

This newsletter together with our other publications will be placed on our website at www.chrysanthemumwa.com



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Upcoming Events

September

Annual General Meeting
12 noon Tuesday 8th September
Rotary Hall, Sandgate St South Perth

October

Distribution Day
2 pm Saturday 24th October
Rotary Hall, Sandgate St South Perth

Please remember that the success of the Society depends on the willingness of members to be involved in its activities. There will be some vacancies to be filled at the AGM and a good supply of plants is needed to make the Distribution Day a success.

WAES Subscriptions

\$10 p.a. single, \$15 p.a. double
Please send to Treasurer

NEWSLETTER of The Western Australian Chrysanthemum Society Inc.

AUGUST 2015

President's Notes



The flowering season has come and gone but we are left with memories of a very successful show and some wonderful blooms. The Showcase 2015 booklet is a great reminder of the highlights of the exhibits and thanks to Frank Blackwell for an excellent publication. Congratulations especially to Ron Atyeo on being Australia's newest Champion. The consistent high quality of his blooms in every Section is certainly something we would all like to emulate and I thank him for sharing a few details of his methods with us in this newsletter. Other growers also had success and the achievements of our Novice growers, Michael Drake-Brockman in his first show season and Richard Williams in his second, are especially pleasing and bode well for the future of the Society. The show could not have been a success without the efforts of the many members and friends who contributed their time and expertise. In par-

ticular I would like to thank Leila Blackwell for her excellent organisation of the event and helping to make sure that we did indeed have a show, given the uncertainties surrounding the change of ownership of the venue. The Hawaiian Group are also to be thanked for honouring the commitment of their predecessor at a time when they must have had much bigger issues to deal with. We are hopeful of continuing our association with them into the future. As I am retiring from the Presidency at the AGM, this will be my last Notes. I would like to say that it has been a privilege to serve the Society for the last ten years and a great honour to be made a Life Member. The friendships that Shirley and I have made have been the greatest highlights of all. I leave the Presidency at a time when the Society is not without challenges but a good blend of experience and enthusiasm exists within the membership, which gives me great optimism for the future. I look forward to continuing my association with the Society and with all of the friends that I have made along the way. My best wishes to you all. *Keith Robinson*

50th Anniversary Booklet

Work is still progressing on this project and it is hoped that it will be available at the Distribution Day later this year.

CULTURAL NOTES

Taking Cuttings

The following advice is from Mr Roger Middleton, a former member, which appeared in the West Australian Gardener of June 1973.

Once the offsets have developed to a size and stockiness that can be handled, usually about 3 inches above soil level, it is time to consider the preparation of cuttings. Although some growers only plant "offsets" or "suckers", it has been universally established that a plant growing from a properly prepared cutting produces superior results.

The cutting should be selected from only the strongest "offsets", usually those growing furthest from the old stem. Once the "offsets" have been removed from the parent plant, they should have all but three or four topmost leaves removed, and the stem should be cleanly severed above the existing roots.

Next, it is a good practice to completely dip the cutting in a solution of fungicide. This helps to ensure that any existing fungus diseases are eliminated right at the outset.

Once the fungicide solution has drained from the cuttings, they should be planted about 1 1/2

to 2 inches apart in a cutting bed, or in pots or boxes. Irrespective of what method is used, the striking medium should be well drained and contain little or no contaminating materials—washed, clean sand—or 1 part Peat Moss and 3 parts clean, washed sand are very suitable mediums in which to strike cuttings.

Before the cuttings are inserted into the striking medium, they may be treated with one of the hormone rooting preparations on the market, if one so desires. Remember, should one of these preparations be considered, it must be suitable for soft-wooded subjects.

Whether a hormone is used or not, well prepared cuttings, in a suitable medium, and receiving the correct conditions, should average 95 per cent strike rate. Occasionally the parent plant makes few or very weak cuttings, in this case it is quite permissible to leave 2 or 3 existing roots on the cutting when it is being prepared. After the cuttings have been put into the striking medium, they should be well watered and then covered with some form of shading or protective material. (*Shade cloth*), hessian, shaded glass or fibreglass sheeting are all good types of material for this purpose.

Whatever form of protection is used, it should be about 2 or 3 feet above the cuttings, thus helping to create a stable, humid atmosphere. Apart from keeping the cuttings moist, light spraying of the leaves is done 2 or 3 times daily, no further troubles should be encountered, with the possible exception of slugs and snails. So keep a sharp eye out for these.

Once the cuttings have struck, usually 10 to 14 days later, the shading should be removed and the young plants left to develop into strong, stocky specimens.

This then is all that really worries us until the springtime arrives, when planting and potting of these young plants is to take place.

A discussion with Ron Atyeo regarding his 2014-15 cultural methods.



Ron's shade house is a lean-to in a sunny position on the north side of a shed. It is covered with White Opal Suntuf polycarbonate sheets (55% shade) and shade cloth (50% shade) sides.

The plants were struck as described in the blue covered WACS/Ted Elms cultural booklet and then later planted into 10cm pots. They were grown on until early December when they were transferred into 15 litre squat nursery bags filled with Baileys Premium Potting Mix. When potting on a good handful of 6-8 month slow release Macracote fertiliser (10.5-3.9-14.6 NPK) and some water saving crystals were mixed into the bottom half of the bag. In the past Ron added a microbial powder although last season this was not needed as the Macracote Pink Coloniser Plus used had added microbes.

Staking and pruning was done as per the 'blue book'. Exhibitions were grown three up, decoratives and spiders four or five up and singles and anemones up to eight up. Ron is aware of the balance between size and form and some tinkering with these numbers may be required in the future for selected cultivars.

The plants were watered by drip irrigation, which was mostly once per day although extreme heat required extra waterings, especially as his location gets regular temperatures to the mid forties in summer. The plants received about half a litre per plant at each watering. Additional fertilizer (high potassium Poly-Feed or similar) was added to the water every two weeks or so at a strength of 500g per 100 litres of water. As soon as petal colour was seen this stopped. He also supplied some potassium silicate two or three times in the season, but not together with the fertilizer. The bags were flushed, about monthly, as salts started to accumulate on the top of the soil in the pots.

Sprays used included Mancozeb and Bravo fungicides, Maldison and Proclaim insecticides and Acramite miticide. Proclaim provided very good control for caterpillars. The main problems encountered in his location are aphids and mealy bug.

Ron grew 75 plants last season, and unless he extends the shade house, that's about his limit.

