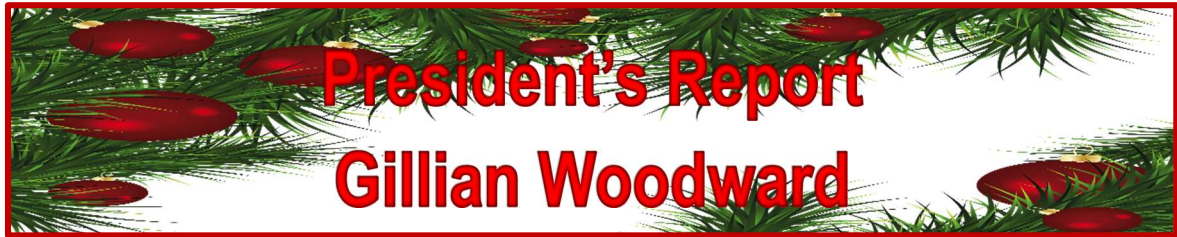


# Uki Garden Club

Volume 20/11 December 2020 [ugcnews@gmail.com](mailto:ugcnews@gmail.com) P.O. Box 580 Murwillumbah 2484  
<http://ukigarden.club/wp/>



Santa seems to have come early to the Tweed with our much-requested rain. But maybe he is being a bit too generous for some of us! Our rivers are currently bursting their banks after months of looking pretty low and listless. But that is life – either too much or too little of a good thing! Our gardens will certainly be lapping it all up though, and maybe our lawns will be rejuvenated by Christmas.

What a year 2020 has been – like no other before it, I am sure. If you've been staying at home, not travelling or seeing family, then maybe during Christmas some of you may be reunited with those you haven't been able to see in person for most of the year. Hopefully it will be a time of celebration extraordinaire for those who have been very socially isolated due to COVID.

For our garden club, the future looks to be much more positive for 2021, with gatherings of 50 now being allowed at private residences. This means that we can recommence both Food Group (in March) and Garden Gatherings (from February) as long as NSW stays as COVID-free as it is at present. If you would like to host a meeting, do get in touch with those organising the calendar (see page 9).

We do understand that for some of our members, especially those who are immuno-compromised or who are not very well physically, hosting or attending meetings may still be out of the question. You are still valued members, who can contribute/participate in other ways – especially via the newsletter – so do try to keep in touch. We'd also like to hear of any possible venues (other than members' private homes) that you'd like to suggest – perhaps good nurseries or non-members' special gardens that you have visited.

Although we don't usually hold a meeting in January, our committee decided that since we haven't met since last February or March, we should have a big "Welcome Back to 2021 Party", to which you are all invited (see details on next page). Catering and entertainment plans are well under way for this, so mark it on your calendar and book in to ensure your place at the table. It should be great fun and a fantastic way to catch up with all your gardening friends.

Happy Gardening, and all the best for the festive season.

Gillian





# Welcome Back to 2021 Party



## Invitation to All of Our Valued Uki Garden Club Members

### Where?

Burringbar School of Arts Hall,  
1 Old Pacific Highway, Burringbar, NSW, 2483

### Date?

Saturday 30th January 2021

### Time?

2pm to 4pm

### What will be happening?

- ☺ Celebratory welcome alcoholic & non-alcoholic beverages as well as a delicious Gourmet Afternoon Tea provided.
- ☺ A Mega Raffle carefully compiled by Couz'n Lynn – best hamper-maker ever!
- ☺ A Garden Trivia Contest and a UGC photo quiz so sharpen your pencils and minds for this.
- ☺ Garden 'Show and Tell' so please bring along any flowers, odd seeds, plants or leaf foliage for discussion/identification.

### What to wear?

Your best garden party gear.

### What to bring?

Your own plate, fork, knife, spoon, drinking glass, & mug. And any other beverages you may want as we will be providing the first drink. Don't forget a pencil for the quizzes!

### How do I book?

As this is a COVID-safe event we ask you to please book through this link:

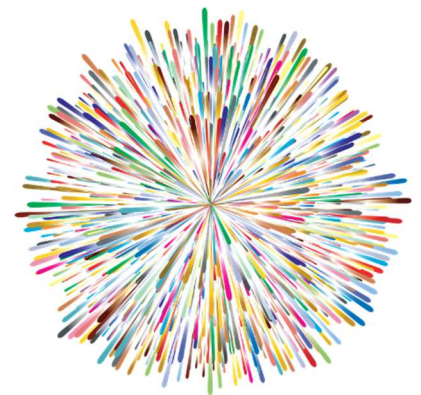
<https://www.trybooking.com/BNPEZ>

Bookings open on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and close on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

You will be sent a confirmation email and ticket. If you find you are unable to attend after RSVPing – please return your ticket as we need to confirm final numbers by Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January for catering purposes.

If you are unable to book online – please either speak with a friend or phone Gillian on 0457 872 040 and she will help you through the online booking process.

**Please note: There will be NO swap table or seed box at this event.**



We look forward to seeing you there!

Your Uki Garden Club Committee

# Peculiar Platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*)

The platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) is one of the more unusual looking Australian mammals, so unique that early scientists believed they were a hoax and not real at all with their duck like bill, paddle shaped tails, sleek furry body, venomous spur (in males) and webbed feet. Echidnas and platypus are the only mammals in the world that lay eggs and have their own classification Order called Monotremata. The females lay eggs and once the young have hatched, milk flows from special ducts onto the mother's fur and the young suckle from the fur.



Photo: ABC Open: Simone Law

The platypus is the sole living representative of its family (Ornithorhynchidae) and may have been around since 120million years ago, meaning it lived alongside dinosaurs. Fossil records suggest they were a number of related species. In 2013 a prehistoric tooth was discovered in northern Queensland confirming that the modern-day platypus once had a larger relative that was almost a metre long! Another prehistoric tooth unearthed from an ancient platypus in Patagonia is the first evidence of a monotreme living outside Australia and New Guinea. The discovery supports the theory that Australia and South America once shared a fauna which included marsupials and monotremes.

If all this isn't enough to impress, the platypus is also one of the earliest mammals and has genetic affinity with both reptiles and birds providing further evidence for the theory of evolution. Platypus genes contain DNA for egg yolk proteins shared only with reptiles and fish, plus mammalian genes responsible for lactation. This confirms that lactation evolved 166 million years ago, way before mammals birthed live young.

Platypus truly are remarkable creatures that live here in the Tweed Valley. Some of the best platypus habitat coincides with our drinking water catchment. They are found in the major permanent rivers, lakes and creeks of eastern Australia, from Northern Queensland to Victoria and Tasmania. Platypus are most active at night so spotting one is more likely at dusk or just before dawn. Watch for a distinctive, bullseye ripple pattern in still pools or areas of slow flowing water.

Healthy, intact embankment on the Oxley River makes ideal habitat for a platypus. Photo at right by Kim Stephan.



Platypus numbers are declining rapidly across their range. Since 1990, their habitat has seen a 22.6% national decline with the largest declines in NSW (32%) and QLD (27%). Platypus are now absent from 41% of their previously recorded range. The decline is the result of compounding impacts on the species from poor river health due to poor land management practices, climate change, pollution, 'opera house fish traps', competition from introduced fish for food, aquatic weeds and predation by feral animals as they move between water bodies. Lack of rainfall is identified as a major threat to platypuses, who like deep river pools with plenty of coverage and stable banks. The platypus species has somehow survived millennia, yet the age of the Anthropocene – the age of the humans – is the biggest threat yet.

We know the platypus is widespread in the Tweed, but there are very few sightings that have been recorded and little information available on where they live and their numbers. We can all do our bit to protect these amazing animals. Please report any sightings of platypus in the Tweed to <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NTW8TTY>. See here for more information: <https://www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/NaturalEnvironment>.

(The above article appeared in the *Grassroots Gazette* and has been reproduced with kind permission from Tweed Landcare Inc <http://tweedlandcare.org.au/>.)



# Aaah Ya Gotta Laugh

Passed on from Penny Riley... thanks Miss Pen!



A married couple in their early 60s are celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary in a quiet, romantic little restaurant. Suddenly, a tiny yet beautiful fairy appeared on their table.

She said, 'For being such an exemplary married couple and for being loving to each other for all this time, I will grant you each a wish.'

The wife answered, 'Oh, I want to travel around the world with my darling husband.'

The fairy waved her magic wand and - poof! - two tickets for the Queen Mary II appeared in her hands.

The husband thought for a moment: 'Well, this is all very romantic, but an opportunity like this will never come again. I'm sorry my love, but my wish is to have a wife 30 years younger than me.'

The wife and the fairy were deeply disappointed, but a wish is a wish! So the fairy waved her magic wand and voila!...the husband became 92 years old.

The moral of this story:

Men who are ungrateful bastards should remember most fairies are female ...



## And of course – just because it's Christmas...

What do you call Santa's little helpers? Subordinate Clauses.

What did Adam say to his wife on Christmas? It's finally Christmas, Eve!

What's every parent's favourite Christmas Carol? Silent Night.

Why was Santa's little helper depressed? Because he had very low elf esteem.

What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa? A rebel without a Claus.



# Members' Recipes

Here are some recipes to put you into the Christmas mood. They are both family recipes from Hartmut's family in Germany.

Thanks to Sue and Hartmut Holz knecht for sharing these yummy Christmas treats.

## Honey Biscuits (Honigplätzle)

Makes about 30 small biscuits

### Ingredients:

- ✓ 3 cups plain flour
- ✓ 1 cup sugar
- ✓ 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda, dissolved in 2 Tablespoons water
- ✓ 1 teaspoon powdered cinnamon
- ✓ ¼ teaspoon powdered cloves
- ✓ ½ cup clear honey
- ✓ ½ cup soft butter (or Nuttelex)



### Method:

1. Sift flour, cinnamon and cloves together in a medium-sized bowl.
2. Rub together flour mix, sugar and butter, until mix is like fine breadcrumbs.
3. Add honey and lastly the soda-water.
4. Mix very well, form into a ball, refrigerate ½ hour.
5. Grease and paper baking trays; heat oven to 195°C (Medium-Hot, 400°F).
6. Remove mixture from fridge. Roll teaspoons of mix into small, firm balls.
7. Place on trays. Flatten with a fork dipped in flour.
8. Bake for about 10 minutes until the biscuits are dark gold. Do not allow to burn.
9. Place on wire racks to cool.
10. Store in airtight tins for up to 2 weeks (but they never last that long in our house!)

## Weihnachtsstollen (Christmas Stollen)

(Makes 2 medium-sized loaves)

Mix together in a large warm bowl:

- ✓ 2 cups hand-warm milk (or a bit warmer)
- ✓ ½ cup sugar
- ✓ 1 teaspoon salt
- ✓ Mix into this:
- ✓ 1 ½ to 2 teaspoons dry yeast
- ✓ Stir until yeast is dissolved. Cover bowl with clean tea towel, put in a warm place and wait for yeast mix to react, about 15 minutes.



Stir in:

- ✓ 2 eggs, beaten
- ✓ ½ cup soft butter (or Nuttelex)
- ✓ Mix in, first with a wooden spoon then with your hand:
- ✓ 7 – 7 1/2 cups sifted plain flour

Turn out onto floured board. Knead well until dough feels elastic. Form into a smooth ball.

Put back in bowl and cover with tea towel. Put in a warm place to rise. Dough should double in bulk (about 1 hour).

Punch down, and let rise again (about 30 minutes).

Turn out onto lightly floured board, knead again and flatten out to about 4 cm thick.

In another bowl, mix together:

- ✓ Grated rind of 2 lemons
- ✓ 1 cup currants
- ✓ 1 cup raisins (chopped)
- ✓ ½ cup mixed peel (*optional: some people hate it!*)
- ✓ ½ cup blanched almonds (chopped)

Knead this mixture into the dough, trying to distribute it evenly throughout.

Cut dough in half. Press each half out into an oval shape about 4 centimetres thick.

Smear soft butter over the surface, fold over lengthwise to make a half-moon shape, press edges firmly together.

Brush top with melted butter. Place the 2 loaves on greased baking trays.

Allow Stollen to rise again (about 30 minutes).

Pre-heat oven to 190 °C/375°.

Bake in oven for about 30 minutes, until done. The top should be golden, and loaf should sound hollow when tapped.

When cool, ice with plain white icing with vanilla or rum essence added, decorate with almonds, glacé cherries, candied peel.

## Icing

Mix together:

- ✓ 1 cup icing sugar
- ✓ 1-2 Tablespoons milk
- ✓ 1 teaspoon vanilla extract/ rum essence

Make the mixture fairly thick, as it runs off the Stollen if it is too thin.





## And now a word from our UK correspondents

Hello from a very wet and deserted allotment site here in North London. Only a very few hardy members have been tending their plots these past few weeks.

Although it has been unseasonably warm, we have had more than enough rainfall to make it very heavy going. Our most senior plot holder (49 years and counting!) has never seen her plot so wet. A naturally sloping site down to a valley (Pymm's Brook), our site has always had many natural springs appearing across the 9.5 acres which emanate from the natural aquifers down to the valley. Heavy rainfall permeating into an already saturated aquifer will always drive more water to the surface through these springs to add to the rainfall on the surface.

Still, some 2021 crops are already well on the way. Our broccoli (January) is now almost ready to pick and the beans and peas are showing at least a month early! See pics below...



Our plot holder, mentioned above, grafted mistletoe onto a very old apple tree some 35 years ago and both the tree and the mistletoe are thriving. This year the mistletoe is the best she can remember. It seems an odd thing to do, but last year we took berries from this tree and spread them around the site on apple trees over 15 years old in an effort to propagate.

A small nick was made into the branch of a suitable tree, a ripe berry inserted then wrapped in sacking for protection.

It will take a good few years to see whether or not we have been successful. Why, you might wonder, do we want to cultivate a parasitic plant into our fruit trees and the only reason is almost on us – Christmas.

We are lucky enough to have many examples of the traditional Christmas greenery on our site – so here's a festive reminder from the UK of a well-known carol for you to sing along to. No prizes!



Merry Christmas to all of you from all of us here at the Cat Hill Allotments.

Richard & Pat Stile



## And from my dear brother in law – Dermot...



Hullo everyone! Just thought you might be interested in what is happening around our North London neck of the woods this festive season.

At left - Hannah and Glen from a couple of houses up have their front garden fern wrapped up against the frost and the insulation has been customised by yours truly. They then dressed it up. The mask is there in case the poor thing passes on the virus to any passers-by!

At right - Rebecca and Nick next door have added last year's carrot to the face after I'd done my bit with the face and the mask.

Our lawn has a good covering of leaves at this time of year, but because the lovable pooch from next door, Cara, uses our garden for her calling card as well as her own garden, it really is quite difficult sometimes to locate her calling card with a trowel and plastic bag in order to dispose of it, everything being the same colour. An

autumn/winter tip: take care where you tread, or rake the leaves up.



At left –our cute local squirrel collecting his nuts for the winter and probably stuffing them into our pot plants for eating later.

trees in the local park are now showing their mistletoes, of which there are tons this year.

At right - a few bare Sycamore



And lastly – at left, our Cyclamen at this time of year, still showing plenty of blooms, brightening up the garden.

Pauline has reminded me of a gardening tip regarding orchids. At this time of year the indoor orchids are showing good blooms but to keep them in tip-top condition, add tea to the water when giving them a drink, once a week during the flowering period. This could be the tea bag that's left in the tea pot, just top up with cold water and leave it to stew a while. Apparently orchids like the tannin. I guess this means they also like red wine but that's NOT going to happen.

A really good tip, nothing to do with gardening, from when I had an encounter with a grumpy taxi driver a few years ago. This was in answer to his question at the end of the taxi ride, " 'ere, what about a tip then?" "Never try to whistle with your mouth full of blancmange" I said to him.

Cheerio and Merry Christmas!





# Calendars of Meetings for 2021 are being compiled - Gardens Needed Please!

With meetings now possible for 2021, Sue Holzkecht has kindly volunteered to put together a schedule for the Food Group meetings and Lynn O'Hara will do the same for the Garden Gatherings for 2021. Thank you both for volunteering.

Food Group meetings are held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month starting 9.30am.

Garden Gatherings are held the last Saturday of the month starting at 2pm.

Please could all those members who are willing to host meetings throughout next year get in touch with Sue and Lynn as soon as possible because we like to get the calendar out just after Christmas. Best contact details are as below:

Food Group Meetings: Sue Holzkecht      0448 880 239      sue.holzkecht@gmail.com

Garden Gatherings: Lynn O'Hara      0408 053 303      lohboh1@bigpond.com

**Things to think about when hosting a meeting:** The Club really appreciates members hosting meetings as it provides a wonderful opportunity to see other gardens in different parts of our area, to get inspiring ideas and see first-hand what is working and not working for others.

When offering to host a meeting you will need to think about the best place to hold the meeting: in your garden, gazebo, garage or wherever, taking into consideration the possible need for shade and wind protection, the possibility of rain and the number of people you will have to accommodate.

The Club has two shade structures. Please contact Don Capner on 02 6677 7244 or mobile 0421 696 567 if you need to borrow them. You also need power access for the urns.

## ***Then:***

1. Give any special instructions about how to find your place, car parking arrangements, etc. to put into the Club newsletter the month before your meeting. Email to [ugcnews@gmail.com](mailto:ugcnews@gmail.com).
2. You should receive the UGC hosting kit from the person who hosted the last Food Group or Garden Gathering. It is their responsibility to organise its transfer to you. The kit includes two electric urns, a power board, tea, coffee, sugar, some paddlepop sticks and spoons (for stirring sugar), main sandwich board sign, tables and signs for the food and swap tables. It's best if you can organise this at the previous Food Group or Garden Gathering.
3. Buy fresh milk for the meeting (around 3 litres of whole milk should do).
4. Fill urns before the meeting and make sure that they are turned on. Check them during the meeting and turn them down if they are boiling.
5. You might also want to provide a jug of fresh water and a few spare glasses and extra cups for those who forget.
6. Have the right Attendance Book and Question Book out for the start of the meeting.
7. Find out who is hosting the next meeting and get the kit to them as it is your responsibility.

Thank you for considering hosting a meeting – the Club really values your contribution.

# December Job File – Julia Hancock

- ☼ Feed Hibiscus with a soluble fertiliser to keep the blooms coming all summer.
- ☼ Holiday-proof your plants by making sure they are well mulched. Remember to always mulch after rain to capture the moisture in the soil. If you are going away, move pots into the shade and cluster them so it's easier for a neighbour to water while you are away. Consider mulching your larger pots with pebbles, wine corks or pine cones to prevent them from drying out rapidly.
- ☼ Summer is not the ideal time for propagating most plants, but cuttings can be confidently taken from Cordylines (pic at right) and Dracaenas because they are struck in water. It's a good idea to cut the heads off Cordylines and Dracaenas to induce bushy growth, because where you cut, two shoots form. They also make a nice decorative cutting that you can keep in a vase indoors until roots begin to form.
- ☼ Likewise, aquatic plants can be divided up and potted on and kept in a bucket of water in the shade house until they have formed a healthy root ball.
- ☼ Be diligent in emptying saucers under pots on a regular basis to prevent mozzies from laying eggs in them.
- ☼ If you've got enough water, plant sweet corn as it's both nutritious and delicious. However, if your place is dry, don't bother because sweet corn needs to be almost flooded on a weekly basis to produce heads of juicy, sweet corn.
- ☼ Spring bulbs have died down now so it's a good opportunity to sprinkle some dynamic lifter around where they grow and place a blanket of mulch on top to protect them over the summer.
- ☼ If your Azaleas have shown signs of lace bug, give them a light trim and throw the cuttings in the bin. Clear away any dead and diseased foliage from around the base of the plant and dispose of this in the bin too.
- ☼ Ixoras are coming into flower now (pic at right). Check that they are not covered in ants and scale. If they are, spray with Pest Oil and keep an eye on them.
- ☼ If you want to grow tomatoes this summer try doing so in straw bales and make sure you mix some dolomite in with the potting mix before you plant. As they grow, feed regularly with a liquid plant food and keep the bale moist.
- ☼ Parsley plants sometimes collapse when a day of intense heat is followed by rain. There is nothing one can do to revive them once they're gone, so pull them up and replant with fresh plants when this happens. It usually affects older plants, so as a preventive why not start off some young plants in a shady area so you never run out of parsley.





# Creating Christmas Colour

It's not too late to create some last minute Christmas colour to brighten up your Christmas dinner table or outdoor entertaining area. An added bonus is that your floral creation can last for months!

Here is some inspiration:

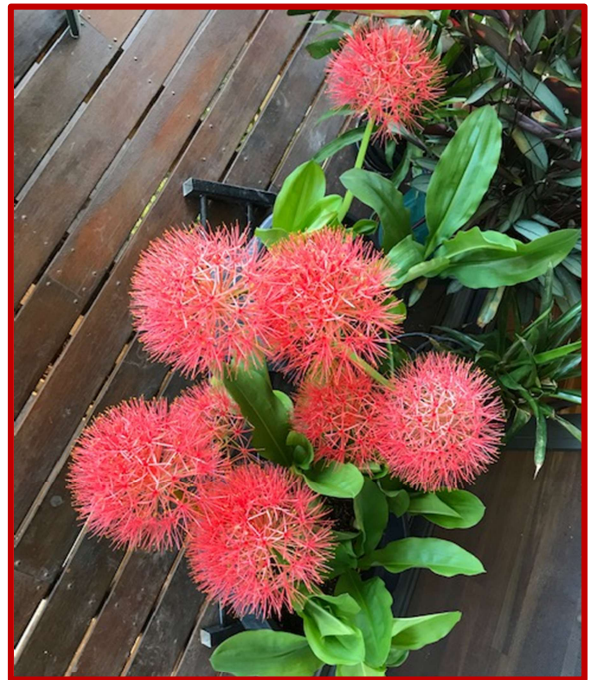
- Crisp white Lobelias, Alyssum and Geraniums combined with trailing Dichondra 'Silver Falls'.
- Hanging baskets or pots filled with white and vibrant red and white Calibrachoa or Petunias.
- A planter bowl with a showy red Geranium in the centre surrounded by a halo of white Alyssum.
- Purple and white Petunias and grey leafed Cineraria 'Silver Dust' planted together in a decorative trough.
- A bright red, soft pink or snowy white Poinsettia in a matching pretty pot.
- For sheltered and shady spots, a combination of eye-catching red and white Impatiens.



To promote lots of healthy growth and festive flowers, keep the pots well-watered and feed each week with a weak solution of seaweed emulsion. Regularly trim off any dead flowers to help keep the plants looking tidy.

Festive touches –before guests arrive you can add some final pizzazz to the pots such as ribbons, baubles, sprigs of holly and tinsel or even magical fairy lights.

And speaking of Christmas cheer – here's a pic of my Paintbrush Lillies (*Scadoxus puniceus*) that never fail to impress as they come up year after year...



## That's all Folks for This Month & This Year...

Huge, huge, huge thanks to all the contributors over this most trying of years and for this December newsletter which is your last one for 2020.

There will be a short newsletter in January with the calendar of meetings for the first quarter of the year, however your next full newsletter will be out sometime in February 2021. As always, all of your contributions are welcome and we would love to hear what you've all been up to over the summer. Send your hints, tips, recipes, travel stories, bragging photos to us at [ugcnew@gmail.com](mailto:ugcnew@gmail.com)

We wish you all the best for the festive season and may 2021 bring much fun, love, laughter and good gardening!

And thanks as always to our printer – Sandra & Alan Guthrie at Poster Paradise, Murwillumbah.



