

Bowral Garden Club Inc

(established in 1963)

Address: PO Box 910, Bowral NSW 2576



*'Friendship through Gardening'
Affiliated with Garden Clubs of
Australia Inc*

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2012



Fruits from the garden

Edibles: the Theme for the Month

We have certainly had the mists and rains this autumn and very little sun so that the tomatoes have struggled to ripen. Instead of the zucchinis enjoying their usual growth, they are rather miserably small. Whatever the state of your garden edibles, please bring some examples of your successes and failures—herbs, vegetables, fruits. You will then be eligible to win the lucky prize.



Pat Keen brought a Climbing Spinach plant (*Basella alba* or Malabar or Red-vine or Ceylon Spinach) for the trading table last month. A common vegetable in tropical Africa and Southeast Asia (where it originated), the thick, dark green leaves of this edible ornamental climber provide tasty greens throughout the summer. It has a mild flavour more palatable to children than the peppery cool-season varieties and is equally delicious cooked or fresh in a salad. Heat-loving and vigorous, these attractive plants can reach over 6 feet (2 metres) if they are trained on a bean tower or trellis, or any vertical structure for twining.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held on
Monday 7 May 2012 at 1.30 pm.

The new committee will be elected. Please note: nomination forms will be available at the April Club meeting or contact a committee member if one is required.

The annual subscription will also be due at the AGM. This year the cost is \$30 but there will be no payments taken at the door at the Club monthly meetings, so that is quite a saving over the year.

What's on in April

2 April (Monday): 1.30pm Club meeting at Presbyterian Church Hall, Bendooley St, Bowral. Theme is *Edibles* with guest speaker Jonathan Purvis – "The Edible Gardener".

16 April (Monday): 10.30 am: Garden visit to the artist Sue Wilson's garden at 23 Viewland St, Bundanoon. Photos below taken by Pat Keen.



All sorts of garden art



Including hats made from hosepipes!

30 April (Monday): 10.30 am Coffee morning with Margaret Buckland: Unit 75, 25 Park Road, Bowral.

Local Events in April

21 April (Saturday): Brigadoon at Bundanoon

28 - 29 April (Sat- Sun): Town & Country Garden Weekend to raise funds for the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens. Seven beautiful gardens will be open from 10am to 4pm:

Wandella, 475 Old South Road, Mittagong

Greenbriar Park, 1117 Old South Road, Mittagong

Coombe Wood, 226 Range Road, Mittagong

Bellagio, 4 Kimberley Drive, Bowral

A native garden at 4 Earl Street, Mittagong

Woodleigh, 221 Oxley Drive, Mittagong

Quindalup, 180 Sproules Lane, Bowral

The Plant Stall will also be held at *Quindalup* and picnics are welcome on the lawn.

What's on in May

7 May (Monday): 1.30pm Annual General Meeting at Presbyterian Church Hall, Bendooley St, Bowral. Guest speaker will be Jim Powell on Camellias.

9 May (Wednesday): 10.30am Committee meeting.

14 May (Monday): 10.30am: Garden visit to the Australian Botanic Garden, Mount Annan.

21 May (Monday): 10.30am Coffee at Braemar Garden World.

Garden Visit to Wildes Meadow

The visit to Les and Elaine Musgrave's garden took place on Monday 12 March. Many of the members had never driven to Wildes Meadow and were delighted with the lovely countryside surrounding the garden. The five acres of the Musgrave's property, which they bought about five years ago, are undulating, with a long tree-lined drive, two dams, wet areas as well as sunny borders and a formal parterre—an ornamental arrangement of flowerbeds with a central path and arches with burgundy maples growing on either side. The burgundy colour is reflected in the flowerbeds with the dramatic, tall canna lilies contrasting with silver leaf foliage.



A view of the parterre (photo S. Regtop)

Beyond the house and the parterre are sweeping lawns leading to the dam. Everywhere there are lovely vistas and wonderful planting, including a stand of birches. Les has chosen *Betula nigra*, a deciduous tree from along the rivers in eastern USA

known as the river or tropical birch, which keeps its foliage longer and more successfully than the *Betula pendula*—the silver birch, which abound in Southern Highlands gardens.

There is a beautiful bed of a wide variety of grasses, in which are two statues of a boy and a girl (with moss on her hair and part of her body). Elaine's mother sculpted the girl from a life study and then when she first saw her in the garden she thought she looked a bit lonely—so she made a little boy to keep her company.



The little girl and boy created by Elaine's mother

The gravel area near the house, with its golden bamboo, purple and white irises, and all sorts of varieties of ground cover planted in the stones, is really lovely and Les weeds it using a weed-killer to keep the bamboo under control.

The two stables, now sited side by side, provide Les with a place for his machinery and Elaine with a beautiful studio, where she produces her exquisite botanical art. We all enjoyed that part of the visit too, admiring her paintings and buying her cards and larger prints. The beautiful Musgrave property is certainly an inspirational place for gardeners to visit.

Plants you couldn't do without

Choose ten or twenty of your favourite plants that you believe are essential for your piece of paradise. These can be plants that you actually grow or would like to grow in your Southern Highlands garden. Please send the list to the Editor, (probyn44@bigpond.com) or hand the list in to her at the April or May meeting. It will be interesting to see which plants we favour. Some people (mentioning no names!) couldn't live without their maples, or fuchsias or roses. Which plants do you love most?

Garden Tips

Cyclamen: There are several true species of cyclamens which are excellent plants for the rock garden, for growing in pots, or flat bowls, or for spots under trees and shrubs. These are all miniature flowered forms—not the large hybridised variety sold in all the supermarkets. In autumn

these pretty little swept-back flowers in white and shades of pink stick their heads up above the bare soil, followed by heart-shaped leaves with attractive marbling. Moidart nursery has some *Cyclamen hederifolium* though currently only the white ones. Their pink stock is rather low. The miniature cyclamens set seed profusely which comes true to type. Watch out for some different varieties such as *Cyclamen coum*, *Cyclamen repandum* or *Cyclamen rhodium subsp. vividum* (a beautiful deep red variety) at the Plant Stall at Quindalup on 28-29 April.

Anemone bulbs should be planted during April/May in prepared soil. Care should be taken that the corms are planted the right way up. There is a root-producing side, which is recognizable by its roughness and its point, while the growing side is smoother and flatter. If there is any doubt, soak the corms on moist paper or a moist cloth for a day or so until the first signs of roots appear, and then plant carefully with these downwards. The corms should be planted from 2-4 inches (5-10 cm) deep, depending on the lightness of the soil, and from 6-12 inches (15-30 cm) apart according to the mass flowering effect desired. An excellent colour result will be achieved if the corms are planted in a group of 20-30.

Sasanqua Camellias: Prune the camellias after flowering and before they set their buds for the following year. If you prune too late you may cut off next year's flowers. Most varieties thrive in semi-shade although a few are suitable for a sunny position. What they can't cope with is limed areas so avoid planting near newly concreted areas. They need acid soil. A handful of sulphur sprinkled round the plants every 3-4 months helps in alkaline areas.

Pests and diseases: The use of chemical solutions to solve garden problems should be a last resort, as most pests and diseases result from imperfect growing conditions. The secret is good cultivation, care and attention, biological controls and small amounts of chemicals if all else fails. Plants need to have space to grow and if they are overcrowded in a bed the humidity may be very high leading to more frequent problems with leaf disease.

Tree planting: Autumn is often the time for gardeners to visit nurseries looking for a feature tree. This is when you will be able to see the colour of autumn foliage. If you plant a tree in your lawn, cut a circle out of the turf around it. Mulch regularly and keep mowers and trimmers away from the trunk. Disease enters damage on tree trunks caused by careless use of tools.

Hyacinths: The open garden is the most suitable planting area for them, as they love a deep, rich, cool soil, particularly through their early stage of growth. The bulbs should be planted during the months of March and April in moist soil about five inches (13cm) deep. In heavy soils, they must be planted at a shallower level, while in hot, sandy soils it may be advisable to go as deep as 6 inches (15cm).

Hyacinths can be planted in rows or clumps about 6 inches (15cm) apart.

Many people prefer to plant them in containers and the most effective results can be achieved by using special bulb bowls with no drainage holes, filled not with soil or potting mix but with specially prepared bulb fibre, which is made up from peat moss, to which has been added a small quantity of charcoal, crushed shells and fertilizer.

The fibre must be wetted and damp but not too damp that it oozes water when squeezed. Press the damp fibre into the bowl to a depth of about 1½ inches (4cm) and place the bulbs on top on the mixture. Fill the space in between each bulb with more fibre leaving the upper half of the bulb free of fibre.

Store in a semi-dark, cool place and only water when dry so that the bulbs do not dry out. When the flowering spikes appear the bowl can be moved into a light, but not too bright position. This way of cultivation is very severe on the bulb, which should be planted out in a garden bed as soon as it has finished flowering and left to recover. It may not flower again properly for several years.

Hyacinths grown in a glass bulb jar are usually so weakened as to be of no further use. It seems a cruel way to treat such a beautiful bulb!

Tulips: Have you put your tulip bulbs in the fridge? Six weeks in the cold (not the freezer) will encourage good spring flowering.

Lawns: April is the time when a little attention to the lawn will reap rewards. The grass certainly won't require watering this season but check for weeds and either hand weed or spray with a selective herbicide. If there are any bare patches sow seeds now, broadcasting half the packet of seed in one direction and the second at right angles to it. Either press the seed down with a light roller or simply scatter some sandy soil over the top. The weather forecast is for a wet April so the seed should soon produce results without the need to water.

Edibles: April is strawberry planting time. If you have space for a dedicated bed, prepare it with compost, plant and mulch with sugarcane straw. If your summer vegetables were not very successful this year, it's time to plant for a winter crop of cabbages, silverbeet and beetroot.

Perennials: Once they have finished flowering check whether the perennials need dividing—you will tell by the way they are losing their vigour or pushing the crowns out of the ground looking more like a ring than a clump. Dividing perennial plants gives you healthier, longer-lived plants and the bonus of more plants.

When to divide perennials depends on the type of plant and how quickly it's growing. Dig up the whole clump and select rooted offsets from the outside of the clump. Discard the rest. Plant the offsets in well-

prepared soil, incorporating blood and bone and compost.

Berrima Nursery: Have you visited Berrima Nursery yet? It's certainly worth a trip and conveniently situated two doors from the Maggie Café.

Avocado Ice Cream

This is an easy to make and extremely tasty sensation!

- Put the following ingredients into a blender and blend until smooth: 1 avocado cut into pieces, 1 cup sugar, juice of 2 lemons, ½ jar of Buderim Ginger Syrup (4 ozs)
- In a separate bowl beat 300 ml whipping cream.
- Combine the two components and place in a container with a lid and freeze until needed.

If you serve this ice cream with something red with a bite—like stewed plums or apple and rhubarb—it looks and tastes wonderful.

Margaret Buckland

Muriel's Musings

There are so many interesting historical gardens around this area and one in my mind this month is situated on Oxley Drive. Now called *Robinwood House*, it was originally named *Fernside* and its first owner is believed to have planted one of each of the trees mentioned in the Bible. I doubt that many of them remain in the grounds.

When I was about twelve the owners, Colonel and Mrs Lewis, showed me round the garden and pointed out the trees, the pool, nuttery and paths that were mentioned in "Hollyman", the book the Colonel had written in 1923 for their three children, who by 1937 were finishing their education at Oxford. I think it was John who was in the rowing eight, but had to give up his place to another when he suffered a back injury. Elizabeth, the daughter, had long wavy auburn hair—the colour of well-made peach jam.

I still remember the mornings when I was walking to school and Colonel Lewis would be striding along the footpath in a military manner—his walking stick fairly swinging—and in his hand a bundle of letters to post to his children in England. I think he must have seen service in India because the little book "Hollyman" was printed in Bengal.

The Lewises sold up and returned to England when the War was declared in September 1939. The name of the gardener who lived in the cottage (*Robinwood Cottage* - much added to and now on the market) was Mr Wells. He lived alone there with his family of cats - and painted pictures.

During the war years a Swiss lady, Mrs De Silva, and her chauffeur, lived at *Fernside* and I think it was she who renamed it *Robinwood*. She was a very private lady and didn't 'blend in' with the townsfolk.

Following Mrs De Silva were Mr and Mrs David Absolon, who were very enthusiastic gardeners—they were very active in the early years of Tulip Time—and their beautiful flowerbeds were often featured in the gardening magazines.¹ After the Absolons, *Robinwood* changed hands several times I believe, and was added to or changed from its original set up. I think at one time the lady ran it as an up-market B & B.

I wonder if the games room for the children still exists? You entered it at the north facing side of the house. In that room on rainy days the children played quoits—a Hookey board on the wall—a cuckoo clock, a piano and a long table where the children ate their meals or did their lessons and played board games.

The book "Hollyman" that the Colonel wrote - they gave me a copy for Christmas in 1937 - is now with my daughter Annalee and her children in Brisbane. As a moderately talented artist I delight in watching the Gib bathed in the pink glow that only lasts eight or so minutes as the last of the setting sunlight fades into evening. The Colonel wrote of it as the Fairy Light and it is an important part of the "Hollyman" story. Many years ago my Mother sent me a copy of the obituary notice of Mrs Lewis, a dearly loved Mother and Grandmother. I have no doubt that "Hollyman" has delighted the Lewis grandchildren as he did and still does me.

Muriel Stuart

1. Muriel has a copy of *The Women's Weekly* dated 26 February 1969 with a gardening supplement edited by Allan Searle, which contains an article on the spring-flowering bulbs among the annuals in the Absolon's garden in Bowral. As well as the beautiful bluebells, they were also growing *Lachenalis* 'like golden orange sentinels' among a mass of pink alpine phlox. In addition the article has a couple of photographs of Mr and Mrs T.C. Read's garden at Burradoo with *Cytisus praecox* (Warminster broom) and phlox and yellow tulips.

Minutes of General Meeting 5 March 2012, Presbyterian Church Hall, Bowral.

Apologies: M. Stuart, L. Thirrul, E. Nicol, F. Moore, S. Beames & J. Scot.

Members: 35 **Visitors:** 2 (D. Clifford & V. Davey)

Vice President J Braithwaite opened the meeting at 1.30pm, welcomed all and introduced our guest speaker Gerard Oldfield of Highland Dahlias. Gerard gave an enthusiastic and very knowledgeable talk on the subject. Members learned that dahlias are subtropical plants related to the aster and although they can do well in a short season in colder climates they suffer in high heat. Red spider, frost, mildew and snails can also damage them. Larger dahlias need support and are best secured to a fence or allowed to grow through supported pieces of large mesh. Plants do well mulched with grass clippings, like lime but require additional liquid fertilizing. Dahlias come in many colours and forms. Forms include pompom, water lily, cactus, single and tiny tot dahlias.

We learned that lifting tubers is not necessary, but when cutting the tubers in half, leaving an eye as the new shoot and throwing half away makes less stress on the plant for nutrients. Protect tubers in winter by mulching heavily and wait until October to plant out any new tubers. De-budding to one flower per stem makes for bigger and stronger flowers. For cut flowers, Gerard recommended picking flowers before 10.00am, cutting at a 45-degree angle and placing them straight into deep cold water to prolong their life.

Lorraine Stott thanked Gerard for his very informative talk and presented him with a gift.

For the benefit of new Members J. Braithwaite then reminded the meeting of the \$3.00 fee payable at the door (until May) and that we also ask for a gold coin donation in lieu of a small plate of food at afternoon tea. J. Braithwaite thanked U. Virag who donated two pretty dishes for this purpose that will sit at each end of the tea trolley.

Minutes from 6 February General Meeting were taken as read and the motion was put to have them accepted.

Moved: L. Stott : **Seconded:** B. Wilson. The motion was carried.

Correspondence Out:

- Thanks to Noel Arroll for his generous donation of mushroom compost.
- Thanks to Robyn Bible (guest speaker in February).
- Thanks to Patty Mouhtouris, for opening up *Summerlees* gardens for the club.

Correspondence In:

- Pamphlets: Bundanoon Garden Ramble "Oct" Tourist ideas.
- Southern Highlands Gardens open 28 & 29 April - money raised goes to SHBG.
- Bathurst Gardens - Oct.
- Gardening down the Lachlan (Condobolin) 21 & 22 April.
- Highlands Garden Society February Bulletin.
- Letter: Scott & Broad informing us Gardens Clubs of Australia Inc. (GCA Inc.) has cancelled them as our insurer.
- Letter: The GCA Inc. notifying us that LTM Risk Partners are our new insurers with fees due by 30 April.

Treasurer's Report: In the Treasurer's absence J. Braithwaite reported Income for February was \$157.00 and expenditure \$408.50 leaving a balance of accumulated cash funds of \$3577.22. Together with the cash funds and savings A/C of \$2171.49, balance at bank is now \$5748.71. J. Braithwaite put the motion that the Treasurer's Report be accepted: **Seconded** : C. Probyn . The motion was carried.

General Business:

- The Botanical Art activity on 19 March 2012 is cancelled but hopefully will be rescheduled.
- Muriel Stuart is being consulted about the early days of the Club. Muriel was secretary for 20 years and her father was president for 25 years.

- J. Braithwaite asked for names of Members interested in forming a group to help remove ivy from significant trees at Summerlees: date to be set.
- The new suggestion box looked lovely with many floral patterns applied by our volunteer K. Bailey.
- **Suggestions for the Surplus funds**

J. Braithwaite reported on the suggestions gathered at the February Club general meeting on how surplus funds might be spent. These suggestions were: \$1000 added to the Club's Savings O/C with the interest gained then combined with \$500 to be spent on the Club's 50th anniversary celebrations; bus outings to plant fairs or gardens out of the area; a quality PA system; data projection equipment.

At today's meeting members' ideas put in the new "suggestion box" included: purchase 'Highlands Gardening' book for new members to borrow; a lapel microphone with a PA system; spend money on the Club to benefit all members for the future; support for a PA system; spend money on the Club's 50th anniversary celebrations; pay for a guest speaker like Jackie French.

J. Braithwaite further reported that in February members offered ideas for community donations to: Welby Garden Centre & SHBG; SHBG for a special project such as a "wishing tree" or scented garden walk for the blind; children's gardening projects. At today's meeting members' ideas from the new "suggestion box" included one to donate the bulk of any surplus funds to Welby Garden Centre and SHBG; a fancy dress ball where we all come dressed as flowers (for the 50th Anniversary.

K. Fintan requested we ask for more suggestions for the committee to consider along with those previously put forward. K. Fintan then moved the following motion, which was seconded by C. Probyn:

"That the committee bring concrete proposals on spending the \$1500 available Club funds to the April Club monthly meeting for the Membership to vote on." The motion was carried.

- M. Gleeson reported on the successful potting morning and particularly thanked Patricia and Stewart Ward who brought extra cuttings.
- M. Gleeson reported on a 14-day garden tour to Tasmania and a floral display in the hall on 20 March (\$15.00 entrance) to raise funds for SHBG.
- 50th Birthday celebrations Think Tank: L. Stott reported many ideas have been gathered and the group will present a report to the Committee meeting.

Plant of the month: There was a lovely display of dahlias and members who contributed had their names put in a draw for a \$25 voucher for dahlia tubers organized by K. Fintan and kindly donated by Highland Dahlias. A lucky dip bag has also been donated by L. Stott. The lucky winner of the draw was U. Virag.

Trading Table: There were lots of plants for sale.

Seed Bank: B. Wilson reported there are new seeds available.

Lucky Door Prize: Won by U. Virag. Drawn by G. Oldfield.

The meeting was closed at 4.15pm.

The next meeting will be at the Presbyterian Church Hall in Bowral, on Monday 2 April commencing 1.30pm.

Management Committee

Vice-President:	Jennifer Braithwaite	4869 1389
Secretary:	Lynne Moore	4872 2433
Treasurer:	Pam Bailey	4869 5117
Program:	Kay Fintan	4861 2594
Meet & Greet:	Pat Keen	4861 5815
Membership:	Marilyn Gleeson	4869 3881
Newsletter Ed:	Meg Probyn	4871 3134

General Committee Members

Publicity:	Lorraine Stott	4869 4797
Social Secretary:	Catherine Mah	4861 7268
Seed Bank:	Barbara Wilson	4869 3925
Trading Table:	Ulishka Virag	4872 2243
Public Officer:	Eric Paananen	4862 1570
General Member:	Lindsey Arrol	4872 2005
Afternoon Tea		
Hosts:	Glenys Lilliendal	4861 2849
	Margaret Buckland	4862 5963
	Wendy Gamble	4862 2766
	Doreen Plumridge	4868 3517

Contributions to the Newsletter are always gratefully received. Please send them to the editor (probyn44@bigpond.com) or post to 158 Oxley Drive, Mittagong, NSW 2575.

