

**AUSTRALIAN HORTICULTURAL
JUDGES'
ASSOCIATION INC.**

Reg. No. A0030988D

Website: www.ahja.org.au Email: ahjaweb@gmail.com

**NEWSLETTER NO. 126
– WINTER 2026**



AUSTRALIAN HORTICULTURAL JUDGES' ASSOCIATION

Reg. No. A0030988D

Website: www.ahja.org.au Email: ahjaweb@gmail.com

OFFICE BEARERS

Executive Committee:

President:	Diane	Email: ahjaweb@gmail.com	0401 054 204
Secretary:	Wendy	Email: wendyearwicker10@gmail.com	0417 352 258
Treasurer:	Clive		03 9729 3117

Gippsland Branch:

President:	Yvonne	0400 915 056
Secretary:	Glenice	0447 622 000

North East Branch:

President:	Gwen	02 6026 2323
Secretary/Treasurer:	Margaret	
	Email: mcdiarmid.margaret@gmail.com	0439 346 635

Northern Branch: Email: ahjanthbr@gmail.com

President:	David	0432 520 626
Secretary:	Julie	0439 801 636

South East Queensland Branch: aus.hort.judges.assn@gmail.com

President/Secretary:	Anne	0439 720 565
Treasurer:	Amanda	0400 390 866

Please keep in mind that these may change at the upcoming AGM.

.....

NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

PRESIDENT'S FAREWELL

REPORT from Diane:

Winter Greetings to all.

The last six months have been very busy for me personally. My son arrived from overseas and I also enjoyed my own overseas holiday. Among my eight grandchildren – two turned 21 – three just turned eighteen – and my youngest granddaughter recently turned 13. Seeing my grandchildren reach these milestones reminds me how quickly time passes --- and I've moved along as well.

Contemplating and reflecting on what I'd like to say after 26 years of being Secretary and President, but I can't possibly put all into a few short paragraphs.

This is my last Newsletter as President of AHJA. I'd just like to say, thank you to all of the clubs for their support. I have made lifelong friends through the clubs and continue those friendships.

I will continue to judge shows as often as I can and look forward to seeing everyone at local shows from time to time.

It was an enormous pleasure to have organised the weekends away that we have all enjoyed over this time. Highlights include the (Tassy Devil) Tasmanian trip and, most recently, the Ballarat Breakaway. There are lots of fabulous memories from AHJA weekends away in between.

I can't thank all of my AHJA mentors enough for all of their personal support, dedication and tolerance in helping me along the way. Without their help through thick and thin, AHJA would not exist.

To all Australian Horticultural Judges, I'd like to wish you all well and continued success. To the new Judges coming on board, you will make friendships through your time in judging and they will be wonderful.

Congratulations to our new Judges, Darlene Wetzel, Maggie Palmer and Beth Maloof, who have now finished their course.

All the very best, Take Care.

Diane



MAUREEN'S MEGAPHONE:

Hear Ye, Hear Ye:

I have now taken over doing the Newsletter completely, with the help of my lovely husband Paul. This will be a big job as well as the other 'thousand' that we do, but I think that we can manage it – with

your cooperation by getting your reports in regularly to me and telling me what your club is doing. I would appreciate you keeping your reports brief and concise, but do welcome any articles that you might like to share with us. Members do enjoy reading such things and many are both informative and fun. They also make your Newsletter more interesting. Don't worry if you don't feel that you are a writer. It is my job to edit everything and I can put it in the right format, etc. Please keep your articles to less than 350 words.

I hope that you all enjoy having a bit of a break from judging over the winter months, so that you are all nice and fresh for Spring. Some people, of course, do go away to get a break from the cold and that is not a bad idea, if you can.

Best wishes to one and all.

Maureen, Editor



.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS TO:

Diane – Diane has been a steadfast worker for our organisation for many years, as stated in her final farewell note. We cannot thank her enough, not only for her formal jobs of President and Secretary but also for the many other things that she has taken on as well. Well done, Diane

Shirley – Shirley has been the person who has collated and organised the printing of the hard copies of the AHJA Newsletter for the last 20 years or so. This has required putting in pictures, organising the layout, taking the final copy to the printers, negotiating with them to get a good price and much, much more. Unfortunately, Shirley has now retired from this and we will miss her input greatly. MANY, MANY THANKS TO SHIRLEY. May her 'retirement' be a safe, happy, healthy and fulfilling one.

Clive - For most of this time, Clive has been picking up the printed copies from the printer, paying for it, then organising for them to be posted out via Australia Post – a dedicated job. Clive has also been our very diligent Treasurer. All of this has been very diligently done.

Weng – has been on the Melbourne Branch Committee, for which we thank him very much. He has educated us on the subject of Asian vegetables – for which he is an expert and for that, and everything else, we are very grateful. We will look forward to his input in the future.

Chris Michalopoulos – from Sunshine Garden Club – who has been awarded the Dahl Medal for his services to Dahlias in Australia. Congratulations and Well Done, Chris.

PLEASE NOTE:

AHJA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AGM ZOOM MEETING – 7pm 20th JULY 2026

At this meeting, all Office Bearer positions are declared vacant and need to be filled to maintain the AHJA as an accredited association that you are all part of.

All members should have now received an email with a nomination form attached. Please consider nominating. The Executive Committee requires two members from each of our Branches.

Diane and Clive are retiring from the Executive Committee and Melbourne Branch. Weng is retiring from Melbourne Branch and we thank them all sincerely for their roles as President, Treasurer and Committee member over many years' service to our organisation.

David – Vice President AHJA Executive Committee

.....

VALES:

JEANNIE by David

Jeannie was our oldest member of the AHJA – 23rd January 1928 to 19th April 2026.

Jeannie was a young at heart 98-year-old. Always happy, cheerful, full of life, unselfish and always wanted to know how you were.

Jeannie's funeral was from the Swan Hill Uniting Church where 200+ people attended. The church had several large free standing Floral Arrangements. Her coffin was a sea of flowers – a fitting

tribute to a lady who gave so much to so many.

Family and friends who spoke at the service told us of her love for her family, garden, Floral Art, her Horticultural Judging ability, infectious personality and unending energy. It was an honour to know and love her. At the conclusion of the service, a guard of honour was formed by the Swan Hill Garden Club.

Farewell dear Jeannie, a life well lived and thank you for your many years of service to AHJA.



.....

MARGARET & LORRAINE

by Linda

Early in 2026, we said goodbye to Margaret and Lorraine, members of Gippsland Region of AHJA.

Margaret had been a Horticultural Judge for many years and was a member of several garden groups in the region. As well as being a Judge, Margaret was a keen exhibitor at many local shows and won many prizes especially for her outstanding Hellebores. Until recently, Margaret lived at Poowong East, where

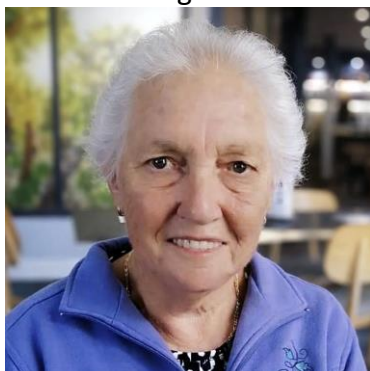
she had an outstanding garden. She was a Life member of Poowong Garden Club and in 2020 received the John Pascoe Fawcner Medal for services to Horticulture.

Lorraine lived at Willung South (near Traralgon) and completed her training and graduated as a qualified Horticultural Judge in 2014. During the past twelve years, she was a very active member and filled many judging assignments. She also loved being at home in her beautiful garden.

Both Margaret and Lorraine were valuable members of the AHJA Gippsland Branch and will be greatly missed.



Margaret



Lorraine

BRANCH NEWS:

Northern Branch:

Our next Branch Meeting will be on September 8th, 2026. Location: Julie and Ian Brooksby's home at 57 Hopwood St, Echuca, starting at 10am. Like all AHJA Branches we continue to have theoretical and practical judging exercises at each general meeting, using exhibits and sharing our judging skills and knowledge with each other. We never stop learning! We also enjoy the great fellowship with each other. As the next cycle of Agricultural and Flower Shows are starting to request Judges, our members will be out and about attending these appointments and doing their bit to assist the particular show and the people who organise them.

In the meantime, enjoy Winter gardening. It's great exercise bending down and pulling out weeds and getting pricked by rose thorns!! Just think how much you are saving on Gym Membership too??

David, Hon President

.....

South East Queensland Branch:

Met at the Brisbane Botanic Gardens, Mt Coot-tha Rd, Toowong in March. Items discussed were – the definition of Cut Flowers – which was decided that the wording in the Manual is a bit ambiguous because some types of flowers can be exhibited as both Cut Flowers and Cut Shrubs.

May – meeting held in Capalaba – various relevant items.

Anne – President/Secretary

JUDGING THINGS:

Maureen

EGGS:

For this issue, I am going to talk a little bit about Judging Eggs. It is not often that we have to do it, but some guidelines can be helpful here in case you are asked.

The main rules (which are pretty comprehensive) are on page 227 of the AHJA Manual. Some comments I would like to make are:

For chickens, the most popular breeds in Australia are:

1. **Isa Brown** - highly productive layer – light to medium brown eggs, so you could get colour variation from this breed (although our Manual says they should all be the same colour, because this isn't possible for such breeds, we would have to accept the variation).
2. **Leghorn** – white eggs.
3. **Australorp** – brown eggs – also has a Bantam (miniature form of chook with small eggs).
4. **Rhode Island Red** – light to medium brown eggs – also has a Bantam form., ditto.
5. **Araucana** – blue eggs.
6. **Marans** – dark chocolate brown eggs.

Other things:

- Some breeds of domestic fowl lay an egg nearly every day – up to a maximum of 300 per year. They will have less or none when they are moulting, depending upon the breed. Moulting occurs when the days are shorter, with decreasing light. About two weeks after the

birds have got their new feathers for the season, then they begin to lay again.

- Although the Manual says that 12 eggs (a dozen) would normally make an exhibit, this would be for a big show. On a Show bench for example, when it will mostly be home gardeners (or, in this case, people keeping fowl), there would most likely be less than this number – probably six eggs. If it was a large show – with, perhaps some commercial egg producers - then they will most likely have a specialist egg judge.
- Our Manual also says that the colour of the eggs should all be the same – e.g. all white or all brown. This would, of course, depend upon the eggs being asked for and from what type of bird.
- You might get duck eggs, turkey eggs, as well.
- Sometimes you might see a Schedule item for 'coloured eggs', which could include spotted eggs. I would not expect every egg to have the same number and size of spots or, indeed, the same distribution of them.
- Checking the freshness of eggs is time consuming and I would only do it for the final few that you are considering, otherwise you will be there all day, which, of course is not possible.
- Probably the easiest method of checking freshness is the last one mentioned in our Manual and that is putting the egg into a bowl of cold water to see if floats or not. The older the egg, the more air it

will have in it and the more likely it is to float. It is obvious that if you have 12 eggs, all laid by the same hen, then some would be less fresh than others because hens usually only lay one egg a day. To get all eggs at the same stage of freshness for an exhibit, in this case, there would need to be 12 hens laying.

- Our Manual also says that it is not recommended to break eggs at a show. With things like citrus fruit, for example, you would cut one to check the size of the pith, if you needed to but, in the egg situation, you could end up with a rotten egg smell by the end of the show as well as, perhaps, a health problem for anyone having to handle them.

BALANCED DIET:

Noel

Last summer I thought I would trial some unusual dwarf tomatoes for a change. I chose Black Cherry, Lemon Drop, Mini Roma and Principe Borghese. I decided that I would plant them in especially prepared soil behind the shed, in a sunny spot. The plants grew very well and I was excited that the crop promised a tasty change from the usual varieties that I normally grow. As time passed, I wondered why there were no ripe fruit to harvest. I convinced myself to be patient, then I'm sure, I would be rewarded.

For many years I have been leaving seeds and grain in two hanging baskets suspended from the Liriodendron (tulip tree) in my back garden so I could spy on the birds' beauty as they eat. Gardeners

are keenly aware of the environment and it's not unusual to hear that they support feathered visitors. Among the birds that visit the basket are King Parrots. They announce their arrival with a clear ringing call. There are usually 2 or 3 but, seasonally, there could be 9 or 10.

They drifted in this day, calling for their meal. I hurried to the carport where I keep the bird feed and quickly returned to fill the baskets. Out of the corner of my eye, I spotted a King Parrot breaking out from behind the shed – with a partly ripe mini tomato in its beak!

Mystery solved! While I don't mind sharing all things horticultural, I decided not to net the plants and still enjoyed some very tasty fruits that I harvested before the King Parrots found them. Both man and bird content.

THE SENSE OF SMELL:

Maureen

Around 1986/7, National Geographic magazine did a world-wide research study on how people perceive smell or perfume. My husband, Paul and myself, participated in this experiment because we were, at that time, subscribers to this publication.

Inside several of the issues were attached little pouches (or some such), that had various types of smells embedded in them. Participants were asked to rate these on a 1-10 grading, depending upon whether they liked the smell or not.

The interesting thing that came out of this research was that different people

perceive perfumes in different ways, which isn't all that surprising really. Have you ever stood near a person wearing a perfume that you have found to be overpowering and horribly awful? Obviously, people wouldn't put on something like that so THEY must think that it smells lovely. For you, it smelled like a dead rat but to them it may have had the scent of a lovely rose, or vice versa.

What does that mean for we Judges? The fact is that perfume is very subjective between one person and another. Therefore, putting any judging value on it is a bit complicated and not very accurate.

If the Schedule item is, for example: 'Most perfumed Rose', then, of course you will need to make a decision as best you can at the time. Sometimes this section is judged by a visually impaired person – which is lovely because we get the benefit of their enhanced sense of smell (it has been proven that if you lose one of your senses, the others become more active). Having said that, this schedule item is in much the same area of being what we call a 'side class' in, say, a cat or dog show. Side classes will often give an animal a chance to win something rather than not winning anything at all. It could be for "Best eye colour", "Best coat colour and texture" or some such.

Sometimes judges might bring the attribute of scent or perfume into play when choosing between two very close horticultural exhibits but, in my humble opinion, this is a faulty way of doing it for all of the above reasons. I know that, at times, it can be very difficult to distinguish between a first and second placing and,

of course, we aren't allowed to give an equal first, equal second or whatever – which is a story for another day.

Having said all of this, there will always be some small difference between the quality of exhibits and it is up to you, as the Judge to find it. Experience will come into play here and the longer that you have been judging, the more of it you will gain.

Don't forget, as well, that we, as AHJA Judges, can give our special "Considered for Best" award when it is a close decision. Although the winner here will not get a trophy or ribbon, they know that they were pretty close, so a real encouragement award, you might say. The other thing about this is that only WE can give this award, so if the club running the show don't use us (they might call in the local florist or some such), they don't get this award.

.....

DAHLIA DAY AT DEB'S:

Rosie – AHJA Training Coordinator

Can you ever have too much training? Do we ever know it all? How often do we brush up our knowledge? Could we find the relevant chapter in the Manual? How do we stay sharp?

It seems 'more is more', when it applies to judging Dahlias. All those varieties; the height from the vase rim; the angle, the twists and turns of petals; flat, round, fimbriated, single, double...on and on. I am reminded of judging Camellias...so many...

New and experienced Judges met at Deb's dahlia patch mid-season to absorb

another coat of judging knowledge. The colours were stunning; the varieties many; the number of plants impressive. In true Deb style, all was prepared with samples. She then explained the physical differences in the blooms and staging requirements.

Now, I could parrot her narrative but then that would defeat the concept of ownership of learning. My challenge to you is to own your revision with some ideas that are recommended to our Trainees:

- Revisit the Specialist Dahlia section in our AHJA Manual – from page 169, in your preparation.

I totally understand why Deb has a substantial patch. We were very fortunate to enjoy her favourite flowers, nudge our knowledge and be more mentally muscled for next summer's show bench. Thank you, Deb, for opening your bank of knowledge, your patch, your overall garden and your home for our lunch venue. So much to enjoy and learn.



FOSTER FROLIC – 18 to 20th March

Day 1 – Toora Pear Orchard: has a unique collection of heritage pear varieties – afternoon and tour. Dinner Foster Golf Club.

Day 2 – Foster Museum; drive to Port Welshpool and walk the restored long jetty; visit to Ros MacPherson's lovely seaside garden. Fruit and drinks in the garden; Port Welshpool Maritime Museum, which is housed in a fisherman's cottage – included lunch. After lunch, Arie showed us his large garden which was a riot of Roses, shrubs and fruit trees. Afternoon tea in the garden. Dinner at the Foster Hotel and musical entertainment.

Day 3 – Visit Deep Creek Nursery to see, and perhaps buy Australian plants. Next, Pru Fleming's garden, which is dominated by a huge Oak tree. Morning tea under the Oak – after which, a visit to Elizabeth's garden up the road. Pearl Park for lunch.

Then go home after another wonderful AHJA get-together.



.....

SUNSHINE COAST SHOW – QLD:

Lachlan and Enid

On 12-14th June, the Sunshine Coast Show was held at Nambour, Queensland. It was their 120th Show – a three-day Event. Being Victorian, Enid and I went along to view the flowers, plants and produce from a warmer climate – some were the same but most, quite different – some we can grow indoors, but there they grow happily outside. The winter temperatures are mostly 18-22 deg Celsius, not the big ranges there are in the southern states.

There were quite a lot of sections but not so many entries in each. The quality was very good and the colours quite vibrant – even the foliage. There were some outstanding colour combinations in the Bromeliads and such robust plants. The Crotons were also quite colourful. There were some good exhibits of Zigocactus in various colours, some big Gerberas and plants with bright bracts and small contrasting flowers; Roses and Camellias not as good as grown in a cooler climate but that is to be expected.

There were displays of produce from the region – large exhibits showcasing what grows well in this area and some excellent fruit and vegetables.

We liked the delicious looking cookery and wonderful crafts. Some well groomed cattle were on show and well-trained horses. We enjoyed watching the Show Jumping from the Grandstand.

All in all – a very good day was had by both of us.



THOUGHTS FOR THE SEASON:

If a person is happy most of the time, it is not because everything is *right* in their life all the time. They are happy because their *attitude* towards everything in their life is *right* all the time.

Scientists have found that living near trees can benefit your health to the extent that if you have ten or more trees on a city block, it can have a similar impact to your health as a \$10,000 increase in personal income or being 7 years younger would.

.....

EDITOR'S DEADLINES:

Spring – 1st October 2026

Autumn – 1st March 2027

Winter – 1st June 2027

We have three issues per year. I would appreciate it if you could please endeavour to get your editorial to me by these dates at the latest. I have a tight schedule. I do not remind members because you need to put these dates in your own diary yourself. Many thanks,
Maureen Lucas, Editor.

.....

Disclaimer:

Responsibility for selection of material for publication in this Newsletter is assumed by the Editor. Opinions expressed by the authors are not specifically endorsed by the Australian Horticultural Judges' Association Inc. or by the Editor. The copyright for articles and photographs in this publication remains with the writers and photographers and articles or photos cannot be reproduced without the permission of the Editor and/or the writer/photographer.

.....

INTERESTING THOUGHTS

When I fill out a form that says "In case of emergency, who should we call?" I always put "ambulance", because nobody in my family is answering an unknown number!

.....

Photos for this issue are supplied by:

Paul, David, Diane, Lachlan, Linda, Shirley

.....

AUSTRALIAN FLORAL ART ASSOCIATION CONVENTION

"FLOWERS IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYWHERE"

Celebrating 50 years – 7-12th Sept. 2026

Demonstrations, Public Viewing,
Workshops, Displays and much more.

Venue: 70 Foster St, Port of Sale, Victoria

Enquiries: convention26@outlook.com

Heather: 0413 919 537

.....

WISE WORDS FROM HENRY FORD

"Those who never make mistakes,
generally work for those of us who do."

.....

DISPLAY AT
SUNSHINE COAST
SHOW -
QUEENSLAND



