

# HORTULANUS

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

MARCH 2019



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**Website:** [www.khsgardenclub.org.au](http://www.khsgardenclub.org.au)

**MEETINGS COMMENCE AT 7.30PM  
ST IVES COMMUNITY HALL, MEMORIAL AVE, ST IVES**

## COMING EVENTS

**TRADING TABLE at the  
March meeting (see below  
for further details)**

- Mar 5** MARCH MEETING: Doug Rickard—'All about Soil, the Lifeblood of the Garden'
- Mar 21** Garden Design Series, Tattersalls Club, Sydney—Mark Hovane, speaker, Enq. 9231 8182
- Mar 30/  
Apr 14** Botanica Art Exhibition, Lion Gate Lodge, Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens Enq. 9231 8182
- Apr 2** APRIL MEETING: Kate Stanley—'All about Roses'
- Apr 6/7** Concord Garden Club's Autumn Flower Show, Concord Community Centre Enq. 9743 3402
- Apr 6/7** Collectors' Plant Fair, Hawkesbury Race Club, Clarendon. Enq. [convenor@collectorsplantfair.com.au](mailto:convenor@collectorsplantfair.com.au)
- Apr 11** Garden Design Series, Tattersalls Club, Sydney—Andrew Laidlaw, speaker Enq. 9231 8182
- Apr 28** Maureene and Keith Smith's Huge Plant Sale, 45 Parklands Ave, Lane Cove North from 10am

Hi

It was a very warm night and the noisy fans needed to be used intermittently whilst 80 members and friends gathered for the first meeting of the new year. The President welcomed members, the main speaker, Gordon Cheers, and a number of visitors. She passed on some advice from Bernard Chapman, a horticulturalist living in our area, that agapanthus should now be dead-headed so that none of their seeds get inadvertently into bushland areas where they can quickly take over large areas.

## MEMBER NEWS

A warm welcome to new members, Tony and Jan Wilkinson, Beth Bunyan and Janice Ho. Hugh Myers and Ian St Clair have been on the 'missing in action' list this month but happily both are now well on their way to recovery.

For a few years a number of members interested in propagation have been meeting several times during the year in members' gardens for the purpose of taking cuttings to propagate. They then bring some of these plants along to the Turramurra Flea Market in October where the Society takes a stall. The sale of these plants then raises funds for the Society. We are happy to recruit new members to this group and if you are interested in participating, please contact our President, Doreen Clark, on 9498 1677 or at the next meeting. Help and advice will be given for those not familiar with propagation techniques.

As you know, the Society has a website which has been in operation for the past 9 years. The yearly cost of running this has now risen to the point where it has become very expensive. Therefore, it was decided to try to set up our own website and reduce our yearly expense. We now are asking if any of our members have expertise in setting up a website and if so, whether they would be willing to give help or advice. If you are such a person, please contact Ted Shaw on 9979 3930.

## OUTINGS

**Toowoomba Trip (23-26 September):** Travel and accommodation reservations have been confirmed for the 33 KHS members and friends who booked and paid a deposit for this trip by the close-off date. Thank you for the great response. If you have not booked but would like to be included on a waiting list in case someone is not able to come, please see Helen Gilkes at a meeting or phone her on 9144 4826.

**Southern Highlands Trip (a date in September or October, still to be decided):** This will be a one-day trip when we will visit Retford Park and Red Cow Farm as well as one or two other gardens as time allows. Further details will be given as soon as they are finalised.

## GARDEN TABLE

The Garden Table was literally loaded with plants, many hard-to-come-by, including a basket full of yellow Spider Lily (*Lycoris*) bulbs, some fuchsias, achimenes, salvias, tree daisies and many more. Some real bargains were on offer so make sure you check it out next time (at our April meeting) so you don't miss out.

## TRADING TABLE

**The Trading Table will be operating at the March meeting.** Members may bring in 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 first class condition, pots should be clean with no soil, roots or stains on the outside of the pot. The plant must be disease- and insect-free with no damaged or dead leaves. Any weeds should be removed. The plant should be named and a paddle pop stick showing the owner's initials, the plant number and the price should be put in each pot. Paddle pop sticks will be available at the table. A book-keeping form, also available at the table, must be filled in. Plants will be checked in on arrival at a table outside the hall and the paper work will be signed off. 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 for sale.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU WILL NOW NEED TO BRING YOUR OWN BAGS OR BOXES TO CARRY THE PLANTS YOU BUY!**

## SHOW BENCH

Even though the very hot weather in the past two months has played havoc with our gardens, exhibitors still found some wonderful plants to bring along for the show bench. Of particular note were some very well grown vegetables—potatoes, carrots, eggplants, capsicums, cucumbers, a very large pumpkin and of course, tomatoes. To round out the Vegie section there was a very well grown pineapple in a pot. In the flower section there were some very lovely roses and the last of the hydrangeas, still looking bright and fresh. Dahlias were a feature as were the natives - grevilleas, correas and kangaroo paw. Two very well grown and flowered streptocarpus were exhibited as well as some lovely begonias, one with light-coloured leaves particularly catching the eye. There were some wonderfully imaginative exhibits in the Decorative section.

## RAFFLE

There were five prizes on offer this month. The Society purchased a lovely white Dipladenia from Elegant Outdoors Nursery in Turrumurra. The other four prizes were donated by members so many thanks go to these generous people. Don't forget to purchase your tickets from the man just inside the door, \$2 will buy you 3 tickets and you never know your luck. All the proceeds go to help your Society.

## MAIN SPEAKER FEBRUARY



Gordon Cheers, president of the Tropical Garden Society, spoke to us on 'Publishing, Plants and Propagation'. Not only has Gordon written books on carnivorous plants (a couple specifically aimed at the younger generation) but has also published numerous other books over the past 30 years, many of them specifically on plants and many of these are on the bookshelves of our members. Gordon started off with the a book called Ultimate Gardening which was soon followed by the Ultimate Book of Flowers, then Trees and Shrubs. This series was followed by the Botanica range which include Botanica itself with 10,000 individual plants named and described, then a Botanica specifically for roses, followed by another for orchids, then trees, annuals and perennials. This then led to the publication of Flora and this time 20,000 individual plants were included. Gordon's publications were not just confined to botanical subjects but also included other subjects including maps and atlases. He showed a page of his last book, a world atlas which was measured in metres—it was very large indeed.

Gordon also gave us some useful tips. He showed us the Bladderwort (*Utricularia*), a carnivorous plant that lives in water and eats mosquito larvae. A couple of lucky members were given samples of this plant. He also told us about how to look after Cycads by pruning off all the old leaves in early summer just when it is about the put forth new fronds. Within a week, the new fronds will have emerged and will then grow on strongly. Another handy hint concerned disposing of snails by using a house brick—the type with holes in it. By putting this in the garden, snails will hide away during the day in these holes and can then be easily despatched from there.

Gordon finished his talk by showing us some 'before and after' photos of his garden in St Ives. Once he had cleared the bamboo and lantana rubbish out of the garden when he first moved in, Gordon then moved in large and well-established palms, ferns and cycads from his former property in Hunters Hill and with much love and attention, he has got them all established again in their new location. Gordon's garden showed his great love for these plants as well as his many bromeliads, tillandsias, creepers and orchids.

We were urged to document our gardens and preserve some of the leaves and flowers that grow in it. This then would become your own garden journal, a legacy to hand on to others.

Gordon's final surprise was to cut the head off the large pony tail palm he had brought in. He explained that rather than letting it simply get taller, by cutting it you encourage multiple heads and this prevents the plant from getting any taller. One lucky member took home the head of the plant which hopefully will grow again.



**Main Speaker March:** Doug Rickard will speak to us about 'Soil, the Lifeblood of the Garden'. This will be a very interesting talk about a subject dear to every gardener's heart.

### **MEMBER SPEAKER February**

Our Member Speaker was Christine Erratt who gave a Power Point presentation of photos taken by Christine's husband, Ron, during the Society's trip to the Crookwell area last November. On the first day, we visited three gardens in Bundanoon, all very different including a lovely native garden. We had a delicious lunch in the second garden which was catered for by the Bundanoon Garden Club. Our accommodation was in Goulburn and early on the next two mornings we travelled out from there to Crookwell. During our first morning we visited the markets in the grounds of the primary school and many of us picked up some very nice plants as well as garden ornaments, ironwork and some delicious jams and honey. The first garden we visited was a town garden and was just gorgeous. It ended up being most people's favourite. We went on to more town gardens before returning to the motel for dinner. The next day we visited the country gardens which again were very varied. Of the three gardens visited, Markdale and Binda Mill stood out. Markdale was originally designed by Edna Walling and although it has been changed somewhat since its early days, her influence could be seen in the lovely wisteria walk, the lake and the large terraced lawn.

**Member Speaker March:** This will be Bob Ballinger who will show us some photos from the Heritage Rose Conference held in Perth last November. It will include some of the lovely gardens the conference delegates visited.

### **ANIGOZANTHOS (Kangaroo Paws)**

Native to West Australia, the popular Kangaroo Paw is one of Australia's more unusual looking plants. They vary in height from about 30cm to more than 2 metres with strap like leaves up to half a metre long and can be an interesting addition to any garden. Flowers vary in colour from red, green, yellow and orange. Much work has been done in hybridising different varieties to produce smaller plants. The flowers are long lasting both on the plant and as a cut flower so they are popular with florists. Commonly grown varieties are *A. bicolour*, *A. flavidius* and *A. viridis*. Another spectacular Kangaroo paw is *A. manglesii* or the Black Kangaroo Paw which is the state flower of West Australia. Unfortunately this beautiful flower does not do well on the humid east coast where it succumbs very easily to Ink Disease.



*Anigozanthos manglesii*

In their attempt to produce smaller plants, breeders also bred much of the longevity out of the smaller plants. It has been found that smaller Kangaroo Paws only live a few years while the tall natives that were not hybridised live up to 14 or 15 years.

When planting Kangaroo Paws, place them in clumps, about 20cm apart for the small ones and 70cm apart for the big ones. This will allow good air circulation and help to fight Ink Disease, a fungus that blackens and kills the leaves.

Kangaroo Paws prefer a well-drained soil that has a sandy and gritty feel about it. If you have a drainage problem, raise the bed a bit. Kangaroo Paws don't mind the winter rains but they prefer a hot dry summer and don't like wet feet at all. They do not like high humidity around the plant so make a practice of regularly removing dead or diseased leaves and any rubbish that accumulates around the plants.

Kangaroo Paws can be grown from seed but it will take up to three years before you see any flowers so you are better off buying plants that have had a good start in a nursery. During a hot dry summer the plants can be watered regularly but do not apply water overhead as this will wet the leaves and encourage Ink Disease. Be careful to only water down at ground level.

Kangaroo Paws can be fertilised at the beginning of autumn with a slow release fertiliser for natives. Hybrids like the Bush Gem series are hungrier and can be given another feed in early spring.

Ink Disease is the worst disease you will encounter. The only cure seems to be to remove all the black or affected leaves. The leaves should go into the garbage bin not the compost. It is difficult to recommend any fungicide to get rid of this disease. Probably the best thing to do would be to improve air circulation and give more exposure to the sun. Some Kangaroo Paws are more sensitive to Ink Disease than others. This applies particularly to hybrids.

Once all flowering has finished, you can then prune your plants. If you have a bed of Kangaroo Paws the easiest way to prune them is to use a hedger. Cut everything off about at 15 -20cm above the ground. As there is bound to be dead and diseased leaf stumps left in the clumps, take the opportunity to clean up them up with a pair of long nosed pliers to pull out the dead and diseased remains.

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



► March is the beginning of autumn and with it comes the wind and with any luck, some rain too. Look round the garden and check any tall growing plants or shrubs like dahlias and chrysanthemums. If they are not staked they can be easily blown over. Stake any plant or shrub that needs to be supported but be careful not to damage the

roots or tubers. Use proper horticultural ties as string or wire will cut into the stem. Alternatively, if it is a big plant or shrub, an old stocking will do the job.

► Pelargonium cuttings can be taken now. Pick out the best cuttings as you prune the plants. Cut to just below a joint and remove all but the top two or three leaves. A cutting should only be about 8- 10cm long and will readily set roots in a damp mixture of sharp sand and compost or peat moss. When grown on in a pot, this type of cutting will produce flowers the following spring.

► Chrysanthemums have brittle stems and it is very disheartening to see a fine plant knocked over by the wind. All is not lost however if it is still attached to the main stem. Get hold of a few paddle pop sticks and some sticky tape or string. Carefully bend the stem back upright and splint it as you would a broken leg. Use the tape to hold the splints in place and with any luck, your plant will mend itself.

► March is sweet pea planting time, Tradition says that St Patrick's Day is the ideal time to put in your seeds, however they can be planted safely for the next six weeks. The best place to grow your sweet peas is on a trellis 1.8 – 2.5m high, attached to a north-south running fence where they will get as much sun as possible. However in these days of shrinking garden space, a tripod or pyramid can be rigged up from 3 two metre garden stakes lashed together at the top and then driven into the ground to form a frame around which you can wrap some wire netting. This will be ideal for your sweet peas to grow on. Sweet peas need good drainage and rich soil with a pH of around 6.5. Dig the soil over to about a spade depth, sprinkle over some dolomite and add some pelletised manure then give the lot a good forking over. Seeds should be planted between 2-4cm deep. Keep an eye on the plants once they are growing, as you will probably have to lead them over to the trellis or netting to get them climbing and on their way. Once they are on their way, a light dressing of super phosphate would be appreciated.

► Are you looking for a low maintenance bulb that will give you a fine show in the middle of spring? Give blue bells a trial run and you could be surprised. They can be planted under a deciduous tree or even in a large pot. They will multiply fairly rapidly. While they prefer a cool area, they will tolerate a warmer situation but the flowers won't last as long. Plant about 5cm down and about 8cm apart in late summer or early autumn. Blue bells are not hungry plants but a feed with a complete fertiliser will be appreciated after flowering. Water regularly while in leaf and flower, just damp is the way to go. The bulbs do not need to be lifted when finished, just leave them in place to let them multiply.



**Question?** I have some young roses that are doing well but over the last few weeks they are starting to get small white spots on them. The spots are only a millimeter or so in diameter. What are they and how do I get rid of them?

**Answer:** Those little white spots are white scale and should be got rid of before they do more damage. They are sap suckers. Spray them with either Pest Oil (mineral) or Eco Oil (organic). Spray where ever you see them and keep an eye on the plant as you might have to spray a second time.

**Question?** We have a big lantana bush growing up against our back fence and want to get rid of it. If I spray with glyphosate, will it kill it ?

**Answer:** Spraying a large lantana with glyphosate is often not very successful. Rather, run the hedger through it and get rid of most of the foliage, then let it reshoot. The soft new growth can now be sprayed with glyphosate and it will kill the whole bush. Lantana are shallow rooted shrubs and can be pulled out or dug out relatively easily. It is a gloves and long sleeves job as lantana stems have a rough sharp surface. Make sure you get it all out as any small pieces left behind will reshoot.

**Question?** I have a pine tree down the back and something that looks like a big bunch of hair is hanging off one of the branches. It is about 50cm long and looks quite interesting. What is it and should I get rid of it?

**Answer:** This sounds suspiciously like a mistletoe. Mistletoe is a parasite and if left in place, will kill the branch and eventually the tree. It sends its roots into the branch and along the trunk and gets its food from the tree. Cut the branch off near the trunk. Mistletoe seeds are brought by birds and there is such a thing as a mistletoe bird that is a small and quite attractive.

*Regards  
Hugh*



Decorative: 'In the Loop'