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Committee Message

Dear Members, welcome to the March newsletter. We hope you are enjoying these lovely warm autumn days and evenings. At our last meeting in February, we welcomed nearly 50 members and guests. We were treated to a presentation by Emmaline Bowman, award winning landscape architect. Emmaline talked about reinvigorating environments and how to plan a garden that promotes bio-diversity and draws in the community with clever design.

April speaker and flyers

Please note: the March meeting has had a late change with **Gerald, President of the Northern suburbs Bonsai Society** presenting with exhibits and displays for members to view. Darebin Council postponed their presentation due to illness. Thanks to Heather for her handiwork in developing flyers to promote our monthly meetings and thanks to all the members who have letterboxed neighbours. There will be bundles of flyers at the registration table for any members interested in letterboxing their neighbours.

Trivia Night update

The sub-committee planning our very own Plant-based Trivia Night for the June meeting has begun their work. Thank you to Kay, Lee, Anita, Rosie and Paul for joining Bill to start the planning. At this month's meeting, members are invited to express their interest in attending Wednesday June 24 trivia night. The event will occur in lieu of our usual meeting at the town hall opening at 6.30pm for 7pm start. There will be a catered supper with a range of hot and cold finger food, games, spot prizes, raffles and lots of fun.

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

Laura Saunders and Sandra Di Francesco both nominated to represent Preston Garden Club in the hanging basket competition. Best wishes to you both and I hope you enjoy the garden show.

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

March speaker- Gerald Meade, President of the Northern Suburbs Bonsai Club

Gerald Meade will talk about the art of Bonsai and some insights on his own club. We look forward to meeting Gerald on Wednesday night.



February speaker review – Emmaline Bowman (STEM Landscape)

Emmaline talked about her various work projects and showed great pictures of how design blended with ecology, restored native biodiversity and created beautiful and functional spaces. 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 was titled "Through The Looking Glass,". Instagram - stem_emmalinebowman



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.

Speakers for 2026

- **March** Gerald Meade, President Northern Suburbs Bonsai Club
(Darebin Council Natural and Civic Spaces – Nature Strip Planting- postponed)
- **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!)

Member news

Alphington Show Saturday 21 March 2026

Each year, Bill Saunders and Wayne Hurley judge the flower and vegetable entries for the Alphington Show - see some winning entries below. This year, Rosie, Paul, Laura, Mia, Heather and Anita, all supported each other to run a stall promoting our wonderful club and selling a few plants to draw interest - we raised \$80 on the day. Thank you to the stall keepers and a **big** thank you and acknowledgement to those who potted up and donated plants to sell: Carolyn, Richard, Heather and Rosie. And also, to Bill for helping pack up.



Native Bonsai Show – Preston Town Hall 20 & 21 March 2026





Happy Birthday!

March-

Georgette Georges, Hilary May

Rosa Nardella, Robert Strugnell and Carolyn Scott

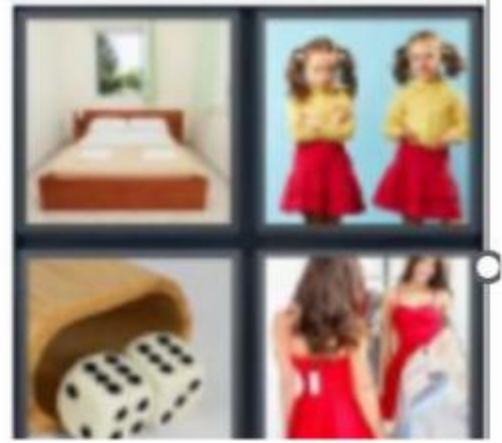
WORD QUIZ

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

*The word last month was - **BOUQUET***

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

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



March in Melbourne is the ideal time to transition your garden to autumn by planting leafy greens (spinach, kale), sowing root vegetables (carrots, parsnips), and planting spring bulbs like daffodils. It's crucial to fertilize, mulch to suppress weeds, and apply wetting agents to ensure autumn rains penetrate the warm soil.



Key Gardening Tasks for March

- **Planting Veggies & Herbs:** March is prime time for broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, lettuce, silverbeet, and leeks. Directly sow carrots, beetroot, parsnips, and Asian greens.
- **Flowers & Bulbs:** Plant spring bulbs (daffodils, hyacinths) and plant seedlings for autumn color, such as pansies, violas, snapdragons, and marigolds.

Maintenance:

- **Mulch:** Apply a 5cm layer of mulch to conserve moisture and suppress weeds.
- **Watering:** Continue watering deeply in the morning, but adjust frequency to account for cooler nights.
- **Feeding:** Use liquid seaweed fertilizers for new seedlings and established fruit trees.
- **Garden Tidy-up:** Cut back tired summer perennials and clear away finished vegetable plants.
- **Pest Control:** Autumn rain brings out snails and slugs, so apply safe baits to protect young, leafy seedlings.

Harvesting: Enjoy the last of the tomatoes and zucchinis, and harvest apples, pears, and pomegranates.

Gardening Events in Melbourne (March 2026)

- **Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show:** March 25–29, 2026, at Carlton Gardens and the Royal Exhibition Building.
- **Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria:** Take a free guided walk or check out the Cranbourne Garden's biodiversity events.

Soil Preparation

- Add compost and organic manures to beds to prepare them for autumn planting.
- Consider planting green manure crops like oats or lupins to boost soil nutrients.

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](#)



Tom McIlroy Author Talk

Blue Poles: Jackson Pollock, Gough Whitlam and the painting that changed the nation.

Preston Library, 266 Gower St, Preston 3072

Tagged as: Library event, Author talks and speakers



Device Advice - Fairfield Library

Need help with using your phone, laptop or tablet?

Fairfield Library, 121 Station Street, Fairfield 3078

15 more dates

Tagged as: Library event, Digital



Life Writing

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

Northcote Library, 32-38 Separation Street, Northcote 3070

2 more dates

Tagged as: Library event, Writing

Recipe – Raspberry Jam Coconut slice

Thank you to **Bill Saunders** (and thanks to *Carolyn Asquith* for assisting with the recipe.)

Ingredients:

Base:

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 ½ cups SR flour

Topping:

- 1/2 cup Raspberry jam
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 cup desiccated coconut
- Pinch salt



Method

- ❖ Heat oven to 180o Celsius
- ❖ Line cake tin with baking paper
- ❖ BASE: Cream the butter and sugar together
- ❖ Add 1 egg
- ❖ Add sifted flour. Mix well
- ❖ Spread thinly in a lined lamington tin (25x30)
- ❖ Bake 15 minutes until base is light golden colour
- ❖ Topping:
- ❖ Spread raspberry jam over warm base
- ❖ Whisk remaining egg and remaining sugar together. Stir in coconut.
- ❖ Spread over base.
- ❖ Bake for 20-25 minutes, or until golden.
- ❖ Cool completely in pan.
- ❖ Cut into pieces. Serve. Enjoy 🍪

Things to do in March and April 2026

- **Blue Lotus Water Garden Warburton Hwy, Yarra Junction.**

Tickets available on site.
Open until - Sunday 19 April 2026

- **The Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show**

Wednesday 25th to Sunday 29th March

- **2026 CONVENTION of the AUSTRALIAN CACTUS and SUCCULENT SOCIETIES**

Friday 10 April 2026 - Tuesday 14 April 2026

- **The Gippsland Rare and Unusual Plant Fair**

Saturday 11 April 2026 (9:00am to 4:00pm)

- **Ferny Creek Horticultural Society - Plants Collectors' Expo & Flower Show**

Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 April 2026

- **Gardener's Day Out 2026 is on at Deakin University Campus, Burwood.**

Saturday, 13th June 2026

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 !.



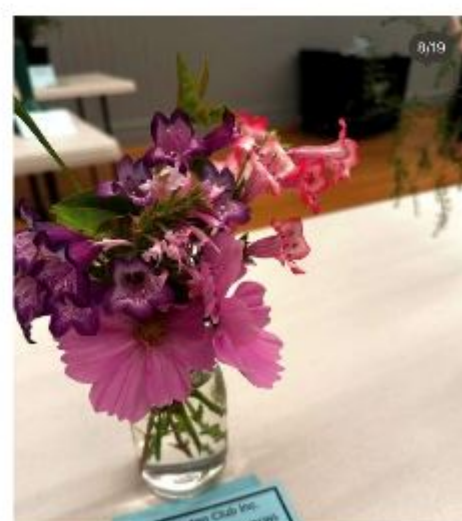
Monthly Competitions wrap up – FEBRUARY 2026

The February General meeting featured 43 member entries with summer veggies, fruit and container plants featuring heavily. Best Exhibit was awarded to Sarah's excellent exhibit of Floral Art.

Category	1 st place
Cut flowers	Sarah Borg Novice – Kim Sureda
Specimen Bloom, Truss or Spike	Kate Chmiel Novice – Laura Saunders
Plants in a container	Antoine
Vegetables	Bill Chamberlain Novice – Lee Klein
Fruit and Herbs	Barb Lee
Floral Art	Sarah Borg Novice – Maree Gleeson
Item of the Month - Marigolds	Anita Chamberlain
Best Exhibit – sponsored by Bunnings	Sarah Borg



Photos from February competitions





April Item of the Month – Chrysanthemums

- **Form and Shape:** Flowers not past their peak.
- **Freshness:** Florets should be unspotted and fresh. No dead or marked petals.
- **Uniformity:** A good balance between blooms in terms of size, form and colour.
- **Foliage:** Leaves to be free of pests and no disease or damage of any kind.
- **Staging:** 6 to 10 stems, counted at the top of the green flower tube. Stems arranged with flowers to face the front.



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Meet Preston Garden clubber – Bill Saunders



Tell us your gardening story:

I grew up in Preston and was lucky to have my grandparents next door- so I had the run of two houses and backyards! Nan and Pop had a country style garden and dad had a very neat orderly garden. Pop grew veggies and Nan grew flowers out the front. Nan had cuttings going all the time. Nan and I were very close -I'm one of 5 children and Nan helped look after me when I was quite young as I suffered with asthma as a little one.

Nan gave me a small plot of my own, a little garden bed in the back corner, that's how I became

interested because it was mine and I got to look after it. I became fascinated watching seeds sprout and grow. I would race home after school to check on them, water and take out any snails or bugs and weeds from my garden bed. I watch my plants grow till they died and I'd have a funeral -which became my trench compost!

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

I have been a member of Preston Garden Club for 48 years. I joined 28 February 1978 with Margaret Trewella and Pat Kilpartrick and we all participated in the club events and eventually joined the committee and we later all became life members.

How did you find out about the club? I found about the club from my next-door neighbour. She put her

head over the fence and said '*Bill you are always out gardening*' why don't you join the Garden Club? I said what garden club? That was at the end of 1977. I met Ben Hosking at my first meeting- he ran the trading table back then. It was filled with his produce that he'd sell for the club. In those days 70 plus members attended the meetings. Ben clocked me as having 'skills' and asked me to join him

on the trading table- it was a big thing in those days. Ben had many contacts and would get commercial products to sell. In my first year I was co-opted onto the committee and joined as Assistant Secretary and then minute secretary, I served on committee in some type of executive role since I started in the club and finished as president about three years ago.

Favourite things about the Preston Garden Club?

Preston Garden club has been a big part of my life - I have enjoyed the people in the club and meeting other like-minded people from other clubs. In the early days, people didn't ask what you did for a quid- it was always 'what do





you grow?' I appreciated the companionship in the club and made lifelong friends. With my wife Wilma, we were always promoting the club, we would organise bus trips for members and it always felt like a big Christmas party. Preston Garden Club was well known for its Garden Shows that occurred twice a year and were big events to organise!! I watched people look after each other and form great friendships. I remember one of the biggest shows we had, coincided with the Clubs 50th anniversary. This added extra planning for the



committee to source commemorative items to mark the anniversary. At the same time the then Mayor of Preston Council, asked for volunteers to create a 'Community committee' to highlight things to celebrate for Preston celebrating 100 years! After these milestone events, the Community committee evolved into a Social committee that I ran, for many years and organising ballroom dances and entertainment.

Any particular gardening interests?

I am bit like the year, I change with the seasons. I love nature and as a child I enjoyed going out to my grandparents' families' farms and I'd watch the changes in colours and plants through the year. I just enjoy watching things grow!

Favourite plant and why? I have trouble identifying a favourite- as I love all plants in each season. I do have a fondness for ferns, not as many in my garden now- I'm away a lot more often now and they dry out. I loved



dahlias and had strong connections with Dahlia Society, again as I travel around visiting my children/grand children, dahlias are hard to maintain. My garden has become a more open area, with plenty of space for all the family to gather, to relax and enjoy the sun or shade. Wilma and I knew so many people and we visited so many gardens and people would visit to seek out Wilma for advice.

Favourite season?

I love all the seasons- I enjoy new things growing in spring and the autumn colours through March, the warm nights to sit outside and enjoy the sunset. I like seeing the changes in the garden, as things grow tall and sprout.



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

I'd say if they have vision about the lifestyle they want, for example; if they look forward to seeing children playing out in the yard or they envision sitting outside and relaxing that is where they should start with their planning. In terms of plants, look around your area to see what is growing well and of course- come to the garden club and meet like-minded people. Our club motto is 'interested in gardening'.