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Committee Message

Dear Members,

**January meeting**

The January meeting was a great start to the year with over 40 members and guests present to witness Kia Jade's presentation on gardening in balconies and small spaces. In addition, members were treated to some wonderful plant exhibit including a stunning Sunflower – more details in this month's newsletter.

**March speaker and flyers**

Our March meeting will feature Darebin Council who will be presenting on the topic of nature strip planting. Thanks to Heather for her handiwork in developing flyers to promote the event. There will be packs of flyers at the front desk for any members interested in doing a letterbox drop in their local area to promote the night.

**Trivia Night sub-committee**

The committee is looking forward to hosting our very own Plant-based Trivia Night in June – our major social event for 2026. In preparation for this event, we are putting together a small sub-committee, and we will also need some helpers on the night. Members interested in being part of a small subcommittee are welcome to express their interest via email to [prestongardenclub@hotmail.com](mailto:prestongardenclub@hotmail.com) or let Bill know.

**MIFGS – Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show – hanging basket competition**

*The competition is open to individuals, groups, companies, schools, or any other interested party that is interested in showcasing their skills at the Show! It involves creating a unique and wonderful hanging basket that stands out from the rest. Your creation will be displayed for the duration of the Show for the public to see, with prizes for the top 10 best displays. More details in the newsletter.*

Regards,  
 PGC Committee.

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

## Guest Speaker Report

### February speaker- Emmaline Bowman

Emmaline is the **Director of STEM Landscape Architecture & Design**, Northcote. Emmaline's work blends design with ecology, aiming to restore native biodiversity while creating spaces that are beautiful, functional, and emotionally resonant. Emmaline was a winner in the 2024 Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show (MIFGS) Landscape Design Show Garden Competition, alongside Liam Riley of ID Landscaping. Their project, "Through The Looking Glass," (pictures of the winning garden at this link [Australian Garden Council](#)) Emmaline, not only won the prestigious City of Melbourne Award of Excellence for Best in Show but also garnered four additional awards, including the Gold Show Garden Award and the Horticultural Media Association Award for the best use of plant life. **We look forward to meeting her on Wednesday night.**  
Instagram · [stem\\_emmalinebowman](#)

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**Thank you to Kia Jade who was a big hit at the January meeting. Kia presented on small gardens, composting in small yards and pot plant care.**

In her small garden, Kia utilises a range of pot sizes, bigger pots for deep rooted plants such as a lemon tree and big crops such as potatoes, and smaller pots for quick growing small crops such as herbs and those with shallow roots. Kia is conscious of utilising her spaces well and will position tall plants to provide shade to the smaller pots and has created a shade cloth frame out of tomato stake frames joined together for the intense heat of summer.



Kia talked about maximising all aspects of the space available and uses vertical wall gardens and raised garden beds to help plants reach the light, as well allowing more growing space and shade for plants below. Between crops Kia will refresh pots by replacing 50% of the soil, and ensures she uses quality potting mix, compost, blood and bone, and fertilisers. Kia has a tumbler composter to feed her plants she includes: kitchen scraps, as well as; old hair, vacuum dust and dead plants. There was debate about shared compost bins in apartments or unit blocks within our meeting or the small dig-in compost bins. Kia stressed that keeping water up is key to plant survival in pots, and mixing ornamentals with food crops. Kia says that bees reach her upper level apartment, but also flagged manual pollination as an option. *With thanks to Heather (pictured above with Kia) for her summary of the presentation.*

[\(kia\\_urbangardener\)](#)

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## Speakers for 2026:

- 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
- May**            Pruning Fruit Trees
- June**           **Plant-based Trivia Night** (*lots of fun no botanical knowledge required!*)

## February in the Australian garden



February gardening is all about managing late-summer heat, harvesting, and preparing for autumn. Key tasks include deep watering (especially before heatwaves), applying mulch (7cm deep), and monitoring for pests like ants. Consider sowing autumn crops (broccoli, kale, carrots, lettuce) in punnets, and prepare beds by adding compost/manure.

**Planting - Autumn Prep:** Start seeds in punnets for beans, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, and lettuce. Direct sow beetroot, carrots, parsnip, and radish.

### Maintenance:

- **Soil:** Turn over garden beds and mix in compost in preparation for cooler weather planting.
- **Pruning:** Trim back deciduous grasses and prune winter-blooming shrubs once they finish flowering.
- **Cleanup:** Remove spent summer crops and weeds to prevent them from taking over.
- **Pest Control:** Check for bugs, particularly white butterfly on brassicas, and use netting if necessary.

### What to Plant in February (Autumn/Winter Crops)

- Seeds in Punnets: Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, lettuce, spinach, onions, leeks, and parsley.
- Direct Sow: Carrots, radishes, beetroot, and mustard greens

### Key Action Items for Feb 2026

1. **Monitor Water:** Ensure deep, regular watering to prevent plants from running to seed prematurely.
2. **Mulch:** Apply a 7cm layer of mulch to conserve moisture and suppress weeds.
3. **Prepare for Autumn:** Clean up spent summer crops and incorporate compost into the soil.
4. **Protect Seedlings:** Use shade cloth to protect young plants during heatwaves.
5. **Check Irrigation:** Test timers and repair leaks in your irrigation system



**Happy Birthday!**

**February-**

**Daksha Singh, Pratima Francis and Heather Meaklim.**

## **WORD QUIZ**

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

*The word last month was –CRUISE*

*The word this month has **7 letters.***

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



**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.

## 2026 MIFGS Hanging Basket Guide-*and below is a brief excerpt, to get you enthused!*

### 2026 HANGING BASKETS PRESENTED BY AUSTRALIAN UNITY THEME IS: WELLBEING

The competition is open to individuals, groups, companies, schools, or any other interested party that is interested in showcasing their skills at the Show! It involves creating a unique and wonderful hanging basket that stands out from the rest. Your creation will be displayed for the duration of the Show for the public to see, with prizes for the top 10 best displays.

The importance of Wellbeing has never been more prevalent and we want to see your interpretation of what Wellbeing means to you.

#### Here are a few examples to get your creative juices flowing:

**“Healing Gardens”** – Plants with medicinal or soothing qualities.

**“Mindful Moments”** – Soft textures, neutral tones, and minimalist arrangements that create a sense of calm.

**“Uplift & Energise”** – Bright colours, vibrant flowers, and invigorating scents.

**“Nature’s Nourishment”** – Hanging herb baskets for health, nutrition, and connection to food.

**“Sensory Sanctuary”** – A basket designed to appeal to sight, smell, and even touch.



**Please note** that the theme is not mandatory, and MIFGS encourage all ideas and inspirations that will make your creation relevant to you. It will not impact on how your basket is judged or require you to support the connection to the them.

**If you would like to represent Preston Garden Club in the competition please express your interest at the 25 February meeting to Mia, Heather or Anita or via email to Preston Garden Club [prestongardenclub@hotmail.com](mailto:prestongardenclub@hotmail.com) or simply register as yourself, there are great prizes to win and details are all attached.**

**How to Apply-** register via this link below:

**[The Hanging Basket Competition, presented by Australian Unity – Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show](#)**

**Get creative and enter a basket!**

## 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](#)

**26**

FEB 2026



### **Device Advice - Reservoir**

#### **Library**

Need help with using your phone, laptop or tablet?

 Reservoir Library, 23 Edwardes Street, Reservoir, 3073

 15 more dates

Tagged as: Library event, Digital


**13**

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### **Life Writing**

Have you ever wanted to create the story of your life?

 Northcote Library, 32-38 Separation Street, Northcote 3070

 3 more dates

Tagged as: Library event, Writing

**23**


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### **Reservoir Crafters**

Bring your own craft project to work on in the company of like-minded crafty folk.

 Reservoir Library, 23 Edwardes Street, Reservoir, 3073

 6 more dates

Tagged as: Library event

## Recipe – Banana Cake

Thank you to Kathy Zanini (and thanks to Barb Lee for assisting with gathering information.)

### Ingredients:

- 3 large ripe bananas
- 4 ounces (110grams) milk
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons of butter
- 1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- 1 ½ cups SR flour
- Half tsp bicarb soda
- Pinch of salt



### Method

- ❖ Heat oven to 180o Celsius
- ❖ Line cake tin with baking paper
- ❖ Cream the butter, sugar until light and fluffy.
- ❖ Add the eggs and mashed banana
- ❖ Fold in the flour, bicarb and salt
- ❖ Stir in the milk
- ❖ Mix until combined.
- ❖ Bake in a preheated oven for 30 – 35 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean
- ❖ Allow to cool before serving.

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

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

#### [2026 STATE DAHLIA SHOW VIC](#)

Mt Waverley Community Centre

Saturday 28 February 2026 - Sunday 01 March 2026

#### [Melbourne Begonia Society - Plant Sale](#)

➤ Sunday 01 March 2026 10:00am - 03:00pm

#### [WERRIBEE PARK HERITAGE ORCHARD - SUMMER HERITAGE FRUIT TREE FESTIVAL](#)

➤ Saturday 21 March 2026 - Monday 06 April 2026

#### [ARTANICA - Botanic Art Exhibition - Mt Macedon & District Horticultural Society](#)

➤ Friday 10 April 2026 - Tuesday 14 April 2026

#### [2026 CONVENTION of the AUSTRALIAN CACTUS and SUCCULENT SOCIETIES](#)

The Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show in 2026 from Wednesday 25th – Sunday 29th March- 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 – JANUARY 2026

The January General meeting featured 29 member entries with summer veggies, fruit and container plants featuring heavily. Best Exhibit was awarded to Kate's stunning Sunflower.

Category	1 <sup>st</sup> place
Cut flowers	Kate Chmiel <b>Novice – Di McKenzie</b>
Specimen Bloom, Truss or Spike	Kate Chmiel <b>Novice – Di McKenzie</b>
Plants in a container	Antoine
Vegetables	Kathy Zannini
Fruit and Herbs	Kate Chmiel
Best Exhibit – sponsored by Bunnings	Kate Chmiel



### Photos from January competitions



## March Item of the Month – Fern

- Plants must be clean with healthy new growth and disease free.
- Plant should be circular unless habit dictates other wise
- All old fronds should be trimmed right back to ground level
- Spore patterns should always be checked as some could be mistaken for black aphids
- Ferns should not appear to be over or under potted
- All containers must be clean including the saucers under the pots and baskets.



### 2026 Item of the Month

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

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



## Meet Preston Garden clubber – Kathy Zanini

### ***Tell us your gardening story:***

It started with my parents, they came out from Italy. My dad came out first in 1926 and two years later mum came out with my oldest brother and we lived in Deniliquin. I was born there, my mum loved the garden and had every flower you could imagine and veggies and fruit trees. Then I married an Italian, Rino and we both loved our garden he was mostly with the veggies and fruit trees and I was with the flowers. I also volunteer and am a member of the Kingsbury Bowls Club. I help look after the flowers, the rose garden and other flowers. Both my children are into gardens too, my son has a quarter acre and my daughter is also a keen into gardener and has lovely tomatoes.



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

I have been a member of Preston Garden Club about 4 or 5 years. I heard about the club from Barb Lee.

### ***Any particular gardening interests?***

I do enjoy the veggies too and it saves at the supermarket. My veggies are fresh and crisp and no strange chemicals on them.



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

I really like the companionship and learning, there is always something new to learn.

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



With my husband Rino, we had a large veggie garden and flowers out the front. Now I tend to all the garden as I best I can and my son comes and helps out with turning the compost and planting things.



***Favourite plant and why?*** There are so many favourites where do I start. I really love my roses and all the flowers and I have a beautiful elk and stag out the front. My absolute favourite though, is rhubarb-it's always there and you can add it in to so many things... pies, crumble. In Italian it's called 'rubarbaro'.

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

A really big veggie garden with a gardener I can boss around! There is nothing as satisfying as going out in your garden and picking a zucchini and a tomato, herbs and all you need to make dinner.



***Favourite season?***

Autumn - the days are beautiful I love watching all the leaves falling and gathering – although they drive me crazy and I have to clean them up. I love all the colours and the crisp mornings.



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

Go the Preston Garden club and get all the information you can. People are there to help you all the way along.

