, Christine & Ron Erratt, Cynthia & Jim Brydie, Peter & Jill Whitney

RAFFLE

There were twelve prizes on offer at the June meeting—close to a record number. The Society provided a plant and members were very generous in bringing along some other lovely prizes. Contributions are always welcome.

MAIN SPEAKER—Helen Wallace, Camellia Research Society



Helen spoke to us wearing two hats – as the Secretary of the Camellia Research Society and also as a Trustee on the Board of the Eryldene House and Garden in Gordon. She explained that the two roles are closely linked as Prof. Waterhouse, builder and owner of Eryldene, also founded the Camellia Research Society in 1952. Eben Gowrie Waterhouse was born in Sydney in 1881 and was educated at Sydney Grammar and Sydney University, graduating with first class honours in languages. He taught at King's School, Parramatta for four years before going to Europe to continue his teaching career. There he met and married his wife -to-be, Janet, before returning to Sydney in 1912. They rented a house in McIntosh Street, Gordon and bought the ½ acre of land next door for £4. They built the house, designed by William Hardy Wilson, and moved in in 1914. Since those early days, the house and garden have seen many changes and additions mainly due to Prof. Waterhouse's increasing interest in researching and growing camellias. He remained at Eryldene until his death at the age of 96 in 1977. After his retirement soon after the Second World War, Prof. Waterhouse travelled the world in pursuit of research into camellias. At the height of his collection at Eryldene, there were about 700 camellias growing there, including some of the varieties first brought into Australia by John Macarthur in the early 1800's.

After Prof Waterhouse's death, Eryldene was bought by the Eryldene Trust with the sole purpose of preserving the house, garden and plantings. The Trust receives no external funding and must raise significant funds each year to maintain the property. The property is open one weekend each month between April and September and also holds concerts and exhibitions at other times. All this helps to raise the money needed to maintain it. The centre is run completely by volunteers. Helen urged us to visit this historical gem in our midst and help preserve it.

Helen then showed us some pictures of some of the camellias at Eryldene and reminded us of the Camellia Show at Ravenwood School in Gordon on 10/11 July.



From left to right:

C. Moshio

C. Oki-No-Nami

C. Easter Morn

HIGO CAMELLIAS

One of the lovely camellia flowers that Helen Wallace brought to our June meeting was a Higo camellia (pronounced "hee-go"). This style of camellia japonica originated in Japan and comes from what was once known as the Higo province (now Kumamoto). They have a strong cultural significance in Japan and up until the mid-9th century only priests and samurais were allowed to own and cultivate them. The distinctive flowers are single with between 5 and

9 petals and up to 300 yellow, white or pink stamens. There are about 20 different kinds available in Australia at present with hopefully more on the way. A true Higo must be registered under the strict criteria of the Higo Camellia Society.

Growth-wise the Higo camellia is a compact plant with all the requirements expected of a normal Japonica camellia. However, because they are quite rare, expect to pay a bit more for a plant. Bill Parker's nursery (Camellias R Us), 34 Harrisons Lane, Glenorie has several at present.



Camellia japonica 'Okan'



Camellia japonica 'ume-jin higo'



Camellia japonica 'Happy Higo'



Camellia japonica 'Okan'

MEMBER SPEAKER – Lorraine Emerson, President of Garden Clubs of Australia



Changes are afoot at the GCA and Lorraine brought us up to speed with the main features of these changes. Most significantly, the number of committee members has been reduced and their areas of responsibility simplified. The GCA website has been streamlined and made easier to use. The GCA biennial convention is being held this year, this time in Townsville from 12-16 September. The program includes visits to places of interest, significant gardens and some of the lovely parks. Additional activities such as visits to the hinterland and the offshore islands have been organised for those who would like to make a longer holiday of it. This is a great opportunity to meet up with garden enthusiasts from all over Australia. Registration is open until the end of June.

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



► If you are a rose lover and most gardeners are, now is the time to give your roses a major inspection and do whatever is necessary to keep them good and healthy. The first thing you should do is get your secateurs in good sharp working order as there is a lot of hard work ahead of them and blunt secateurs are just plain hard work.

► Roses in all but frosty areas can be pruned now. In frosty areas leave them until August. To do a good pruning job on your roses, you will need a good sharp pair of secateurs and a pruning saw. A medium sized lopper is also very handy for those stems and stalks that the secateurs can't handle and a pair of long gloves will protect your arms and hands. A packet of lime sulphur will also be very useful after you finish pruning.

► Roses flower best on young wood, particularly water shoots, and the main aim of pruning is to remove the older non-productive wood and so keep the plants young. All dead and diseased wood should be removed together with any spindly growth that is choking the centre of the plant. Roses should not be pruned too hard; many gardeners make the mistake of cutting their roses back to within 5cm of the base of the plant. This robs the plant of all the food stored in the branches. Some roses never recover from this sort of treatment and remain weak and sickly and die off after a couple of years. Another bad habit home gardeners have is to prune all their roses off at the same height, regardless of the size of the plant. This is usually done in the interest of neatness and uniformity. If you are growing a row of tall growing plants such as Queen Elizabeth or Pink Parfait as a hedge you will naturally want to keep them at an even height but where a rose bed has been planted with a mixture of small, medium and tall plants, each plant should be treated as an individual and pruned to suit its growth habits. Don't prune climbing roses, they can be pruned later when they have finished flowering.

► When you take out dead or diseased wood, remove it flush with the trunk, don't leave a stump of dead wood to spread disease through the plant. Shorten any healthy stems back to a firm plump eye. Choose an eye that faces outwards and make the cut close to the eye and at the same angle. When you finish each plant, wipe your secateurs with methylated spirits or some sort of antiseptic. This will prevent your secateurs from transferring a disease from one plant to another. If you have a lot of die-back in your roses, paint the cut surfaces with a fungicide. Branches suffering from die-back should be cut several centimetres below the obviously damaged wood as the infection travels downwards and the tissue inside the branch will be diseased even though it may look okay.

► After pruning, spray your plants with a good fungicide to control any fungal diseases like mildew and black spot. A spray with lime sulphur will clean up most fungal and white scale problems but this can only be done when the roses are leafless. Rake up any leaves and rubbish on the ground and put them into the garbage bin not the compost bin. Rose cuttings are hard to compost and usually carry fungal spores.

► Wait until the roses start to get their spring foliage before fertilising with a well-rotted animal manure or an all-purpose fertiliser and mulch. Special rose fertilisers are available from all garden centres. Roses prefer soil that is not too acid and an application of dolomite will improve roses growing in acid conditions. Don't use too much fertiliser as it will encourage soft growth that will be more prone to disease. An application every three months except in winter will be ample. Always water well after applying a fertiliser.

► If you wish to move any of your roses, this can be done after pruning. Dig up the plants and replant them in the new position. Make sure you have the new position ready so the plant is out of the ground a minimum amount of time. Roses that had become shaded or overgrown in their old position will take on a new lease of life if moved to a better position. So don't hesitate to move a rose to a better position if they are not putting on a good show. New roses can still be planted and roses planted now will start to grow quickly as the soil warms up in a month or so.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Question? I want to plant some snowflakes or snowdrops. What is the difference?

Answer: There are two main types of snowdrops. The cold-climate snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis*, is from north Europe and likes a long cold winter and a cool moist spring. It grows best in the shade or dappled sunlight. The bed should

be mulched well with old manure or composted organic matter to prevent it drying out during the hot summer weather. Mulching again in autumn with old manure or leaf mould will make the bulbs very happy. They should be planted 8-10 cm down and the same distance apart. You can expect flowers in mid to late winter. Snowflakes (*Leucojum vernum*) are from the eastern Mediterranean and are easier to grow, producing clusters of white bell-like flowers. Each petal has a bright green spot. Bulbs should be planted about 5cm deep and about 8-10cm apart and they multiply rapidly to form 30 cm high clumps. In Sydney they flower in winter and this is a good reason to plant them. A rough rule of thumb is to grow Snowflakes in NSW and Snowdrops in Victoria

Question? When can I divide my Kniphofia? It is getting out of hand.

Answer: A well-established clump of Kniphofia can be divided in late winter or early spring. This can require a certain amount of hard work. Once you have planted them in the new area, reduce the foliage by about half to allow the roots a chance to get established and reduce moisture loss. Plant the Kniphofia with the top of the rhizome 2-4cm below the soil level. Space small new cuttings about 50cm apart. Larger ones should be planted about 80cm apart. Kniphofia are an economical plant in that they do not need to be fertilised. However, a complete plant food applied in spring will improve the flowers.

Question? I would like to grow some Christmas Bells. Are they hard to grow?

Answer: Christmas Bells are not the easiest of plants to grow as they are slow to establish but well worth trying for the waxy textured red and yellow tubular flowers that cluster in the top of the stem. They grow to more than 50cm in good conditions. The foliage is stiff, narrow and reed-like. It became known in Australia as Christmas Bells because it usually blooms at Christmas time. It is a protected plant and should not be picked when it is found flowering in the bush. If you wish to try your hand at growing them, plants are readily available at native plant nurseries. Freshly cut flowers last well in a vase. Christmas Bells need full sun all day. When planting use a soil that tends to retain moisture and is high in organic matter. Its natural environment is a sandy situation with a high water table. Potted plants can be planted out at any time of the year. If you decide to use seed it should be sown in autumn as soon as it is ripe. Sow in very coarse sand with a little added peat. Seed is slow to germinate and in the initial growth stage may appear very slow but this is the only reliable way of propagation. Plants can be fertilised with a complete plant food or pelletised poultry manure during spring and early autumn. They should be watered regularly during the warm months of the year. Plants will take from three to four years from seed to flower so have some patience. After flowering cut off any faded flower stems at ground level.

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."



Question? How far back can I cut my tree dahlia? It has got quite large.

Answer: Tree dahlias should be cut back to ground level once they have finished flowering. The cuttings can go into the compost heap. The foliage and twigs make good compost.

Regards
Hugh