

NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Friends,
I hope that you enjoyed your Christmas, and that 2017 has started out well for you all.

Welcome back to Preston Garden Club in 2017, where we will once again come together in friendship for another year of learning about and sharing our gardening experiences.

Our agenda is already set for another busy year of events, with speakers organised, preparation for our Autumn Show is well under way, and as usual John Mathie has the next bus trip ready to roll; all he needs is a commitment from you to fill the seats. Don't delay as the seats are always filled very quickly.

Our first meeting for the year will be on Wednesday, 25th January, the evening before Australia Day, and we expect to be back in the Shire Hall for this meeting.



I will be taking you on a journey to Morocco, on the North Western corner of Africa at this meeting to see the sights of a country far different from our own in its culture, geography, and the challenges that Mother Nature

throws at them to grow their crops and to just survive at times, especially where the Sahara Desert keeps up its ruthless advance, swallowing all before it.



This is not the case everywhere though, because there is rich farming land, especially along the Barbary Coast, and what can be produced in the many oases is amazing.

I will show you Rabat, the modern capitol; Casablanca, now the largest and most progressive city; Marrakech, with its amazing souks where you will find everything imaginable, including snake charmers and monkeys trained to pick your pockets.



We will visit a Berber family in their tent home and cross the Erg Chebbi sand dunes of the Sahara by camel, staying overnight in the desert. The next day we climb over the High Atlas Mountains spending the night at a ski resort, where it snowed over- night.

Moving on to Fez, the oldest, most culturally interesting city in Morocco, we will enter the Kasbah (city walls) and head for the Medina (oldest part of Fez). From here we have to pick up local guides to lead us through the labyrinth of narrow alleyways of the Souk (market place), which goes on forever filled with the most amazing goods. Here you have to learn to hold your breath and your belly in and give way to the many donkeys, which negotiate these narrow walkways loaded to the hilt with all sorts of goods and chattels for the market stalls.



I found Morocco to be a fascinating place of contrast, interesting architecture and culture and welcoming, generous people. I hope that you will enjoy reliving this great journey with me on Wednesday night.

Bill.

AUTUMN BUS TRIP

SUNDAY 9TH APRIL 2017
ALOWYN GARDENS – YARRA GLEN, YARRA VALLEY CHOCOLATERIE & ICE CREAMERY & KOOKABERRY BERRY FARM-WANDIN.

COST \$35.00 Includes Coach, M/Tea, Garden Fee.

Coach leaving outside Preston Town Hall 9.00 am sharp, Byo lunch.

Members must advise John Mathie if interested and register and payment must be made by February 2017 meeting. Phone John on 94581632.

On the way two or three games of free bingo (prizes to winners).

1. ALLOWYN GARDEN & NURSERY. (Yarra Glen) (Morning Tea Supplied & BYO Lunch)

The Gardens are situated in the heart of the Yarra Valley. Within a area of approximately 7 acres the garden is designed along strong symmetrical lines that become blurred by the softness of the space and the grace of the trees. There are 5 clearly defined areas within the garden; a perennial border, a silver birch forest, 500 trees, an edible garden of generous proportions with avenues of fruit trees, a berry garden, and beds of organic vegetables, flowers and herbs. A formal parterre garden built along 17th century design principles that lead you through a series of small courtyards and garden spaces. Through all of this runs a wisteria and rose covered arbour 100m long with a sunken rose garden and a classical fountain as a centre piece. The new French garden in the front paddock provides a direct contrast to the detail of the main garden.

Browse around the selection of interesting plants and pots for sale in the nursery. Fruit and vegetables are also for sale when in season. BYO Picnic Lunch to have at the Allowyn Garden.

2. YARRA VALLEY CHOCOLATERIE & ICE CREAMERY.

The Yarra Valley Chocolaterie and Ice Creamery is a destination where you can indulge your love of chocolate in the beautiful countryside. Watch talented European chocolatiers handcraft over 250 different varieties of chocolate. Enjoy chocolate tasting. Free lucky raffle prizes to be drawn.

3. KOOKABERRY BERRY FARM. Owners Tony & Frances Caltieri.

Kookaberry Berry farm is a family owned business, having grown berries for 32 years. Enjoy fresh or frozen strawberries, blackberries, raspberries and of course jams. All jams are produced in small batches by Frances.(Kookaberry farm has been visited before)

Board Coach at 4.40 pm for a relaxing journey home arriving at approx. 5.45pm.

SHOW ENTRIES FOR COOKING SECTION

Some useful tips from our Cooking Judge to be aware of when submitting entries for judging,

Preserves:

All preserves must be **labelled** with the following -

* Name of product e.g. plum jam, tomato relish etc

* A list of ingredients on a separate label

* Metal lids on chutney, pickles etc. should be carefully examined for any damage to the inside of the lid which can, through the acid content of the product, cause rusting and seriously affect the preserves.

All Cooking exhibits must be covered in **cling film**.

SPECIAL NOTICE

At our next Autumn Flower Show, the committee voted on a having a TRADE TABLE.

What does this mean? It means that you can sell your plants. As everyone pays for their plants, pots, soil, fertilizer, water, propagating time, seeds etc. You can end up with more plants than you need. Over a year it comes a substantial amount. Although this is done with love (in my case obsession), it is a chance to recoup some of that love. So please bring your unwanted or over abundance plants along.

Requirements:

- Plants must be potted
- Plants must be in a reasonable condition
- Plants must have a name tag
- Plants must have the price that you want
- Plants will be registered at plant sales
- NO CUTTINGS
- At the end of the show you will come and collect all unsold plants and cash
- There is a charge of 10% to go to the Preston Garden Club

NOTE: You can still donate to the Preston Garden Club sales table.

YOU NEED PEAS

Green peas have virtually no fat, zero cholesterol and are low in sodium. They're rich in disease-fighting antioxidant vitamins and minerals, and high in protein, essential amino acids and fibre, making them a satisfying, filling food (yep, handy for weight loss as well).

Pick me!

When choosing fresh peas, look for pods that are waxy, bright green and blemish-free. Avoid overly bulging pods – this means they're overripe.

Peas for beauty?

You betcha. A cup contains healthy doses of vitamins A, C and K, which together ward off wrinkles and dark circles while promoting clear skin and shiny hair. Yes you do eat them rather than bathing in them!

Fresh or frozen?

Nutritionally, frozen is identical and may even be better in certain circumstances. However, nothing beats the flavour of freshly picked peas straight from the pod! Fresh peas are available year-round but are at their peak from October to December.

Grow your own

Peas are easy and quick to grow. Best months for growing peas is April-September. Ask at your garden centre about the best planting times and varieties. And sow a few varieties to stagger your harvest.

Snow peas and sugar snaps; what's the difference?

On the nutritional panel, there's not much between these two pea types and their garden- variety cousins. Snow peas are flat-sided while snaps are more rounded. Unlike garden peas, which require shelling, these are eaten pod and all. If you're feeling a bit fancy, call them mange tout, which is French for 'eat all'. Enjoy raw or cooked – either way, they're delish.

Packing a punch

One cup of peas contains more protein than a tablespoon of peanut butter, but a 10th the fat!

Did you know...

Peas are technically a fruit, since they are the seeds from the pod of a flowering plant.

FRUIT OR VEGETABLE?

A peach is a fruit, whoever you are, and a carrot is definitely a vegetable. In fact that "fruit" and "vegetable" are defined differently depending on whether you're a gardener or a chef. Dead centre of the overlapping region sits the tomato. So, why is it a fruit, and why is it a vegetable?

Botanically speaking, a fruit is a seed-bearing structure that develops from the ovary of a flowering plant, whereas vegetables are all other plant parts, such as roots, leaves and stems. By those standards, seedy outgrowths such as apples, squash and, yes, tomatoes are all fruits, while roots such as beets, potatoes and turnips, leaves such as spinach, kale and lettuce, and stems such as celery and broccoli are all vegetables.

The outlook is quite different in culinary terms, however. A lot of foods that are (botanically speaking) fruits, but which are savoury rather than sweet, are typically considered vegetables by chefs. This includes such botanical fruits as eggplants, bell peppers and tomatoes.

The fruit vs vegetable debate can sometimes reach such a fever pitch that the law must step in. In the 1893 United States Supreme Court case *Nix. vs Hedden*, the court ruled unanimously that an imported tomato should be taxed as a vegetable, rather than as a (less taxed) fruit. The court acknowledged that a tomato is a botanical fruit, but went with what they called the "ordinary" definitions of fruit and vegetable – the ones used in the kitchen.

SIX REASONS TO USE MULCH

The good reasons to use mulch in your garden. It takes no time at all to apply and by spending a couple

of dollars, you can to maintain the integrity and health of the most valuable veggie garden asset – the soil. When it comes to jobs to be done, mulching has to be one of the high priority tasks that occurs in your veggie patch.

The benefits of mulch are many, and here are just six of the reasons you should use it:

1. Mulch stabilises the temperature of the soil

By placing a layer of mulch on your garden bed you are actually putting down a layer of insulation. It stops the soil in your garden bed heating up quickly as the searing summer sun hits it, or from cooling down fast when the sun goes down. The temperature is more constant and you reduce the stress on your crops.

2. Mulch helps to reduce water usage

A good layer of mulch will shade the soil and reduce evaporation of water from the veggie garden beds. Because of the reduction in evaporation, water is more readily available for the plants and as a bonus, less water needs to be added. Combine mulch with a good water timer and the risk of over watering also diminishes.

3. Mulch provides weed control

Place 3-4 cm of sugar cane mulch to cover the soil on each garden bed. This thickness suppresses any weed seedlings from germinating and those few that do manage to get through are easily pulled up. A tip for the inexperienced, make sure that the mulch you use is seed free before you buy it. Nothing worse than spending all of that effort to spread mulch only to introduce a whole new set of weed seeds to your garden.

4. Mulch feeds the soil

As the mulch decomposes, all of the nutrients stored in the mulch are released slowly to your veggies.

MEMBERS NEWS

Just below the surface in the cooler soil, there will be an army of worms that will consume all of the mulch you put onto your garden beds. Over time they will turn it all into worm castings.

5. Mulch provides a habitat

A good layer of mulch helps provide place for a vibrant ecosystem of good and bad critters and microorganisms helping you develop a healthy garden. Whenever you lift up the mulch, there are plenty of worms on the surface of the soil working away among the decomposing mulch. All providing a much valued service.

6. Mulch reduces soil erosion

Mulch stops the force of the rain from hitting the soil directly, reducing soil compaction, erosion and splash-back onto the underside of the veggie leaves. Ever picked nice looking spinach or lettuce leaves only to find them covered underneath with gritty sand? When the rain hits hard onto the soil it bounces back up it takes with it tiny soil grains that can stick to the underside of the leaves. The force of the rain can also wash away the valuable soil from the surface and erode all of your hard work.

The mulch for your veggie patch can be Sugar Cane Mulch. It's easy to get hold of, cheap enough and really easy to apply. It decomposes readily and apply it twice a year in the veggie patch. Simply spread 3-4 cm deep onto moist soil and hose it down so that it is compacted a bit so it doesn't blow away. Make holes into the mulch to plant the veggies in. If you want to sow a row of seeds, expose a strip of soil to sow them in leaving plenty of mulch between the rows. You can use other types of mulch like pea straw, hay, lawn clippings or leaves. However for a backyard veggie grower, sugar cane mulch the easiest to use, clean and readily available.

We are delighted to report that two of our members have been recognised by the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria for their work over many years in horticultural.

Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria President Mr Don Rickerby accompanied by his wife Jennifer attended our Christmas Breakup in November to present these medals to -

Mr Geoff May received the Gold John Pascoe Fawkner Medal.



Don Rickerby with Geoff May.

Mrs Noelene Park received the Silver John Pascoe Fawkner Medal.



Don Rickerby with Noelene Park.

Geoff & Noelene have been members of our club for many years, we congratulate them on this wonderful achievement.



Happy birthday to you!

Happy birthday to you!

Jim Begg, Dorothy Berrill, Glenda Edgar, Barbara Lee, Desiree Mathie, Val Newland, Noelene Park & Dawn Walsh

Lovely to start off the New Year with a birthday. We wish you a wonderful day.

COMING EVENTS

Saturday, 25. February, Sunday, 26. Dahlia Society of Victoria, State Dahlia Show

Saturday, 25. February, Sunday, 26. Melbourne Begonia Society Show.

Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show Great Victorian Hanging Basket Competition 2017. Wednesday, 29. March 2017 - Sunday, 2. April 2017

MONTHLY COMPETITION

January 25th: Three Tomatoes, Shown with Stalks.

February 22nd: One Container Marigold, One Variety, C.V.A. (cut flowers)

MONTHLY MEETING

January 25th: Overseas Travel - Bill Saunders

February 22nd: Grow Better, products and use - Mike Donsen

STAMPS

Looking for more stamps. Some members have been collecting stamps for Robert to take back to China. He will be at the January and February meetings so if you can bring those stamps along to either meeting.