



NEWSLETTER

No. 119

SPRING, 2023

**AUSTRALIAN HORTICULTURAL
JUDGES' ASSOCIATION INC.**

AUSTRALIAN HORTICULTURAL JUDGES' ASSOCIATION

Reg. No. A0030988D

WEBSITE www.ahja.org.au

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

What a beautiful start to Spring, with glorious days and cool nights. I do hope that everyone has had time to spend in the garden sprucing up and cutting the winter away. I myself have been doing a spring clean and cut back with all now ready for the hot summer predicted and I am sure that we will see the effects of the El Nino prediction with the greater chance of multi-day heatwaves to most likely effect exhibits on the Show Bench. It is also a good idea to check up on your nearest and dearest at this time and keep fluid levels up for both yourself and your plants.



***Our new President
Diane Sharman***

Earlier in August, I was privileged to be able to spend four days and nights on the Murray River in upper South Australia and to see the damage to hundreds of homes that were flooded and the devastation the floods had caused.

The Mighty Murray certainly is a massive force, along with the beauty of the most magnificent gums standing tall and proud. In addition to all of that, new grasses and wild flowers were springing forth on the banks. Some of these will, undoubtedly, be exhibits for the bench in the coming year.



Murray River, South Australia

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With the popularity of meadow flowers being grown in local gardens now, we might also see them as well.

On reflection, it has been a very busy year, with a New Committee, a Revised AHJA Show and Judges' Manual, Introduction and up and running of the new Judges' Training Course. My profound thanks to all involved, along with a warm welcome to the Trainee Judges. All of this means that the new and old are coming together to form a bright and eager AHJA.

I am looking forward to working with you all in the New Year and perhaps hearing any New Year's Resolutions that might be pledged. Let me know. I can always take onboard new ideas.

Keep well, safe, and always be kind to each other.

Cheers, Diane



MAUREEN'S MESSAGE -

Well, here we are again. The last issue of the Newsletter for the year. First and foremost, Paul and I would like to wish you and yours the very best for Christmas, the New Year to come and anything else that you might celebrate in the next few months.

We have been juggling some travel over the last few months (in our millions of available spare hours) – now doing some more Australian stuff for various reasons – taking members of our Probus Group on a cruise on the Murray Princess, doing a trip across the top of Australia (covering part of the trip that we did on our honeymoon 56 years ago), going to Lake Macquarie for the Garden Clubs of Australia Convention (where we saw local gardens in literally mountain goat country) and soon going to Perth for the National Rose Show and to see family.

While we were at the above Convention, Paul was awarded Life Membership of the Garden Clubs of Australia for his work for them and promoting horticulture in general with his photography etc. Since GCA is the largest garden umbrella organisation in the country, it was such a thrill as well as a surprise into the bargain.

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While we were away, our side fence fell down on a stormy night with lots of wind. This has ruined some of the garden, so a lot of work to fix it up. The fencing people are working on it as I write this. Why I am telling you this is that we didn't realise that because it was storm damage, we can claim the cost of it on our home insurance. Our neighbour told us we could so we approached our insurance company who said that we were eligible. We have to pay \$500 because it is our upfront excess but they will pay the rest. Keep this in mind if you, too, have a similar situation. As the young man who came to check it out said to me – "You pay your insurance for all these years and when something like this happens, there is an expectation that you will be covered," so lucky for us – something that we certainly hadn't counted on.

My thanks to all the contributors this month, writers, photographers and so on. We wouldn't have a Newsletter without you. David Richards, Dianne Sharman, Shirley Lahtinen, Weng, Paul Lucas, Rosie Kenney. The rest of you, (particularly Branches) please put a note in your diary a month before the next Editor's Deadline, to think about possibly sending something to me – either by snail mail or by email. We need Branch Meeting Notes as well as articles/etc. Others would like to know what you have been doing, please.

A Thought To End The Year On :

Some people could be given an entire field of roses
and only see the prickles.

Others could be given a single weed and see the wildflower.

Perception is a key component to gratitude and
gratitude is a key component to joy.

Perception is also reality for most people.

Best Wishes, Maureen

BREAKAWAY BALLARAT 13TH TO 15TH MARCH, 2024

WE HAVE PLANNED A FEW SOCIAL DAYS IN BALLARAT FOR A GET-TOGETHER.
IT IS DURING THE BEGONIA FESTIVAL SO THERE SHOULD BE SOME GOOD
THINGS TO LOOK AT.

DIANNE HAS ALREADY SENT EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FORMS TO YOUR
BRANCH. PLEASE CONSIDER THIS EXCITING EVENT AND REPLY **AS SOON AS
YOU CAN**. THIS WILL HELP WITH ORGANISATION.

BRANCH NEWS AND MEETING NOTES

MELBOURNE BRANCH

Saturday 24/02/24

Melbourne Committee Meeting : 10.30am

Melbourne Branch Members Meeting : 1-3.30pm

Both meetings at Mt Waverley Youth Centre, Millers Crescent – opposite Mt. Waverley Railway Station

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Saturday 27/04/24

Melbourne Committee Meeting : 10.30am

Melbourne Branch Members Meeting : 1-3.30pm

Both meetings at Mt Waverley Youth Centre, Millers Crescent – opposite Mt. Waverley Railway Station

NORTHERN BRANCH - DAVID RICHARDS, HON PRESIDENT

Our next Branch Meeting will be on 16th April, 2024 in Eaglehawk.

We had an enjoyable day meeting at Julie and Ian Brooksby's beautiful home and garden. We enjoyed their hospitality in September immensely. We conducted our Branch AGM and General Meeting there. All Office Bearers were re-elected and we thank them for their service to our group. We continue to have practical judging exercises at each general meeting, using exhibits provided by members. We also enjoy the great fellowship as a group.



It was good to be able to welcome our Trainee Judge Kathryn Nolan, from Mildura, to our meeting.

All of our Branch members now have their new AHJA Manuals and are upgrading their knowledge outlined in the new edition.

Our members have been busy attending judging appointments as the Show season restarts.

Members were encouraged to consider attending the AHJA Breakaway in Ballarat in March 2024.

May the 2023 year continue to be a good one for all – as well as the coming year 2024.

David Richards

GIPPSLAND A.G.M. AND GENERAL MEETING — 1ST JULY, 2023

The venue for the mid-year was again the R.S.L. in Leongatha and we were pleased to welcome two new Trainees who joined us for lunch first. The A.G.M. was concluded quickly and the General Meeting followed.

Key points of discussion were :

1. The new Manual was distributed and the compilers congratulated. It was agreed we all need to re-read relevant sections before Shows begin and as Show Organisers, some of the changes will need to be notified to exhibitors in the Show Schedules.
2. The possibility of a copy of the Manual being available digitally for competitors was discussed.
3. People to supervise Trainees – Mentors were appointed and the Branch members were very willing to offer to have trainees shadow them at any Show so their training experience could be maximized.
4. A representative for Gippsland at the Central Zoom meeting was also decided now the new technology of Zoom is available.

Topics for the Inservice :

The venue is less convenient for a show bench and so the Committee rightly make the focus broad to encourage exhibits at this time of the year, when finding new items each year can be a challenge. In the same spirit, members brought exhibits that could be stretched to fit the class by competitors. The discussion of definitions is very productive and, as usual when this happens, it helped members to clarify finer points.

1. Indoor Pot Plant: Here were two exhibits - a Cyclamen and a Bromeliad – was the second strictly indoor?

2. Vegetable Exhibit: Among the pumpkins, bok choy and silver beet, there was a jar of dried beans. In schedules requiring a variety of produce from the garden, was this acceptable? Do eggs, fit? Can you show honey here too? Herbs also raised discussion on the best ways to display them.

3. Container of Perennials: The group quickly dismissed single stems of Hellebore and Isoplexis. Discussion of whether tree Fuchsia was a perennial and the tuberous nature of Alstroemeria sent us to the definition section of the Manual once again.



The afternoon had been a very fruitful one and we were pleased to be joined by Rodney Emmerson, who still adds relevant comments from his wide experience.

- Shirley Lahtinen.

JUDGING PROBLEMS - INSECTS ON EXHIBITS FOR FLOWER SHOWS

by Maureen Lucas

When I was breeding and showing my dogs and cats and took them to a show, they had to pass a veterinary inspection at the entrance. If they showed any sign of disease, or indeed, fleas that might transmit to another entrant, they were removed from the show hall and immediately sent home. The rationale behind this, of course, is that the show organisation didn't want what are sometimes nasty ailments, spread from one exhibit to another and thus brought home to the owner's kennel or cattery.

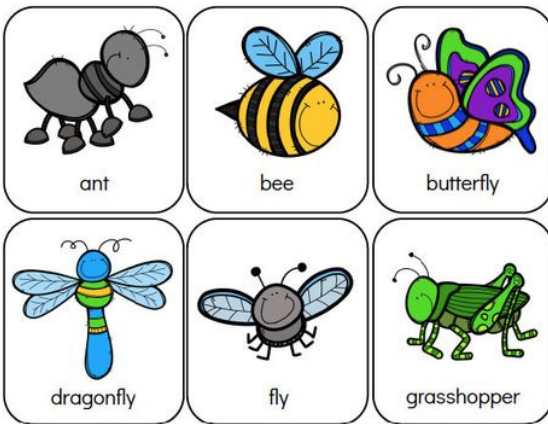
It is similar with plants (although, arguably not as serious, but it could be). An exhibitor would probably not show a plant that has obvious bad disease. However, insects are probably the main offenders here because they have a great ability to transmit disease. These can be challenging for the exhibitor because they often lie 'doggo' at home when you put them in the car to take to the show. Once you get there and put them on the bench, in the light and heat of the exhibition hall, the darn things get a bit excited and emerge. By the time the judging occurs they are often quite obvious, particularly if they are things that walk, jump or fly.

What does the judge do when they see obvious signs of disease on a plant? If it is minor, they would downpoint the exhibit. If it looks like something that could create a huge problem then they should ask for the exhibit to be removed from the hall. Of course, judges cannot be expected to be an expert on all diseases, even if they may be able to identify some of them.

Now, let's talk about insects. They are many and varied and the study of these creatures (as with plant diseases) requires many years and hours of research and such. A Horticultural Judge cannot be expected to be an expert in this field either.

Therefore, they should err on the side of caution. If they SEE an insect on the plant they really should ask for it to be removed from the hall.

The critical thing here is the word 'see.' As in all judging, if the judge doesn't see the fault then it is ok. Why would they not see it? It could be on the back of a leaf out of sight of the judge or on the back of the plant itself.



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Judging is normally done by looking from the front, except for some floral art and such where the judge looks down on the exhibit.

An AHJA Judge is not allowed to touch the exhibits. They can ask the Steward to move a plant closer but *they* can't do so, or touch it, unless it is fruit or vegetables.

What are the types of insects that you might encounter? Probably the main ones would be aphids. These come in various types and colours – green and black being the main ones.

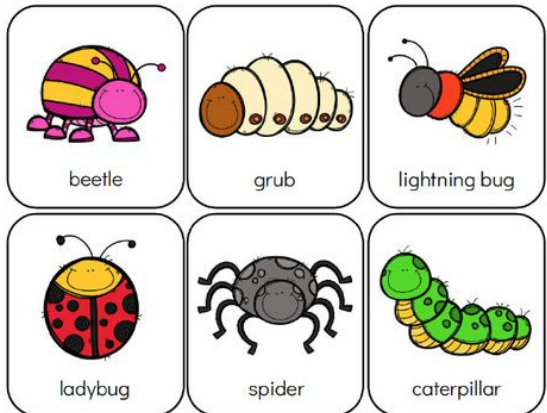
Mealy bug is another – these show themselves like little white fluffy balls. With cacti and other succulent plants, there is a root mealy bug which is very difficult to see because it mainly stays below soil level. This one can easily jump from one exhibit to another and can very quickly devastate a whole collection – only being eradicated by really toxic sprays or removing and replacing the potting mix from every plant in the collection.

Ladybirds, which we all love of course, because they are wonderful to have in the garden in as much as they destroy things like aphids etc., don't they? BUT you might be wrong here because there are a number of different ones of these and a few of them are detrimental to some plants as well as causing allergy problems for humans. How to tell the difference? Only the real experts know. It is something to do with the number of spots, the colour of them and other things. When the darn things are jumping around on a flower it is hard to tell even if you know what you are looking for. I wouldn't destroy them in the garden, of course, unless I knew that they were bad ones but on the showbench it is a different matter.

It is wise to be aware, when judging, that you need to look for these things. Use your own discretion where these are concerned. It is up to the Judge at the time to decide if the situation may be serious or not. If in real doubt, err on the side of caution.

Others may think you are being mean if you either downpoint or ask for the exhibit to be removed but you have to stick to your guns and make a judgment.

After all, that is what a judge does – they make a judgement.



WATTLE (OUR NATIONAL FLOWER)

by Maureen Lucas

Driving along the highways on our recent trips through the southern parts of Australia, some of the Wattles (*Acacia*) have been in bloom. These have made a wonderful addition on each side of the road and you don't realise how many of them there are until you see this display in spring.



Acacia pycnantha

The genus *Acacia* is in the Mimosaceae family and, of the 1,350 species throughout the world, nearly 1,000 of these are found in Australia. Australia's Floral Emblem *Acacia pycnantha* is one of these (the reason for our national colours - green and gold). If you are photographing them in the wild, unless you are an expert on Wattles, it is hard to be sure that you will get a correct identification of the variety. Nevertheless, go ahead and do so because they do make a lovely picture.

These plants range in habit from prostrate and low-growing species to larger shrubs and shade trees. Generally speaking, they are fairly short-lived and often described as 'coloniser' plants, although their lifespan can be extended by regular pruning. Some people are surprised to find that *Acacias* are actually legumes which can take nitrogen from the atmosphere and spread it through their roots, thus fixing it in the soil. This helps, not only their own growth but also that of neighbouring plants.

Because *Acacia* flowers have a lot of pollen, beekeepers love to have their hives close by in order for their bees to be able to easily collect a lot of it in a small amount of time. Wattle seeds are also an important source of food for birds. The Australian Aborigine used extracts from the leaves, bark or phyllodes for various medicinal purposes. They also used the wood of some varieties to make clubs, boomerangs, and shields that they used in battle or to hunt food.

Wattles can readily be grown from cuttings or seeds but the latter do need to be scarified or softened before they will germinate. You can do this at home by pouring boiling water over them and leaving them to soak for 24 hours before planting. Not all seeds will be viable, as with any plant but, hopefully, you will have success with a sufficient number.

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Because the plants generally recover quite quickly after a fire or drought and the storage life of the seeds is many years, you can truly say that Wattles are a fitting emblem for this country – tough and hardy.

Some years ago, a Wattle expert told me that if you have enough different varieties growing in your garden, there will be one in flower every month of the year. Because they come from a range of different climate zones, however, this information may be problematical in your particular garden but if you have the room and the inclination, then it may be something to consider. Even if you grow one variety that would be fantastic.

The Association's logo on our badges depicts the Golden Wattle.

A symbol of the Australian spirit of resilience, the Golden Wattle, *Acacia pycnantha*, became the national floral emblem in 1988 co-inciding with Australia's Bicentenary.



We have carried this theme over to our new Judges' Manual and also the new cover on our Newsletter.

OUR NEW WEBSITE

www.ahja.org.au

Visit our new website which has concise information about our Club.

If anyone wants to know more about exhibiting and judging please log in for information and contact details.

TRAINING - A YEAR ON

Rosie Kenney, Training Coordinator

It's been anything other than a routine year for AHJA.

With the Judges' training process and programme ratified by the Executive, last spring saw fliers distributed beckoning potential Trainees to our self-paced Mentored Programme. The content adheres to applying the Principles of Judging. There are good chunks from prior programmes – shadowing Judges and Shows and final hurdles to achieve the high standard that our crew is known for.

Hats off to you for seeing the potential for your Branches – circulating fliers; sharing the process; and including Trainees into your fold. Shadowing is now standard practice, with some Shows taking up to four Trainees. Thank you. Your shared wisdom and experience are impressive.

Not every enquiry resulted in an application but we welcomed 10 Trainees. I've observed serious dedication and motivation. It's a pleasure to engage with them. They live in remote and near localities. This was the intended platform for the programme and it works due to a joint commitment from the Trainee and their Mentor. Each Mentor is matched within the Region and oversees progress on Shadowing and Learning Task Completion. The Mentor is the second miler. In a time-poor era we appreciate their invested energy.

On our Training Day, we covered categories likely to materialise on the bench this season – Cut Flowers, Container Grown Plants, Trees and Shrubs, Vegetables and Ethics. It was an energetic day. The facilitating Judges showed dedication in preparation and delivery. A bonus was the wise tidbits offered during discussions. Our Trainees made sound assessment at each phase. It will be repeated next year.

It's a successful beginning. Let's keep the momentum this Show season Hand out the fliers, shadow and encourage, keep the completed Learning Tasks turning over, speak with potential Trainees. Feed into our next Training Day.

Our investment is paying dividends to our current and future raison d'être.

Rosie Kenney



Become a Horticultural Judge
Increase your plant knowledge
Join an accredited team
Enrol In Our Training Program.
Find out more
ahjatraining@gmail.com

A.H.J.A. SHOW & JUDGES' MANUAL 5TH REVISION

The 5th Revision of the A.H.J.A. Show & Judges' Manual was released earlier this year. This revision includes two new chapters, one on Australian Native Plants and another on Aroids.

It is important that every A.H.J.A. member has a Manual, is familiar with the contents and uses it as their judging handbook.

Manuals can be purchased for \$35 each plus \$18.70 Postage.

**Please contact Diane Sharman - diannemsharman@hotmail.com
for sales and delivery.**

PISTACHIO AND LIME SYRUP CAKE WITH POMEGRANATE

Recipe Sent In By Our Judge, Weng

Ingredients:

60 g plain flour (can substitute GF)
1 teaspoon baking powder
100 g. pistachios, finely ground
Zest of 3 large limes, finely grated
120 g almond meal
250 g unsalted butter, at room temperature
200 g castor sugar
4 eggs, 60 g each, room temperature
1/3 cup pomegranate jewels

Syrup and Topping:

90 g Castor Sugar
½ cup fresh lime juice from
about 3 large limes (strained)
90 g pistachios, roughly
chopped

Method:

Preheat oven to 170°C. Butter a 22-24 cm round cake tin, line base with buttered baking paper, then dust tin with flour.

Tip flour, baking powder, ground pistachios, lime zest and almond meal into medium-sized bowl. Whisk together for a minute or so, then set aside.

Put butter and sugar into bowl of electric mixer (or handheld beater) and beat on medium speed for about 4 minutes, scraping down sides occasionally until mixture looks creamy.

Beat in eggs, one at a time, allowing each egg to be absorbed before adding the next. Tip in the flour mixture and mix on low speed until just combined – don't overmix as cake may be a bit tough. Scrape the batter into prepared tin and smooth the top.

Bake 45-50 minutes or until cake springs back when pressed in centre and a fine skewer comes out clean.

Transfer to wire rack and leave to cool a little in the tin. When lukewarm, make the syrup. Put the sugar and lime juice into a small saucepan over low heat and stir until sugar dissolves. Add chopped pistachios, increase the heat, and bring the mixture to the boil.

Turn the cake out onto a serving plate and peel away baking paper. Slowly spoon the hot syrup evenly over the top, then leave to cool completely. Just before serving, scatter it with pomegranate jewels. Serve with softly whipped cream or yoghurt.

LAVENDER

Old fashioned plants, with a “cottagey” feel are tempting to many gardeners with their winning ways. A most popular favourite is Lavender that gives flowers and fragrance to any sunny spot, and it never fails to remind one of old aunts and butterflies.

Lavender is probably one of the hardiest plants to grow, as it withstands extremes of heat and drought, as well as blasts of wind. The only environmental hazard it hates is to have its roots growing in boggy or permanently wet soils, as it will then drop dead with little hesitation. Another tip is to keep plants clipped twice a year after each flush of flowers as this will keep bushes neat and compact. They don't like being cut back hard into old wood so this needs to be done regularly



English Lavender

There are actually around twenty-five different varieties of lavender. The most common one is the English, *Lavandula spica*, (or *L. vera*) with the truest blue lavender coloured flowers and compact narrow foliage. It is used commercially for oil, and in the home garden sense is a compact neat grower. Other English lavenders come in the form of the white flowering variety, the small growing pink form and ‘Munstead’ which has mauve-blue flowers on a dwarf bush. ‘Hidcote’ is yet another form of English lavender, dwarf growing to approximately 60cm with deeper coloured lavender spikes.

French Lavender, also known as Spanish Lavender or Butterfly Lavender grows into a larger bush and its blooms generally last longer.

Foliage is serrated with a silvery tone and scent is slightly lighter than English Lavender.

There are many new forms of Lavenders all proving good value as they need so little attention and suit growing in a small place and are naturally neat growing. Lavender ‘Sidonie’ has intense mauve flowers, ‘Fairy Wings’ has bright purple ribbons or bracts, ‘Willowbridge White’ is a bicolour, a bit of a novelty, and ‘Pukehou’ with masses of purple flower spikes.



French Lavender

Application for Judges

Please complete the pro forma “**Application Form For Horticultural Judges**” when making application for judges at all times. This form provides all the necessary detailed information to the AHJA Secretary.

Applications for **Show Judges** should be forwarded **as soon as possible** to the AHJA Branch Secretary as listed on Page 2.

**For further information contact:
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email: secretaryahja@gmail.com**

Copy Deadlines

1st February, 2024 for Autumn Issue

1st June, 2024 for Winter Issue

1st October, 2024 for Spring Issue

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