



PRESIDENT:  
 BILL CHAMBERLAIN  
 Phone: 0438 467 836



E-mail:  
[prestongardenclub@hotmail.com](mailto:prestongardenclub@hotmail.com)

web address :  
[www.prestongardenclub.org.au](http://www.prestongardenclub.org.au)

Instagram : [preston\\_garden\\_club](https://www.instagram.com/preston_garden_club)

ISSUE NO. 267  
 JANUARY 2026  
 Postal Address: P.O. Box 1004, Preston, 3072.

Committee Message

Dear Members,

Happy New Year. Welcome to the January 2026 edition of our newsletter. A new year brings with it new beginnings, fresh ideas and plenty to look forward to. We have lined up some interesting guest speakers for the beginning of the year and also planning a trivia night for the June meeting- stay tuned!

**Christmas Function**

All those that attended the Christmas function on Sunday 30 November enjoyed a delicious dinner and a scrumptious dessert at the Junction Hotel in Preston. The dinner was well attended by members and friends and is always a wonderful opportunity for members to mingle and catch up, as well as the formality of awarding the overall winners of the Monthly Competitions for 2025- congratulations to all see pictures in this newsletter. A fabulous Christmas Raffle was held with 12 prizes won by members, raising over \$200.

**Monthly competitions for 2026**

The 'odd one category' will no longer be a category in 2026. The 'Item of the Month' order has been changed to reflect no competitions for the June meeting as we host a Trivia Night. The judges and club members look forward to another year of beautiful exhibits from you all.

**January speaker- we are excited to have Kia Jade, Garden and lifestyle creator: @kia\_urbangardener**

Kia teaches beginners about designing gardens and growing food and flowers in small spaces.

**Flyers available to promote monthly speaker.**

Heather (*Vice President and raffle ticket dealer*) has created some fabulous flyers which can be used to promote guest speakers before each meeting. Take a few to drop into your neighbour's letter boxes or more to distribute further afield – we recommend letterboxing in the week before the Feb 25 meeting. See Mia or Anita for flyers.

**PGC committee:**

Bill Chamberlain	<b>President</b>	Mia Mikin	<b>Secretary</b>
Daksha Singh	<b>Treasurer</b>	Heather Meaklim	<b>Vice - President</b>
Anita Chamberlain	<b>Vice - President</b>	Antoine Enichteyan	<b>Committee member</b>
Carolyn Asquith	<b>Committee member</b>	Rosie Downs	<b>Committee member</b>
Laura Saunders	<b>Committee member</b>	Paul Shortal	<b>Committee member</b>

## Guest Speaker Report

### **November – speaker Chloe Foster**


Thank you to Chloe Foster who was a big hit at the November meeting. Chloe talked about pruning natives, garden habitats. Chloe's passion and enthusiasm for gardens was contagious. Chloe's depth of knowledge about all aspects of gardening shone through at the meeting as she answered members numerous questions and troubleshooting. <http://fosteryourgarden.com.au>



- Kia Jade -

**Kia Jade – balcony gardening/courtyards and small spaces** – Helping beginners grow their own food and flowers – no backyard needed!

Kia regularly shares her tips and successes on balcony gardening on Instagram ([kia\\_urbangardener](https://www.instagram.com/kia_urbangardener)) and TikTok and now coming to share with us directly!

 Gardening Tips & Tricks



### **Upcoming February speaker – Emmeline Bowman**

**Emmaline Bowman, Director/ Landscape Architect, STEM Landscape Architecture & Design, Northcote.** Her work blends design with ecology, aiming to restore native biodiversity while creating spaces that are beautiful, functional, and emotionally resonant.

[Instagram · stem\\_emmalinebowman](https://www.instagram.com/stem_emmalinebowman) web: [STEM Landscape Architecture & Design](https://www.stemlandscape.com.au)



# Speakers for 2026:

- January**    **Kia Jade** – Balcony gardening/courtyards and small spaces
- February**    **Emmeline Bowman** – Stem Landscape Architecture and Design
- March**    **Darebin Council Natural and Civic Spaces** – Nature Strip Planting
- April**    **Michael Cook** - Weeds of Melbourne -botany and historical storytelling
- June**    **Garden/Plant-based Trivia Night** (no botanical knowledge required!)

## **January in the Australian garden**

It's the height of summer, gardens require consistent watering, heavy mulching, and care to combat heat stress. Consider harvesting tomatoes, beans, and berries, while planting heat-tolerant veggies like eggplant and capsicum. Key tasks include pruning spent roses, deadheading and watering container plants deeply.

### **Planting and Gardening Tasks**

**Vegetables:** Plant beetroot, lettuce (under shade), carrots, silverbeet, beans, and summer staples like zucchini and sweet corn.

**Herbs:** Plant basil and lemongrass, which thrive in the heat.

**Flowers:** Plant heat-loving annuals like zinnias, petunias, and cosmos for instant colour

**Maintenance:** Apply heavy layers of mulch to retain moisture. Use soil wetters to prevent water runoff.

**Pruning:** Trim flowering herbs (lavender), deadhead roses, and prune spent gardenias to promote further blooming.

**Natives:** Plant hardy, bird-attracting Australian natives like callistemon and grevillea.

### **Harvesting:**

**Fruits:** Enjoy the harvest of stone fruit (peaches, nectarines, cherries) and berries.

**Vegies:** Harvest cucumbers, tomatoes, capsicums, eggplant, and melons.



*Happy Birthday! January- Barbara Duggan; Barbara Lee; Dianne McKenzie; Mia Mikin; Noelene Park & Jaswant Singh.*

## WORD QUIZ

How did you go with finding the word in the last newsletter?

The word last month was **-LOCKET**

The word this month has **6 letters**.

What could it be? Look at the four pictures for the clue. Answer in the next newsletter.



### Christmas Party at the Junction

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> of November saw another great Christmas party event at the Junction Hotel with over forty of our members and guests attending. Members were treated to a selection of delicious dinners and desserts and wonderful raffle prizes. Thank you to all those who helped make the night so memorable.





**Preston Garden Club wishes to acknowledge the support of:**

**Darebin City Council-** via its Community Support Grant Program and event management staff for the hall hire each month.

**The Office of Nathan Lambert MP-** for printing this Newsletter each month.

**Bunnings Preston –** Sponsorship of the Club’s Best Exhibit of the Month prize for 2026.

**Darebin Northwest Uniting Church –** Provide the venue for our monthly committee meetings.

## Monthly General Meetings procedures:

### **Date and address**

- Meeting- Fourth Wednesday of each month (except December)
- Venue- Preston Shire Hall, 286 Gower Street Preston VIC 3072
- Hall opens **7pm** and meeting commences at **7.30 pm with the guest speaker.**

### **On arrival**

- Sign in: Members are to sign the attendance book located at the Registration desk.
- Collect your newsletter (if your preference is a hardcopy version).
- Renew your membership subscription, if due, or join the club, if visiting.
- Peruse the information and flyers available for members situated at the registration desk.
- Purchase raffle tickets for the chance to win one of the plant/or other prizes.

### **Monthly Competition Tables**

- There are **eight** competition categories for members to exhibit plants, vegetable and flower arrangements for judging.
- Confirm with the Judging Panel whether you wish to enter as an Open or Novice exhibitor and then enter your plant in the relevant category.
- Entry tags and plant tubes are available for exhibiting in the kitchen.
- Results are announced during General business after the Guest speaker.

### **Guest speaker**

- There is a different guest speaker each month.
- Take a seat and enjoy the presentation.
- Guests and members are welcome to ask question of the speakers.

### **General Business**

- The committee will discuss any general business for the club including correspondence, upcoming events, member updates and gardens.

### **Supper**

- All members and guests are invited to stay for supper.
- The club provides two items each month.
- Members are welcome to bring an item to share for supper.

Meeting closes at 9.30pm




Some events below to attend in Darebin – for more go to: [Events calendar Darebin Libraries](#)



### **Baking with Yen**


Join us for these cultural cooking workshops at the IC

 Darebin Intercultural Centre, 350 High St Preston, VIC 3072, 350 High Street, Preston 3072



### **Darebin Volunteer Expo 2026**

Darebin Council is back hosting its annual Volunteer Expo! Hear from a range of local organisations and community groups about volunteering.

 Darebin Intercultural Centre, 350 High Street, Preston 3072



### **Bundoora Homestead History Tours**

Join this unique guided experience to hear the stories that shaped Bundoora.

 Bundoora Homestead Art Centre, 7 Prospect Hill Dr, Bundoora 3083

## Recipe – Spiced Pecan Cookies

Thank you to Mia Mikin, Secretary PGC.

Makes 24

### Ingredients:

- 150 grams of butter
- 110 grams of caster sugar
- 100 grams of brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
- 1 egg
- 250 grams of SR flour
- 60 grams of chopped pecans
- Half tsp ground nutmeg
- Half tsp ground cinnamon
- Pinch of allspice

You can use less sugar and more pecans – according to taste. Enjoy! 😊



### Method

- ❖ Heat oven to 180 Celsius
- ❖ Line baking trays with baking paper
- ❖ Cream the butter sugars and vanilla until light and fluffy.
- ❖ Add the egg and beat until well combined
- ❖ Fold the flour into the mixture followed by the pecans and spices
- ❖ Stir well.
- ❖ Roll level teaspoons of the mixture into balls and place 3cm apart on baking trays. Flatten slightly using a fork.
- ❖ Bake in a preheated oven for 10 – 15 minutes
- ❖ Remove and cool.

### Things to do in January and February 2026: *(feel free to email in any suggestions to be included)*

- Lavender Season at Lavandula Farm Wandin North -Peak bloom in January
- Friday 26 December 2025 - Sunday 19 April 2026 one of Australia's most spectacular seasonal gardens [Blue Lotus Water Garden](#) Warburton Hwy, Yarra Junction. Tickets available on site.
- Saturday 28 February 2026 - Sunday 01 March 2026  
[Melbourne Begonia Society - Plant Sale](#)

#### Note in the diary:

- The Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show in 2026 from Wednesday 25th – Sunday 29th March- email the Mia -Secretary if you would like to enter the hanging basket competition.
- GARDENER'S DAY OUT 2026!!  
Gardener's Day Out 2026 is on the 13th June 2026 at Deakin University Campus, Burwood. All of the favourite things you like about the day will be there PLUS MORE.  
Three Special Presenters make it a Spectacular Day and the venue and ambiance of the whole event makes it something *NOT TO BE MISSED!*.

## Monthly Competitions wrap up – NOVEMBER 2025

The November General meeting featured 33 member entries. Spring flowers, fruit and veggies all featured heavily in this month's entries. Best Exhibit was awarded to Robert's display of Snapdragons.

Category	1 <sup>st</sup> place
Cut flowers	Kate Chmiel
Specimen Bloom, Truss or Spike	Robert Strugnell
Plants in a container	Robert Strugnell <b>Novice – Di McKenzie</b>
Vegetables	Hilary May
Fruit and Herbs	Hilary May
Floral Art	Sarah Borg
Item of the month – Mixed cut flowers	Robert Strugnell <b>Novice – Di McKenzie</b>
Best Exhibit – sponsored by Bunnings	Robert Strugnell



## Photos from November competitions (*thanks to Sarah B*)





## February Item of the Month – Marigolds

- 3-6 stems
- One Variety
- Colour Variation Allowed
- Flowers are to be:
  - good form,
  - fully double,
  - collarette or single according to type,
  - not coarse.
- Double flowers showing no centre.
- Clear, well-defined colour, good size, strong straight stems, foliage fresh and unblemished.



### 2026 Item of the Month

Month	2026 item	2025 item
January	Tomatoes Three Tomatoes, Shown with Stalks (10 Cherry Tomatoes).	Tomatoes
February	Marigolds One Container Marigold, 3-6 stems, One Variety, C.V.A.	Marigolds
March	Fern One Pot/Container Fern.	Giant Veggies
April	Chrysanthemums One Container of Chrysanthemums, 6-10 stems, C.V.A.	Chrysanthemums
May	Succulents One Pot/Container Succulent/s.	Succulents
June	<b>No item</b> <b>Trivia Night</b>	Fern
July	Floating Flowers Bowl of Floating Flowers. No More Than 6 Blooms.	Floating flowers
August	Floral Arrangement A Floral Arrangement Using Flowers and Foliage.	Floral arrangement
September	Mixed cut flowers One Container of Mixed Cut Flowers, 6-10 stems, At Least Three Kinds.	Mixed cut flowers
October	Spring bulbs <b>NEW</b> One stem spring bulb.	Spring bulbs
November	Three flowers Three flowers shown separately	Three flowers

with thanks to Preston Bunnings for sponsoring the Item of the Month prize.



## Overall Winners of the Monthly Competitions for 2025

Congratulations to the 2025 overall winners of the monthly competitions, who were awarded the following prize money at the Christmas party:

Name	Prize	Amount
<b>Open Exhibitors</b>		
Sarah Borg	1 <sup>st</sup> Vegetables and herbs 1 <sup>st</sup> Fruit 2 <sup>nd</sup> Bloom, Specimen and Truss Equal 2 <sup>nd</sup> Cut flowers	\$55
Bill Chamberlain	2 <sup>nd</sup> Odd one	\$10
Kate Chmiel	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floral Art 2 <sup>nd</sup> Item of the Month Equal 2 <sup>nd</sup> Cut flowers	\$25
Antoine Enichteyan	1 <sup>st</sup> Odd one 2 <sup>nd</sup> Plant in a container	\$30
Hilary May	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vegetables and herbs	\$10
Helen Salisbury	1 <sup>st</sup> Floral Art 2 <sup>nd</sup> Fruit	\$30
Robert Strugnell	1 <sup>st</sup> Cut flowers 1 <sup>st</sup> Bloom, Specimen and Truss 1 <sup>st</sup> Plant in a container 1 <sup>st</sup> Item of the Month	\$80
<b>Novice exhibitors</b>		
Di McKenzie	1 <sup>st</sup> Cut flowers	\$20
Laura Saunders	1 <sup>st</sup> Vegetables and herbs	\$20
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$280</b>



## Meet Preston Garden clubber – Mia Mikin

### *Tell us your gardening story:*



My European parents had gardening in their blood; they always grew most of our produce from the time they arrived in Australia. Watering the tomatoes was the boring job we always had to do as youngsters. I knew absolutely nothing about gardening myself when we bought our house in Northcote 42 years ago. We asked the previous owner to write down the names of all the plants before we moved in. We changed the garden from the classic lawn with borders to a freer flowing design. We've learnt so much over the years, killed a vast number of plants but also managed to have some successes too



### *How long have you been a member of the Preston Garden Club?*

Three years and club secretary for one and half years. I saw the posters for the Gala at the Uniting Church and my curiosity was piqued.

### *Any particular gardening interests?*



I have only just started adding a few orchids to our collection and increased the number of perennials we grow. There is always so much to learn. It's always interesting to wander around the neighbourhood and see what's growing well and planning new areas in the garden. I've had many failures with ferns but we are about to develop a new area (which is quite shaded) and I already have the ferns to add when it's ready.

### *Favourite things about the Preston Garden Club?*

I really enjoy hearing the speakers and mixing with other club members; once again there is always something to learn.





***Tell us about your garden or plants?***

Our garden is quite large; we recently dug up a large expanse of lawn so we could give that prized sunny area to growing more vegetables and annuals. It's working well and the soil is slowly improving. We have planted berries in another prize spot on some steel mesh. The garden is a real mix of roses, perennials, annuals, bulbs and irises.

***Favourite plant and why?*** Impossible to choose – I love the achillea and the daylilies in the front garden because they can both take the intense summer heat. The bluebells and Aquilegia look amazing in the spring and the viburnum is glorious in both autumn and spring. The blueberry bushes never fail to astound me with their autumn colour.

***If space and cost were not an issue, what sort of garden would you choose?***

An even bigger one with water features and distinct garden rooms, so a reflective garden, a kitchen garden, a fruit orchard and of course someone to help with all that work.

***Favourite season?***

A toss up between Autumn and Spring.

***What advice would you give to anyone looking to create their own garden?***

Be prepared for failures but don't be put off – plants thrive in the right conditions and it's often trial and error to provide the right environment for a particular plant.

