

Garden talk

James Alexander-Sinclair

Introspection technology

ONCE UPON A TIME there were notebooks and diaries: in them the conscientious gardener recorded such minutiae as when seeds germinated, the weather and which plants looked their best at which time of the year. This journal was then used to avoid falling into the same heffalump traps every year and to give weight to any over-the-fence conversation about the ghastliness of the weather and preponderance of eelworms.

Today we have The Blog: there are thousands of them lurking out there in cyberspace like jellyfish off a crowded beach. The Blog (for those who do not know) is a diary available to all on the internet: some are simple while others positively bristle with photographs, videos and drawings. They have the advantage of being interactive so if you wish to comment or add your own opinions then you are encouraged so to do.

Like most of the internet this is a bit of a mixed blessing. While many blogs can be both well written and extremely useful, others are immensely dull, heavy on sentiment, bad poetry and with far, far too many cats for comfort. There are blogs that deal with design, some with garden visits, others about sheds. Loads concern plants and many (almost too many) tell tales of allotments and vegetable growing. Anything you wanted to know about gardens and gardeners all around the world is out there somewhere.

Why would anybody want to read about somebody else's mosaic virus or see full-frontal photographs of their geraniums? Maybe to empathise, maybe to gloat; but I think that is probably a side issue. Like many amateur diarists through history a lot of the pleasure of writing a blog is just that, the writing. The fact that other people can, and do, occasionally read your ramblings is a satisfying extra. Some might dismiss blogging as vainglorious and only contributing further to the log jam of drivel but as the exercise is free, optional, spreads a little knowledge, experience and some laughter then why the hell not? Just watch out for sites with too many cats. ■

James Alexander-Sinclair is a garden designer, writer and occasional broadcaster. His blog can be seen at: <http://web.mac.com/blackpittsgarden>



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