



Blackheath & District Horticultural Society Inc

Newsletter - April-May 2024

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From the President's Desk



Tourists enjoying autumn in Wentworth Street

Greetings Everyone!

'Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness'. Surely there is not a more apt description of autumn in Blackheath than the famous words of *To Autumn*, composed by the young poet, John Keats, over two hundred years ago in a country far away. This season sees thousands of tourists wandering down Wentworth Street to view our beautiful autumn trees. Every visitor from China seems to know about it. And no wonder! Apparently, Wentworth Street is featured on almost every Chinese website for 'Must See' places in Australia!

Our sincere apologies for the lack of a newsletter in April. Right at the last minute my old computer crashed and the newsletter with it. I know many of you were looking for it without success. Happily, the computer is now repaired with a new tower and updated programs. We also have our dedicated BDHS desktop computer, which is transportable, and can be passed from committee member to committee member if necessary.

Our other good news is that our website has passed the planning stage and we are in the process of uploading it to the web. We are not quite there yet, but if you would like to try, the site is: blackheathhorticulturalsociety.org.au.

Bring a friend or neighbour along to our next meeting to hear Ken Bird speak about the European Wasp!

Happy gardening!



Autumn produce in Blackheath

~ Heather Pye ~

General Meeting
Thursday, 6 June 2024 - 10.00 am
Uniting Church Hall, 43 Goveyts Leap Road, BLACKHEATH

10.00 - 10.30 am	General Meeting	11.15 – 12.00 noon	Ken Bird, The Wasp Man - It is Ken's passion and hobby to rid the Lithgow and Upper Blue Mountains area of the deadly European Wasp. Come along and learn more about this pesky insect.
10.30 am - 11.00 am	Mini Flower Show Discussion		
11.00 – 11.15 am	Morning Tea		

Don't forget to bring your specimens for the Mini Flower Show! They provide a great source for discussion.

Impromptu Itineraries

Events such as garden rambles or visits to nurseries can be organised at short notice under our new category of outings. Please ring Heather on 0405 393 281 if you are interested in attending any activities as a small group.

Welfare Please contact Liz Fox via our email if you know of any members who are unwell and would like a friendly call. Our best wishes for a full recovery go to Judy Kenyon's daughter, Michelle.

Plant Stall



Our plant stall on Saturday, 27 April was a great success. The weather was mild and we all had a pleasant time. Thank you to our stalwarts Von Dallas, Maree Fitzpatrick, Barbara Levy, Liz Fox and Jeannie Hicks, and all others who supplied plants and other items for sale. Special thanks to our Raffle King, Peter Alexander, who raised almost \$300 on his own, thanks to his art in selling tickets.

Flower & Craft Show 2024



Camellia display at one of our Shows

After much deliberation our committee has decided not to proceed with a Flower & Craft Show in 2024. The reasons for this are varied, the main one being that the large Phillips Hall will not be available until after November, and the Show would have to be considerably reduced in size. We feel that we could not do the show justice using only the smaller Bates Hall. However, we remain positive that we can stage the Show in 2025, and this break will give us more than a year to prepare for a super show in 2025. We have not quite given up our ideas for 2024, and a small event is in the planning stages. More to come

Our Next Bus Trip

Unfortunately, our May bus trip to Mount Tomah had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers.

Mid-year Run to Rural North-west Sydney

20 June 2024: Our next bus trip will be on **Thursday, 20 June** to north-west Sydney, where we will visit Camellia Grove and Mother Earth nurseries—**cost \$25.00**, excluding lunch and any entry fees/donations.

We will depart Blackheath (Gardiner Crescent outside Blackheath Area Neighbourhood Centre) at 8.30 am, arriving at McDonalds, Richmond for morning tea about 9.30. After refreshments we will head to Glenorie, in rural north-west Sydney. We were so impressed with Glenorie RSL on our last trip, we will revisit this club for lunch. This will be your chance to see some beautiful camellias in bloom, and grab some plants from Mother Earth, ready to pop them into your gardens for a spring display in Blackheath.

Community Projects

All About Orchids – 6 April 2024, Blackheath

In spite of the promise of a dismal day, this event turned out to be very cheerful and we enjoyed our participation. The talks on the orchids, and the other stalls were very interesting. We were able to speak to the sculptor of our new installation and hear his views on designing and producing this sculpture: *Reveal: A Celebration of Blue Mountains Orchids. Corunastylis reflexa*, rediscovered after 145 years by local eight-year-old Arabella Hanisch Jasiak inspired the installation by Joel Mitchell. Unfortunately, there are very few images of this orchid due to its rarity. The stall proved to be a very good promotional event and the children enjoyed planting a bulb in their own hand-made newspaper pots.

The orchid sculpture is now well and truly established in front of the small building near the Rotary Clock at the GWH and Govetts Leap Road intersecton. Discussion about the small building is ongoing: BMCC wish to paint the building a suitable background colour, while Stat Rail, the current owners, wish to demolish it. You can have your say on this at our next meeting.



Von Dallas enjoying a sausage sandwich at our stall.

Our May Mini Flower Show Results

Category		Exhibit	Exhibitor	Pnts
Flowers/Shrubs - 1 Cut	1 st	Azalea Indica - <i>Erica</i>	Liz Fox	3
	2 nd	Hybrid Tea Rose - <i>Peace</i>	Judy Kenyon	2
	3 rd	Protea – <i>Pink Ice</i>	Laraine Graham	1
Flowers/Shrubs - 3 Cuts	1 st	Dahlia - 'Bushfire'	Fay McIlwraith	3
	2 nd	Protea	Laraine Graham	2
	3 rd	No 63 Please let us know if this was your exhibit.		1
Native	1 st	Mixed vase	Jan Field	3
	2 nd	Banksia – Giant Candle hybrid	Jan Field	2
	3 rd	Mixed vase	Fay McIlwraith	1
Decorative (vase of flowers, floral arrangement, table centre, etc)	1 st	Dahlias – 'Sunset'	Fay McIlwraith	3
		Vase of Flowers	Fay McIlwraith	2
		Vase of dahlias – 'Cornflake'	Barbara Levy	1
Edible	1 st	Basket of produce	Fay McIlwraith	3
	2 nd	Tomatoes & Mint	Barbara Levy	2
Other (non-decorative) foliage, succulents, pot plants, etc	1 st	Foliage – Maple autumn leaves	Heather Pye	3
	2 nd	Oakleaf Hydrangea – autumn	Jan Field	2
	3 rd	Cactus in pot	Fay McIlwraith	1

May Mini Flower Show Report



Peace – Hybrid Tea Rose

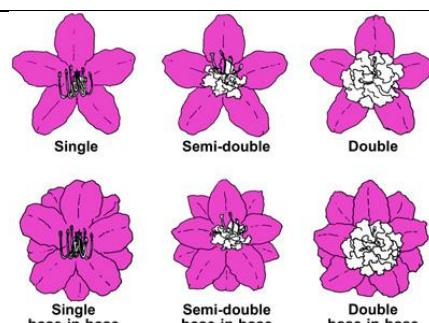
Peace is a Hybrid Tea Rose. It is one of the world's best-loved roses - as nearly perfect as a rose can be. It is the greatest rose of all time according to many rosarians. It was introduced in 1945 by Conard Pyle Co, U.S.A. Peace has interesting statistics: It has a 15cm-wide, high centre, slightly fragrant blooms with between 40-45 petals. At first the petals are golden yellow, edged pink and they change every day until the pink dominates. Peace is a robust bush with large, glossy, dark leathery foliage and strong stems.

In the world of botany, Azaleas are now classed as a species of Rhododendron. However, there are differences between them. As well as the structure of the flowers, the Azalea group thrives in a much wider climatic range than Rhododendron, which are mainly mountain or cold climate plants. Nearly all the azaleas we grow are hybrids, but even so they fall into several main groups.

The most common group is the evergreen INDICA azalea.

The second most common group is the KURUME azalea. The third group is the perfumed MOLLIS azalea, which has blooms of yellow, orange and flame tones. This group is and mostly grows in cold climate gardens.

Azalea flowers come in single and hose-in-hose types. 'Hose-in-hose' azaleas denotes a type of flower whose calyx is genetically modified, either by nature or breeding, into a complete set of petals. Usually, these azaleas are easily recognised by their small evergreen leaves. The flowers, which are small (like a Kurume), all grow in pairs one inside the other.



Different forms of Azalea flower
(Azalea Society of America)

The deciduous Mollis azaleas grow where the winters are cold. Indica and Kurume azaleas grow in warmer climates. All azaleas have shallow roots and should not be planted too deeply.

The winning little pink azalea would be classed as a 'double indica'

The bowl of mini tomatoes was admired by many members, but the addition of the mint leaves to decorate made them a winner. It's lucky that I am not a judge, or else I would be giving the taste test! Another lovely touch was the jar of homemade pickles popped into the basket of raw vegetables.

~ Liz Fox ~



Azalea indica - Erica

April Bus Trip Report - Wisemans Ferry

We set off for the historic Hawkesbury region on a beautiful day via Springwood and Winmalee. The bush was spectacular on the drive down to the plains. Again, we marvelled at the skills of our Driver, Mick, in descending the hairpin bends. After morning tea at McDonalds, Richmond, we headed for Ebenezer and the oldest church in Australia. The ancient church is set high on the banks of the Hawkesbury, with sweeping views across the lawn down to the river itself. The church has been restored and church services are held regularly. The old schoolhouse (the first in Australia) was also worth a visit, together with the shop where morning teas, books and other items could be purchased.



Traversing the Hawkesbury on the Sackville Ferry



Ebenezer Church

After a talk on the history of the church, we set off for our destination along the picturesque road to Wisemans Ferry. Some evidence of the recent inundations was evident and Mick carefully negotiated some very large 'puddles'. For those of us who have not ridden a vehicle ferry in many, many years, traversing the Hawkesbury on the Sackville Ferry was novel and exciting. The swallows which seemed to be in permanent residence on the ferry itself flitted and swooped as the ferry moved forward. We were all in high spirits as we continued over to the other side on the road to Wisemans.

Disappointment ensued, however, as, at the next turnoff, we were stopped by NSW Police. We were unable to proceed due to major road maintenance after an oil spill! However, our indomitable spirits prevailed and we 'headed for the Hills', where we lunched in a beautiful outdoor setting in the grounds of Glenorie RSL. A visit to the potts nursery, and we headed home through the new suburbs of north-west Sydney – an amazing transformation from the farmlands of our youth! We were quite glad when we reached The Driftway and were heading home to our lovely peaceful mountains! A quick stop on the way home at Hawkesbury Lookout over the recently-formed Penrith Lakes completed our trip for the day. In spite of the change of itinerary, everyone agreed that it was a pleasant and enjoyed day.



View of Penrith Lakes from Hawkesbury Lookout



The River from Ebenezer Church grounds



Picnic Tables at Ebenezer Church

Our April Mini Flower Show Results				
Category		Exhibit	Exhibitor	Points
Flowers/Shrubs - 1 Cut	1 st	King Protea	Fay McIlwraith	3
	2 nd	Dahlia – <i>Fire and Ice</i>	Barbara Levy	2
	3 rd	Abysinnian Gladiolus (<i>Acidanthera</i>)	Jeannie Hicks	1
Flowers/Shrubs -3 Cuts	1 st	Hydrangea paniculata	Liz Fox	3
	2 nd	<i>Arisaema fargesii</i> (Cobra Lily)	Jeannie Hicks	1
	3 rd	Fuchsia	Judy Kenyan	2
Native	1 st	Banksia	Fay McIlwraith	3
	2 nd	Bottle Brush	Barbara Levy	2
	3 rd	<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i> (Fringe plant)	Liz Fox	1
Decorative (vase of flowers, floral arrangement, table centre, etc)	1 st	<i>The Last of the Summer Roses</i> (featuring ice berg roses)	Heather Pye	3
	2 nd	<i>Tones of Summer</i> Dahlias – Ikebana style	Fay McIlwraith	2
	3 rd	<i>Statement in Maroon -</i> Dahlias	Fay McIlwraith	1
Edible	1 st	Zucchini & Nasturtium	Barbara Levy	3
	2 nd	Basket of Vegetables	Fay McIlwraith	2
Other (non-decorative) foliage, succulents, pot plants, etc	1 st	Succulents in pot	Liz Fox	

April Mini Show Report

When our members arrived at this meeting, dahlias of many different shapes, colours and sizes met their eyes. This delightful sight for our enjoyment was provided by our guest speaker, Rob Slarke, a past president of our society. He used his beautiful flowers as he spoke to our group. He had also agreed to judge our Mini Flower Show. As Rob judged our Mini Flower Show he shared his knowledge of the protocol of horticultural judging with which he is very familiar as a qualified judge not only of dahlias, but also of daffodils. His judging often takes him interstate. We learnt the basic rules to follow if we placed an entry on the show table. For some people it was all very new and even a little daunting at times. To see your lovely flower examined from every angle (especially from the back) was a trauma, especially if the exhibit was laid aside.



Collarette type dahlia

	<p>Rob judging his own dahlias with a critical eye. The photo on the left shows the face of the dahlia, while the photo on the right shows the back of the flower, where the petals almost meet.</p>	
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However, I am sure that now everyone will check the foliage of their exhibits in the future for tears, disease and other damage or even insects in residence.

You will become used to these additional procedures. Until you get used to it, 'staging' your entry can be a worry. You may recall Rob swinging the entry vase from side to side to check if the entry moved in the vase (and a lot did move.) To stage a flower for exhibition in a show judged along RHS lines, the exhibit must be secure in the vase and facing the judge. Most exhibitors use paper towel or even newspaper placed inside the vase to hold the exhibit securely. The papers must not be visible to the judge. However some lucky people glowed to receive words of praise for their entry which was free of blemishes and unwanted visitors. Of course the exhibit had to satisfy the requirements of the section in which it had been entered. "Three cuts" means exactly that – not two or four, which would be disqualified under RHS rules.

In '1 cut' the winner was the King Protea. The name Protea comes from Greek Mythology where Proteus had the power to assume any shape. Although related to the floras of Australia and South America, they come from South Africa and are NOT natives of Australia. Proteas grow well on hillsides because of their need for perfect drainage. Proteas are loved by birds seeking nectar. The 2nd place was won by a lovely little dahlia (Fire and Ice) which our judge described in glowing terms. In a previous Mini Show report I had described that little dahlia as 'perfect' so I was pleased. I think that anyone would have to be very brave to exhibit a dahlia to a dahlia judge. Well done!

3rd place went to an Abyssinian Gladiolus, more commonly known as a Chinese Cobra Lily. which was a Gladiolus species. This means that it is directly related to the much larger gladioli which are used in floristry. The exhibit was presented very gracefully and could have won a prize in the Decorative section.



King Protea



Acidanthera – Abyssinian Gladiolus

In '3 cuts' the winners were Hydrangea paniculatas. These particular hydrangeas are tough, cold-hardy plants which are easy to grow and propagate. They are laden with snowy blossoms all through summer, but as autumn approaches the blossoms turn pink. Hydrangea paniculata are strong, easy care and long-lived plants. They are hardier than most species, tolerating extremely cold winters, are not fussy about soil type, but need reasonable drainage. Their only flaw is having brittle branches and they are best planted in a sheltered situation.

In previous mini shows we have had an 'amazing' flower - Fritillaria, but in this show there was a 'mystery' flower which was not identified at first. It was Arisaema which is sometimes known as the Cobra Lily. They are grown for their curious large, hooded spathes each enclosing a pencil-shaped spadix.

In the Natives section the banksias and callistemons were well placed.

The Fringe Plant (deserves a mention. The foliage was bronze, the flowers were cerise and they do have very visible fringes. It is interesting as there is a matching shrub which has lime green foliage and its flowers are white with white fringes. Both shrubs are evergreen.



Arisaema fargesii



Vase of Fuchsias



Fringe Plant (*Loropetalum*)
aka Chinese Fringe Flower

 <p>Decorative <i>The Last Roses of Summer</i> Heather Pye</p>	<p>In the next section, “The Last Rose of Summer” was a winner – and why not? Who doesn’t love roses? Our other exhibitor in this section is improving her skills each month and gaining our admiration with her arrangements. Edibles were presented nicely and the ‘colour interest’ of the relevant flowers draws attention. Winter is a test for vegetable growers in our climate. Brassicas (cabbages, cauliflowers etc) and root vegetables should be well established by now.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~ Liz Fox ~</p>	 <p>Decorative – Ikebana Style <i>Tones of Summer</i> Fay McIlwraith</p>
<p>The Garden Buzz</p>  <p>This section is for your contributions: news and anecdotes about your garden or gardens you have seen, as well as your experiences in gardening in Blackheath’s cool climate.</p>	<p>Weeds to Watch Out For</p> <p>Mallow</p> <p>Mallow (<i>Malva parviflora</i>) is an annual, biennial or perennial weed that can grow up to 1.5 m tall and has a single taproot. It produces small pink, mauve or white flowers throughout late autumn to late spring. It often grows in waterlogged, compacted soil with poor drainage. In spite of its status as a weed, mallow leaves are edible and are said to be a tasty addition to salad.</p>	 <p>Mallow growing on the path in Govetts Leap Road</p>

If you have recently acquired mallow in your garden, it would be wise to remove it before it reaches its full height, as the taproot can be up to 60 cm long, which makes it difficult to pull out. Mallow is quite resistant to herbicides, so it is best to remove plants by digging them out when young and before they flower to prevent re-seeding.

Thank you to all our members whose help and assistance ensure that our meetings and events are always successful. Setting up the meeting, presiding over the Welcome Table, helping in the kitchen, taking photographs, bringing plants to our stall, attending our plant stall... the list goes on. All these tasks, large and small, add to the friendly ambiance of our Society and are much appreciated.

Events Calendar 2024 - (* = Non-Society event – possible car-pooling /public transport excursion)

June 6th - General Meeting	10.00 am – 12.00 noon Mini Flower Show + Discussion, Morning Tea Speaker: Ken Bird – The Wasp Man
June 20th Bus Trip	To Sydney’s North-west rural suburbs Visit to Camellia Grove Nursery and Mother Earth Lunch at Glenorie RSL. Depart 8.30 am – Return about 5.30 pm
July 28th - National Tree Day*	This event, facilitated nationally by Planet Ark has grown into Australia’s largest tree planting and nature care event. It’s a call to action for all Australians to put their hands in the earth and give back to nature and their community. Plant a tree, or help someone else to plant one - in a pot or in the ground – every little bit helps!