

Flowers to feed the soul and top gran's grave

ANDREA Drake would go for walks, in her home town of Mt Gambier, always coming back with a big bunch of flowers. “When I was a child, I would be nicking a rose from here and a rose from there,” she says.

“There was a little old man on one of the streets who told me off for pinching his best rose from his garden. He felt so guilty afterwards that every Saturday he left a rose in a little vase out the front for me.”

Andrea, 45, now lives in Creswick with her husband and daughter, and has turned her love of flowers into a hobby at home.

Their standard-size house block hosts a garden of ranunculus, peony poppies, herbs, cornflowers, astilbe and much more. Andrea is continually reading and researching on perennials which will tolerate the local weather for her garden plants.

It has been an ongoing experiment in the garden for Andrea, working out which plants survive and thrive and which ones get the chop. She creates edible bunches which include cornflowers and herbs along with more traditional floral posies.

“I love roses, peony poppies, and very feminine vibrant flowers. Hydrangeas are big, blowsy and beautiful. Colour is a major factor in my choices,” says Andrea.

“You know how people buy groceries to nourish your body; I think people buy flowers to feed their soul. I think flowers are for making you feel better, for celebrating or gifting love to others. I make affordable bunches. I grow plants that are small and abundant.”

It is an evolving garden with a focus at the moment on perennials rather than annuals with vegetables, herbs and shrubbery sharing the garden beds.

Andrea buys in roses from specialist flower farms for the big calendar occasions like Mother’s Day and Valentine’s Day. She keeps the cost of the posies low and sells them at Flemo’s Milkbar in Creswick.

The proximity of the Creswick Cemetery is a perfect marketing opportunity for Andrea’s business. “People pop into Flemo’s for a posy to put on their granny’s grave,” she says.

Flema’s owner Brian Fleming says: “There is no doubt that the cemetery is a factor in Andrea’s success with people looking for flowers. My customers love them, she keeps them very cheap, and they are popular.”

Words: Carol Saffer | Image: supplied



Century-old prayers provide comfort in the pandemic

AFTER more than a century, words of kindness provide comfort in a COVID-struck world, according to Newlyn singer/songwriter Neil Adam.

It has inspired his new album, *The Windmill Needs the Wind*, which features 12 of the prayers written in Samoa by Robert Louis Stevenson set to music.

Neil’s interest in Robert Louis Stevenson has been life-long. Before COVID struck, Neil and his partner Judy Turner were planning a return to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2020, the 170th anniversary of the writer’s birth. Their show *Sing Me A Song*, telling his life story, had sold out at the Scottish Storytelling Centre in August 2019.

Pivoting when COVID brought all travel and touring to a halt, Neil turned his attention to Stevenson’s Vailima Prayers written during the period of his life when he was living with his family in Samoa.

The prayers were written for his extended family and his community of Samoan families living at Vailima, Apia.

“Written under Pacific skies, they have relevance to people struggling with disease, disempowerment or despair, anywhere,” Neil says.

Through 2019 the prayer-songs took shape, and lockdown provided the opportunity to record them. Neil gathered around him a group of acoustic musicians, to record (in their own homes) an album.

The roll call includes Dan Witton (Bush Gothic) on double bass; Luke Plumb (Luke Plumb and The Circuit) on mandolin; Hamish Davidson (Davidson Brothers) on fiddle; Judy Turner on fiddle, viola, uke; and singers Pete Daffy (The Funky String band); Bec Rigby (The Harpoons); and Gus Rigby (Number One Dads, Fools).

Link: www.neiladamandjudyturner.com/windmill



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