

• MY KIND OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY •



# MY • don't be square • KIND

OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY. © 1997

● the planet

■ shopping

dedicated to  
MAUREEN  
GRANDAD  
& NAN

# MY KIND OF SELF SUFFICIENCY

"treading in ever increasing sustainable circles"

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very grateful thanks to John Hillard for loan of computer/ Graham Hamilton for keeping it going/ Anna Pavord & THE INDEPENDENT for believing in me/ Richard Youngman & LEAKY PIPE GARDEN SYSTEMS for all their help

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■ square peg doesn't fit the round hole ●

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my kind of self sufficiency

making life more sustainable

energy saving light bulbs ~ turning off ~ recycling ~ save ~ saving energy ~  
knock down the wall ~ phone ~ bottles ~ clothes ~ skips ~ diesel van ~ scrap  
wood ~ save water ~ rainwater ~ hair ~ secondhand ~ YELLOW PAGES ~  
apprentice ~ furniture ~ tools ~ merchants ~ money ~ e-mail ~ waste paper ~  
making presents ~ decorating ~ the country ~ food shop ~ grow ~ compost ~  
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in the garden

permaculture ~ Bio-dynamics ~ Forest Gardening ~ herb spiral ~ pond ~ frog  
world ~ reed bed ~ bees ~ grass ~ rainwater ~ compost heap ~ polytunnel ~  
ponds ~ comfrey ~ willow ~ fruit press ~ soft fruit ~ pumpkins & gourds ~  
potatoes ~ chickens ~ vegetables from seed ~ weeding ~ crop rotation ~  
companion planting ~ pests ~ predators ~ green manures ~ harvesting ~  
gardening year ~ planting ~ seed potatoes ~ hedging ~ tools etc.

what next?

build our own home ~ solar water heater ~ reed bed ~ rainwater ~ composting  
toilet ~ water turbine ~ coppicing ~ income ~ green burials

places to visit

useful organisations

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finance

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## *my kind* of self sufficiency

Thanks for making the effort to get a copy of this. If at some point you experience a sense of déjà vu and catch yourself saying something like "yes, I think I can follow what he's saying.... and it seems to make sense, especially that bit about....." then I'll consider the effort worthwhile.

First off, this *isn't* a 'how to' booklet. It's more of a 'how I'. How I have been looking, all my life, for a kind of self-sufficiency without realising I already knew what it was. How I eventually twigged. How I now know what I'm going to do when I grow up.

We are all looking for something. Most of us find it by going shopping. You can always go shopping. Now with the internet you can do it 24hrs a day. I've wanted something ever since I can remember, but not the kind of thing you could buy.... in the second or third year at primary school, Thomas Rankin and I spent weeks in our art lesson making a battleship out of strawboard and papier mache. Jonathan Try and I made a working telephone exchange using bits his dad got us from his job at the BBC and we had from army surplus. At secondary school among other things, I made a fish slice and a number plate for the house. Photographs I took and printed up at college hang on the walls of strangers houses .....what I wanted was to repeat those moments - the excitement of having an original idea, finding and using the materials, and to experience the rush of making 'til it becomes a real thing. The flush of pride at how professional it looks just standing there, a recognisable object, you can't quite believe it. Those moments, I remember them as flashes of light through my life, I've wanted to know how to turn them on at will.

Starting at the beginning. I'm Phil Rooksby. Aged 41. 6' 2" tall and very thin. Distinctive rather than handsome, freckles/ moles and save for once a week usually unshaven. Hair cropped short (no.2) to hide hereditary thinness, usually concealed under a hat. Penchant for sharp glasses and assorted ear/ nose piercings (a new one on each birthday from now on). Never seen out without army camouflage trousers, DM's, and several layers of shirts and handmade jumpers. Married 18 years to long-suffering Maureen. Vegetarians. No children. Live in an old two-up two-down farmworkers cottage, on the edge of a small rural village between York, Leeds and Whitby - in the Vale of York. Presently sharing it with four cats, though there have been more and no doubt strays will continue to be taken in, no questions asked. Favourite films 'Truly Madly Deeply', 'The Hairdresser's Husband' and anything South American. Music tastes vary across the spectrum, especially Baroque/ Tango/ Jazz. Enjoy reading anything by Marge Piercy and Iain Banks.

I was born in 1956 in Sydenham, South London. Don't remember much before the 1960's. Grew up with a fear of school (bullied a lot by staff and pupils) and the chore of having to go to church at least three times a week (in the choir from age of 7 until voice broke at 18). I was often incredibly bored, especially in the summer holidays. Left school with amazingly, given the mutual lack of interest, one A-level (an E in English Literature) and managed to trade it at the very last moment place at a teacher training college



in Clacton-on-sea.

Thought a teaching qualification would make up for dismal exam performance. However, was asked to leave after the first term for apparently 'having' no aptitude (is this a contradiction in terms?). Returned home and to a job in the Civil Service (parents anxious I have a 'career'). Managed to plead a place at another college, in Milton Keynes, the following September. Completed the first year unscathed, then transferred back to London for year two and three and move in with new girlfriend. I didn't enjoy teaching but had a minor success in my subject and qualified as a primary school Art teacher in June 1978, nineteen years ago.

Like my schooldays the 'working' ones were a bit of a nightmare too. Starting out with a case of mistaken identity and then swerving hopelessly out of control. I knew I didn't want to be a school teacher. So it took nine months and hundreds of applications to get an interview for something I could do - teach Art one day a week at a local Day Centre for the Elderly. Mysteriously I ended up being appointed as a full-time Community Arts Worker instead. Sent out onto bleak 60's council estate to create meaningful artistic opportunities for the not so keen tenants. Unfortunately (or fortunately for them) I didn't have the slightest idea what a Community Arts worker did for a

living, a state of innocence that remains to this day. I did have a talent however for survival and managed to last eighteen months without injury or being found out. Have a sneaking suspicion the other Arts workers didn't have much of a clue either. Eventually got another job, as a community worker for Age Concern. Equally vague. Beginning to think should have become a teacher, at least then I'd have known what I was supposed to be doing. Desperate for something more down-to-earth I took a part-time post as an administrator running a small community advice centre. In Milton Keynes. Which, despite the lousy money and on the face of it having nothing artistic about it, I was surprised to find I actually liked. Felt more at home working on my own and created ample opportunities for venting creative spleen. The voluntary management committee found it a bit of a strain though. The raw energy I pumped into the job was not quite the responsibility they had bargained for and they didn't have the time to manage me properly, so two years later they called it a day and returned my P45. That was 1983. The next 'real' job wasn't for another seven years. Meanwhile I temped, doing anything and everything for what seems to have been hundreds of different companies. Did 18 months in the library service supervising a government scheme for the long-term unemployed, and even went self-employed for a while as a graphic designer. In 1990 temping at the University of Leeds I saw an internal post advertised in marketing. Amazingly (alarm bells should have rung again at this) was successful and became the Senior Secretary for the Schools Liaison Office. Got my own office, nicely hidden away in the bowels of the Astrophysics department, and my name on the door. Happy days, even if couldn't spell liaison! Had a great time running around the campus being my own boss again. That was until 'Administration' began to realise the full extent of my activities. Believe I was the first person they've actually sacked for no stated reason. The fun had lasted just one year. But that was six years and another life ago.

The week before I found out that the university were going to have to let me go I actually thought I was up for promotion. As you would, having just been interviewed for an exciting future as part of a new team. But obviously things are never quite what they seem. It coincided with us raising a loan to buy some land adjoining our house. A derelict orchard, so overgrown it appeared no more than a thick hedge had suddenly come up for sale as building land. We had become used to the privacy so this was not a pleasant surprise. We made an offer that couldn't be refused, and then the sky fell in.

Overnight we were one income less and the very new and naive owners of one acre of prime wilderness. At 35 and with 'the cv from hell' it wasn't going to be easy finding work. Even temping. I sat down with the bank statement, did some sums, and everything indeed was doomed.

The first weeks were a little bit crazy - a 'twister' of moods - anger, fear, guilt and uncertainty accentuated by my virtual imprisonment at home, six miles from the nearest shop or town without transport. I knew virtually no one in the village and desperately missed the buzz of campus life. Went for a couple of interviews and then stopped looking. Read loads of novels. Eventually things began to settle out, the trees and bushes came into leaf and the summer began to work its magic on the landscape. I decided to have a go at the house and make a start on the garden. Grudging decision, driven entirely by guilt and boredom (I hate decorating, and had no expertise in either diy or gardening). Still, decided to bite the bullet and apply myself like it was a proper job - I have a high regard for religious zeal. Waking up as early as Maureen and out into the garden for an hour before breakfast, then move on to the workshop/ house for the rest of the day. When the sun began to lower in the sky back into the garden again until Maureen got back. This was a turning point, the beginning.....

I started out by just wanting to have some dignity, and work to maintain the fabric of the mortgaged roof over our heads. Working with what I could find around me or scrounge I progressed onto making furniture. Recreating objects we would have once bought, and that brought me back into contact with the 'making' feeling. I'd finally discovered how to switch the 'light' on. In fact everything I do here feels like that, it's connected to that age-old thing of 'providing' (food/ shelter/ fire & water). There's an energy to be had from being so in touch with the basics of life. I feel so much more alive and interested in things now, in fact there's just not enough time to do everything.

You learn that you can always go shopping, but it's not the answer. It's a short-term gratification that blunts the imagination, devalues craft, and has no respect for the environment - consuming the world at an alarming rate with its blandness and uniformity. I can see all around me what the last hundred years of 'shopping' have achieved - a cataract, masquerading as 'progress'. It has blurred our vision, so we no longer see the beauty and vividness of an artisan-based way of life.

If we really want to enjoy life then we need to get back and 'earth' ourselves with some practical tasks and skills.

Q. Why are our parents so dull?

Q. Why aren't we encouraged to work at what we really enjoy?

Q. What's the point of all the physical pain of giving birth and spending eighteen years of a life raising a life, if it's only to enter into servitude and tedium?

Q. Why do teachers so despise pupils who won't fit in?

Q. Why do we spend our entire formative years in company of other children, when society is far from peer based?

Q. Why can't a hobby become a career?

Q. Why do we have to pay direct and indirect taxes yet have no say on how they are spent?

Q. Why are pensioners treated less than third class citizens?

Why?

Because the process of induction to adulthood is about creating a 'managable' being, one who will fit in and maintain the 'status quo'.

Q. What is the 'status quo'?

It is a state of expectation that exists to ensure an unbroken stream of unimaginable wealth (more than could ever be spent in a

lifetime ) for a very select few, and bu\*\*er the rest if they die working for it. It's called 'shopping'.

I look back now and can see all the usual pressures to conform but for some reason I just wasn't interested in buying, making or selling other peoples things. I wanted to work with raw materials myself, or if I wasn't good enough to live by that at least helping others to. Neither 'shopper', 'worker' or 'craftsman' I wasted nineteen years of my life bouncing around the fringes of employment (charities and community work) in jobs that I had no aptitude or interest in, just to find a small corner to be myself in. Not only was it was hard work for me but it must have been hell on my employers.

Having to make ends meet, or self-sufficiency as I now know it, gave me a fresh chance to deviate from the work-hard play-hard community and strike out.

Freedom from the drudgery of work makes you think about whether you really want to be part of a society that makes life so miserable. I see now the popular crusade for 'jobs' at any cost for what it is and cringe. The damage to the environment, and a blatant lack of concern by our elected representatives to put pressure on those responsible to do something about it. I feel betrayed. Everything I was taught to be

see/ believe in as 'good' is probably supported entirely by an economic imperative rather than a valid ethical one. I've decided to abandon 'truths' and am devoting myself to the enjoyment of rediscovering everything through my own observation. To not do-it-yourself, I now realise - as did Tom Good - is a trap where one ends up having to spend precious 'life' time earning to live, rather than getting on with living it.

THE GOOD LIFE television series opens with Tom on the morning of his fortieth birthday. At work he's reached the enviable position of being the chief designer for a range of plastic animals supplied in cereal packets, who suddenly discovers that over the years he's been left behind by all his contemporaries. He is now very much alone in an office full of young turks. Later, at home the birthday dinner offers an opportunity to reflect. He's missing something. Something or "it". He struggles to define "it". Three in the morning and he lands on a possible solution. Self-sufficiency, in Surbiton. Cut to scene of Tom & Barbara dancing in the fish pond. The next morning and before the rest of the Close are up he's swapped their car for a rotavator. Classic. Get the video. Our first hesitant steps were pigeon ones in comparison. But then Tom & Barbara were fictional characters, they didn't have our sizeable mortgage and needed the car for Maureen to get to work. We started out with a spade and a wheelbarrow, and a philosophy known as *scrimping*. We caught up in the end but it took six years to get the rotavator. Here's a list of some of the everyday things we do in our version. Some are obvious and not very glamorous but all have a part to play in making it work:



making life more sustainable

I vowed for years it was too boring and expensive to do it but energy saving light bulbs are actually a good idea - for those places where they can be on for up to several hours at a time (turning them on and off shortens their life apparently). The colour of the light is much whiter, once it's warmed up



& again very mundane, but it's really made a difference, turning off conventional lights/ tv/ video when leaving the room; and painting the walls and ceilings several (the more the better) coats of white emulsion to reflect light more efficiently

& then there's the usual taking glass/ tins/ newspapers to the local recycling point, stop me if I'm boring you but none of my neighbours do it - as a result they have three or four rubbish bags a week and ours takes two or three weeks to fill

& I can't help but save things, waste to me is distressing, but there's a limit. It's got to have another use in the near future, I'm definitely not a hoarder - you can quickly reach a point where you can't see what you've got for all the stuff. I usually collect things when I need them, and because I'm so disorganised often leave it too late, so friends (thanks Mo) and colleagues are an essential part of the system (for example each year we have a huge need for plastic drinks bottles, but don't actually buy any ourselves). If I don't want something any longer I'll try and find it a useful home, or if I'm having one of my big purges then we bite the bullet and do a carboot stall (urghh!)

& however you look at it saving energy is nowhere near as sexy as say harnessing natural energy. But the simple things at least make the house feel more comfortable, which if you spend everyday in it makes sense. We've been slowly taking out the nasty replacement windows and doors which have rotted prematurely, probably because they've been painted when still 'green' instead of using a microporous or 'breathing' stain. Double glazed units this time though triple glazing would have been even better if only the walls didn't let out so much heat. Hardly a saving. Something for our next house. We insulate the windows further in the biting winters with long curtains made from dust sheets, which are dyed. These are then overlaid with cheap and glitzy sari fabric from the Asian shops in nearby Bradford. In the summer we just hang the sari pieces

The glass fibre insulation is beginning to tire now and we shall replace it eventually with WARMCEL, a recycled paper product. It's granulated and you can have it blown it into all those nooks and crannies, like where the roof meets the eaves, and best of all it doesn't bring you out in a rash (one of the reasons we've haven't got round to stripping out the other stuff yet)

I find the whole alternative energy thing (generating electricity or heat from natural energy) really exciting - big boys Meccano - and have been on a number of courses at CAT (described further on) to find out more. But unless you are building new the chances are the cost will be too high for anything but a hobby version.

AE systems also are not as user-friendly as the amazing technology we take for granted around the home. They require you to understand how they work, there's regular maintenance and trouble-shooting you have to do yourself (no service engineer or back-up). It's bit like how our friends view our coal-fired heating. The burn has to be adjusted daily according to the weather and seasonally, by guesswork. It needs fuelling three times a day and ashing once. You have to be aware of how hot the water is at all times (it has a boiler) and think ahead if you want to have a bath. Hardly something you'll see at Curry's. But at least with Alternative Energy you get the electricity or heat for free

& we saved on our heating bills and got ourselves a brilliant new study/ sitting room with views across open countryside just by knocking down a wall. One of our two

bedrooms had been consigned to storing junk because it was so damp. One day we decided to knock down the wall it shares with the staircase/ corridor. Now you come up into the room straight through the floor and it is totally transformed. We put a 'green' woodburning stove in the fireplace and it keeps the whole upstairs toasty in winter (we even bake potatoes and parsnips in it) without using the central heating. We burn skip wood and coppice from our garden, so it doesn't cost us a penny. We were worried about draughts coming up the stairs so I used the old door and rehung it at the bottom but needn't have worried - heat rises, it's totally draught-free

& I have a self-imposed curb on phone use, until the evenings (and leave messages for businesses then on their answerphones) which is one perk of 'working' I really do miss - but I'm sure the University doesn't

& I actually import empty bottles of organic wine (Vinceremos) from where Maureen works (over 5000 now - thanks Malcolm, what about one with something in it?). I use them as edging in the garden. Turned upside down and hammered in with a rubber mallet they are made for the job. When it rains the dimpled base makes ideal bird baths, and in the moonlight they reflect the way ahead. To make a path from them, make two parallel rows of bottles (use a spirit level across) and fill with three-

quarter inch (20mm) gravel to a depth of 6". To aid calculating how much gravel to order - a ton is the equivalent of 22 cubic feet

& I've never liked buying clothes, there's too much choice, and the prices are just too ridiculous. Shoes are even worse. When I was a student in London it was passable to dress how you felt and that was just great. In fact I had quite a collection of top label stuff, sourced from jumble sales and charity shops in the more affluent areas. Up here though people are only too ready to judge you on your appearance so I've had to sober up a bit. Still, most of my clothes are secondhand or hand-me-downs from Maureen. She's also an ace knitter, using recycled wool of course

& we both look in skips as a matter of routine now, especially in the huge one where Maureen works, which often has lovely pieces of wood. It is always worth visiting the local tip at least once a week, and developing a good relationship with the site owner (nothing then should cost more than a couple of pounds, and on average 50p). Furniture, especially pre-foam, metal and spare parts for cookers/ washing-machines are the most popular recyclable items. We recently found a kilim in a skip, worth over £500 so it pays to keep those eyes peeled. Scrapyards which hire out skips are lottery heaven. Don't go with any firm ideas, just a list of possibilities, and ask if you can have a browse. Take cash, wellingtons and strong gloves. Our local one has done us sterling service, it truly is amazing what people will throw away (even when a skip is going to cost them upwards of £100 a time to hire). If you are doing any building work this is the first place to look for second-hand bricks, quarry tiles, joists, beams, windows, shelves, staircases, floorboards, kitchen and sanitary fittings. Over time there's nothing they won't get - so ask them to look something out for you if you can't see it. Industrial units have great skips but they are not usually accessible so you'll have to arrange to get to them. To benefit properly you will need a van

& when our car finally died we did a rather daring (we thought so at the time) thing and bought instead a fleet owned commercial diesel van (parcel van) - oh how a fool and his money are soon parted! It was difficult to find a dealer and we had to ask around to find one, and they aren't used to dealing with folk as naive as us, but they did a good financial deal which is what we needed at the time. If you go to a garage it'll probably cost more but you'll feel more able to get things put right. It is also

absolutely essential to get someone good to service it (if you aren't confident enough to do it yourself - and I'm not). Driving away for the first time was quite hairy as it's was a mite bigger than our 2CV, and only had the driving seat. But it was great being so high up. We found a passenger seat eventually at a scrap dealer and got the hang of parking. Very quickly it became indispensable. Parking wardens and other road users stay clear of you as well, especially if it has a few dents. We had a company name on ours (which we had been told had gone bankrupt), beware. A phone number or address will attract comments about your parking and driving habits by other road users. There's even a scam operating where people phone the company and say their nice new and expensive car has been scratched by the driver of the van, what about some compensation? We got a few complaints (the company was still trading) and so hired out the space to a friend in return for covering over the old signwriting.

Surprisingly a van can be as cheap, if not cheaper, to buy and run than a car. We changed up to a Sherpa van (500cc to 2000cc) for £1700 and noticed very little difference in the overall running costs. Eventually of course it went where vans go when they die but we've found a good garage for service who bought us another one. If you need spares for your car/ van there are some really good breaker services advertised in Yellow Pages. They gut vehicles and clean/ check the parts. Often they are as good as new but at a fraction of the new price. A good one will even be able to match the part to the year of your vehicle as well as the model

& we burn scrap wood on our stoves for heating - found in skips, usually old furniture or building materials. It's time-consuming to cut up with the circular saw and takes up space in the garage to store, but it is free. Alternatively trees that have been felled or trimmed make much more efficient fuel. I found a supplier by phoning round 'tree-surgeons' from Yellow Pages (avoid the softer woods, you'll pay for quantity and they are much lighter and more bulky - burn very quickly). He coppices the trees in our garden or delivers from other jobs, in return for a good meal and a small nominal amount. We do this in the Spring to give the wood time to dry out, and I stack it outside one layer deep about four foot high and with only the top covered against the elements.

We have two stoves, one that heats the water, and a woodburner. If you are thinking of buying one, as a roomheater or for central heating you'll have to decide what size and type of stove will best suit your needs. Woodburners generally just

heat a room and unless you want all the expense of having the chimney lined you need one that burns off all the tars to prevent them coating the chimney, otherwise you're creating a very real fire hazard. These 'green' stoves can also be used in a smokeless zone. The chimney should be swept every year and you'll need a hole cut into the chimney breast just above the stove to do this through.

Their output is usually rated in kilowatts. So imagine a 3-bar electric fire is 3KW and work from there. A multifuel means it'll burn coal or wood. If you want a boiler installed then it'll probably be a multifuel (and although you can burn wood it should be bone-dry otherwise it will corrode the water tank). A smokeless fuel like phurnacite (although not at all 'green') is the best alternative (and you have to find a way of disposing of the ash). These kind of stoves are usually rated in KW for the heat they give off in the room and BTU's for the amount of water they heat. It is very confusing to calculate what you need, my father-in-law came up with the following formulas: if you have radiators already you measure the surface area of them all and multiply the square footage by 192, this gives you the maximum BTU's required.



Alternately you could work out the area of the rooms you want to heat. 1000 cubic feet = 3KW = 10236 BTU's (where 1 cubic ft of air needs 6-10 BTU's per hour). Usually the BTU's rating in the brochure will be for water heating only so you don't include the room with the stove in, only those to have radiators.

As a safety measure central heating systems have a 'leak' radiator which takes excess heater from the hot water tank to prevent it from boiling. This is an excellent way of heating say a bedroom or a bathroom automatically, without the need for expensive timers, thermostats and electronics. Our entire system consists of one piece of electrical equipment, the pump for the radiators with a on/ off switch - and we use it maybe twice a year. At the moment we are also taking all the 'new' radiators out and replacing them with old cast-iron ones - they look more in keeping and hold the heat much better. You can still get them for free though they are beginning to become fashionable again.

Our stoves are a MORSO 'Lion' & 'Squirrel', and I wouldn't hesitate to recommend them as a good buy. It's a scandinavian make and they obviously use them more than we do so know how to make good looking and efficient stoves. They both have a double burn ('green') system which also means more heat from the fuel, and it

helps keep the glass cleaner. A tip for cleaning the glass - wipe with a wet cloth when it's hot, not cold. Don't use anything that might scratch the glass

& we save water by taking less baths and sharing - much more fun. In the next house we're planning to have a shower. We've also begun to clean our greywater (see garden section)

& and all the rainwater (my personal obsession) off the roof is collected. It either ends up topping up the pond adjacent to the house, or if it doesn't fall too hard (still a bit of adjustment needed to Mark III water collector) then goes into storage containers. I'm rather concerned about the effect of having lead flashings, and looking into replacing them with copper

& I can't begin to imagine how much we must save by cutting each others hair with a pair of Wahl electric clippers from Argos. Not so much mine because I've only ever had one style (v. short) and it doesn't grow. But I cut Maureen's every fortnight and once you get the hang of it there's nothing you can't do - and believe me I've tried. A hairdresser put us onto it, brilliant suggestion

& I love to browse the for sale and wanted ads. Our local supermarkets has a really good board and I use it to sell stuff. We always make a point of trying to buy what we can't actually make secondhand. The stereo amplifier I bought secondhand as a student in 1975 is still going today

& regularly browse through YELLOW PAGES. Yes, real train-spotter stuff, and what's more it's even on the Internet now. I think it's great, you come across companies who make/ sell things you've never even thought of. I'm particularly interested in finding companies that sell onto retailers. If I can buy mail-order from them I cut out at least a 100% mark-up and delivered. Also firms that deal in raw materials that you can't normally buy until they're packaged or made into something.

In the garden we've paved the grass paths with gravel to cut down on grass-cutting. If you order over five tons of gravel then the price plummets, and you get it delivered free. I've just stocked the new pond with plants from a trade supplier. Each one cost 35p delivered, compare that to £2 at the local garden centre - and both

supplied by the same firm. If the company is local a visit can be a useful source of advice as well, especially if you're trying to make something in an unfamiliar material/ design. YP is also a good source for ideas on where to find stuff for free - being thrown away. We found our containers for use in the freezer that way, we get them from delicatessens and sandwich shops who have them delivered with fresh fillings. A 400gallon water butt saves far more than the bog-standard 35gallon one and can be had for nothing if you can find a company locally that processes fruit pulp (probably makes preserves) or concentrated juice. This year I'm using stacked bread trays to store fruit and potatoes. The list is endless

& if I want to do something but haven't the nerve/ skill/ or tools (drawing the line at van repairs) I ask around friends and apprentice myself for free in return for the necessary help. In the last six years I've worked on building a house from scratch and become reasonably proficient in plumbing, carpentry and wiring this way. They also have useful trade accounts which I can use to buy materials/ equipment at a good discount

& I can make most of our furniture now, if not then adapt something from an auction or skip. It does take me what seems forever but well worth it. My biggest problem is visualising what it will look like finished. I look at pieces I like first, and photographs in magazines, then sketch ideas into a notebook I've taken to keeping with notes on everything I'm doing in the house or garden (in addition to four box files!). This way it's harder to lose the essential 'bits' of paper. I carry on sketching until it begins to look promising then add the measurements. When it looks almost finished I convert everything into a 3D scale drawing and this shows whether it looks right proportionally and gives me an idea of how to put it all together, which is the next challenge. It is actually possible to do the drawing on acetate (plastic film for overhead projection) then hold it up in front of where it's going to go to see what it will look like. Then I make a list of all the separate pieces and their measurements (makes cutting much quicker, I make the most mistakes at this stage so I need a foolproof system), and it's off to the skip to hunt for materials (wood/ screws/ hinges/ paint). I never buy anything over say £5, it always ends up either not being used or the wrong thing for the job.

The making bit is improved by having a warm and dry place to work, where you can leave things without the pressure to tidy up. I've converted the garage (since the

van wouldn't fit in) into a workshop. There's fluorescent (no shadows) and natural light (replaced part of the roof with corrugated plastic); a long worksurface with power sockets, at a convenient height for me to stand for long periods without hurting my back; I've painted the cement floor so it's easy to sweep clean and keep the dust down. Under the workbench there's storage for materials; and on the wall boards with nails to hang the tools (painted with their outline so I can find them quickly). Lots of jars with reclaimed screws, washers, nuts & bolts, nails. Plastic trays from the vegetable market for electrical and plumbing bits & pieces.

& having a good selection of tools is essential, but knowing what to get when you've never had any isn't easy, and they aren't cheap - buying secondhand can be great (they tend to be better made - but is also a bit of a lottery). I've found that good ironmongers (used by the trade) or builders merchants often produce an annual price list/ catalogue for free and this gives you some idea what there is and a rough price. The best way I've found to know about tools was to volunteer to work for someone and use theirs. They'll also give you advice on how to use them (important with power tools

for instance) and how to look after them (keeping tools sharp/ maintained makes all the difference though sharpening chisels and planes is an art form and they are worse than useless unless very sharp). I've a carborundum stone and files for sharpening but it's hard work and you need to know how to do it properly. When I get £50 and haven't anything more pressing I'm going to treat myself to a bench grinder (ideal for garden tools as well) and all my tools will be useable. Here's a list of what I have that may be useful:

- a set of wood chisels
- bench bandsaw (electric)
- circular saw (electric - with a large blade)
- large workmate
- hammer drill (electric with wide selection of wood/ metal/ masonry drill bits)
- tape measure
- yankee screwdriver (with all the different fittings)
- pliers
- metal files (large)
- brace & bit
- putty knife
- claw hammer
- club hammer
- stanley knife
- ring & open spanners
- adjustable wrench
- steel rule
- try square
- socket set
- hacksaw (junior & large)
- metal snips
- tenon saw
- long extension lead
- long spirit level (3-4')
- mole wrench
- small wood plane
- bolsters

Extras I would like are:

- jigsaw (electric - cuts metal)
- cordless screwdriver
- staple gun
- bench vice
- cramps

A good dust mask and ear protection are essential

& I couldn't wait to go to the first 'warehouse' B&Q when it opened, but what a disappointment. All they've managed to do is cram in more lines under one roof - so there's no real choice and I think they're actually more expensive. For bits and pieces and new tools at the keenest prices trade merchants are the place to go, and you don't have to be a plumber or whatever nowadays to go. I avoid early in the morning, lunchtime and last thing because they'll be busy and I don't want to be rushed. Because they often don't have displays it pays to go prepared with a detailed drawing. The staff are usually very helpful so there's nothing to panic about. You get offered a wide choice in these places, and you can buy in exactly the quantities you need. Some even deliver free of charge, which for me is a life-saver if I'm halfway through something and the bandsaw blade snaps. Out here farmers have their own version which caters for all their needs (especially equipment) and they are veritable Aladdins Caves. Great prices, even clothes and shoes, plus all the spares and tools I need for both the workshop and garden

& as I develop my expertise in the workshop and garden I'm wanting to spend out on extra tools, materials and plant stock. I need money to cover it. Luckily I've discovered session work, teaching Adult Education classes and I wonder why I never thought of it before (well I did, but ended up as a Community Arts worker). Usually it's two hours per session and pays very well, plus they do all the PAYE and NI stuff. Working with adults is no stress and usually if I'm on form great fun. The downside is having to go into Leeds all day, but I prepare beforehand and make the best of what the city has to offer. If you do well on the first you've cracked it and get asked to come back term after term. This year I took a big step for me and put together a course I wanted to do myself, based around this book (if I ever finish it) and found a sponsor in the Workers Education Association. It's taken a bit of organising, Adult Ed. tends to be a bit traditional and for some reason they work 6-9 months ahead, but it soon comes round and then you're in the system. Who knows what it might lead to, garden designer maybe?



& at the time of writing I don't own a computer (I sold my 386 for a polytunnel, one of my smarter financial moves - and am borrowing this one thanks to the generosity of the Hillard family, you may get it back one day John!). But I can receive e-mail by prefixing a friends address with phil@. I can send it at Cyber-cafes. Where I find information on a specific topic - the public library system being too fragmented and antiquated to be of much use, and I hate having to describe to the inevitable blank faced assistant what I want (how on earth have we tolerated this level of reference for so long?). With the Internet, a coffee and cake, the whole world is available to talk to and it's often the author you're having the conversation with, not the book. However it is incredibly chaotic and slow, and I find it useful to go prepared with a list of keywords around the subject (plus pen & paper) and leave my e-mail address, a fax number (another friend) and home address with whoever I e-mail to. Still the postman is the highlight of every day, nothing beats a letter. When I wrote the first edition of this I got ten or twenty letters a day for about a month and it was heaven. I was hooked so much I've had to write this edition just for the post. Writing to someone should be very personal, so I make my own cards/ paper and have an address stamp I made from carving an eraser with a lino-cutting tool. We re-use all envelopes with a sticky label/ sellotape

& we save all our waste paper for lighting the stoves and Maureen makes recycled paper, the cover of this was made by her. It's very easy and there's endless permutations

Very basic recipe for approximately 30 sheets of A4 (main part takes about four hours). Save non-glossy paper of one colour. Tear enough stamp-sized pieces to fill a bucket. Fill with water and leave for a day or two. Make two identical frames from wood, the inside measurement being the paper size you want to end up with (A4 297x210mm). Stretch a piece of fine nylon net curtain over one of the frames and fix with drawing pins to the outside of the frame. Fill a liquidiser three-quarters full with water and add a handful of wet paper. Liquidise to a thick soup and pour into a sink or similar vessel. Continue until bucket is empty. Then holding the net frame net side upwards place the other on top exactly. Grip tightly together and slide into the soup and out in one smooth action covering the mesh with a layer of pulp. Then holding the frames over the sink, gently lift the top frame off. Prop two sides of the net & paper frame on the edge of the sink and lay a piece of plastic/ perspex or similar on top and press to squeeze out water. Slide the perspex off gently. Then turn the frame upside down onto half a J Cloth and sponge off water through the net, back into the sink. Gently peel off the paper by easing off through the netting.

Fold J Cloth over paper and put next sheet on top. When sink is emptied spread J Cloths (containing 2 sheets per cloth) in airing cupboard or somewhere warm to dry. Next day the sheets can be peeled off and pegged out to dry. This is the basic recipe. Try different coloured papers, adding plants at the liquidiser stage/ dyes/ wool/ whatever, the sky's the limit...

& trained as Art teachers we obviously have an interest in how things look. In fact it affects everything we do, that's what makes life worthwhile. We've been making our own christmas cards ever since we got married. In the last few years it's expanded into making presents from recycled materials, which is very rewarding as well as much cheaper - especially at christmas when it seems bills come in threes. We look around to see what we have a quantity of and make a bulk amount of something. For instance I found lots of thin ply-sheeting so I made boxes, and then with the bits left over, christmas tree decorations of animals/ stars etc. I've done loads of things with catfood tins - they make good nightlite holders (had one with a spinning vane on top) and aromatherapy oil burners. Old knitting needles make lovely looking wind-chimes (don't make any noise though), large bamboo sounds great. Papier-mache is good for all

sorts of things from badges to mirrors, even furniture (made a cupboard at christmas from thin ply finished in papier-mache

& during the day when I'm not in the garden and if I'm not making something or teaching then I'll probably be decorating. We started a couple of years ago in earnest when our house was photographed for a feature in an interior design magazine, and it hasn't stopped since. In fact it's gets more and more ambitious with each room. Because as much as possible has to be sourced for free we seem to live in a constant state of deconstruction - it can take anything up to six months to do a room. The finished effect is definitely worth the upheaval, it's somewhere you live in all day and you can create an environment that indulges your current tastes. But it's not my favourite activity, painting is very boring and the fumes tend to make me feel depressed.

It has been possible to buy eco-paint for the last few years which has none of the lethal solvents in. It is both wonderful and baffling to use. The white emulsion smells so lovely I actually looked forward to opening the tin, but oddly it goes on transparent so until it dries you're not quite sure if it's working. The intensity of the finished surface is very good. However the long-term effectiveness of the product is not. It's definitely not washable and so unsuitable for humid (kitchen/bathroom) or damp environ-

ments. For our next house probably.

A tip if you're doing major decorating/ building work. Arrange to have extra windows installed so there's at least two different sources of daylight in each of the rooms you live in during the day. The quality of light is improved dramatically and makes it feel far more open and bright. You'll be amazed how much better it makes you feel, especially in the winter. Upstairs rooms are more suitable for a living room or studio as there are no draughts - easier to heat - and more sunlight/ better views outside

& when we moved up North we decided to make the most of our borrowing power and live in the country, the cheaper option. We would lose all the benefits of being in a town but thought we'd get more house for our money. It didn't turn out quite that way (and definitely isn't now, property prices here are twice that in the town) but where we thought we'd be giving up we've actually gained. It's a life we could never have appreciated before and it's a million times better.

The first difference I noticed was the sky. There's so much more, and the horizon goes all the way round and right down to the ground. Everything is brighter, (it stays lighter for longer in the evenings the further North you travel) which I like to think keeps me saner (keeps you awake as well - it doesn't actually get dark around midsummer). In virtually every direction the landscape stretches off into the distance, there are no buildings or walls to get in the way. And each day this 'scene' changes a little. Rather than it being either summer or winter, here you get all the subtle gradations in between. That journey through the seasons feels rather like being on a round-the-world cruise. The house is a huge liner, directly beneath - the engine-room, and below that the immense depths of the ocean. A massive energy source is at work 24hrs a day, unceasingly powering the vessel forward to the next port of call. During the winter progress is relatively slow, up against the extremes of the weather, but still perceptible distance is covered each day (it never stops) and gradually spring comes closer. It's not just a visual thing either, there are a whole range of smells/ sounds/ temperature changes/ humidity/ wind. It's very much alive and on it's own course. We merely stand on its deck and watch as it sails along, no two days are ever the same. For the first few years we used to say it was like being on holiday every day.

Being just a tiny part of this amazing 'lifecycle' going on all around (there are more sheep than people here, more trees than houses) is the key reason I reckon I've managed at last to find the confidence to do something that comes from me. When I was unemployed in Milton Keynes it was in a brash new urban landscape that shouted modernity and feted success, but actually stood unmoving and unresponsive (merely ageing glass and steel) to the human life that bustled ant-scale around it. Instead of a city they had created a giant concrete zoo with just the one species on display. It was an unnatural environment where, like everyone else, I thought my restlessness would be solved when I found a job with a suitably impressive title and salary. Life was all about status and shopping. Being outside it makes you feel incredibly inadequate. Here in the country I've never felt like that. You don't just interact with other people, it's about being part of something much bigger.

Even though there aren't that many people in our village (100 houses) you get to know (or be known by) far more people living within 500 yds than in any urban area. Everyone takes an interest (gossip is the no.1 activity) in your daily comings and goings. If you want to fit in straight away it's worth having a few children - most contacts revolve around education/ baby-sitting. The church comes a close second but is definitely only for social climbing (playschool for the Masons I call it - lots of big fish in a small pond). Neighbours are the best (or worst). Where else can you get 24hr neighbourhood watch/ cat sitting/ endless milk/ tools/ muscle and virtually anything else. Living in the country is also becoming an increasingly popular trend (unfortunately among the NIMBY crowd) but the diversity of folk and wealth ensures that there must be someone nearby who has what you want to borrow

& here in Sessay there aren't any shops for six miles, so we do our entire food shop once a week at a small wholefood co-op in Leeds near where Maureen works. Where all the profit goes to those who work there and the rest to the producers of organic goods. We probably spend around the same today as we did six years ago at a supermarket (we grow so much of our own stuff now) - but what a difference in choice today, virtually all the food products now are organic and the cleaning ones, biodegradable.

Shopping at a small staff-owned shop makes total sense. Unlike other small shops the prices are no higher than anywhere else - there's nothing quite like it yet and the supermarkets aren't really interested. It's one-stop shopping, it may be tiny

but it does sell everything we need bar cat food. The staff know us and if we want anything we've seen on our travels they get it in by the following week. They deliver locally. They appreciate regular custom and often invite customers to try out new lines. In fact it seems to be a regular feature, which makes for interest. There's also far less food-miles involved, being in town it is actually possible to walk to the shop, and a large proportion of the fresh produce comes from local farms and producers

& we grow virtually all our own vegetables now, and with each year I get more ambitious so the choice gets a bit wider (see plan of garden for list, at the back). We get all our fruit juice, and a good proportion of fresh soft and tree fruit - everything organically produced of course - from the garden. During the season it is possible to eat fresh everything and such is the glut that there are regular bashes to bottle stuff and freeze meals for when it's not so bountiful. In the autumn we press all the apples and pears. At the moment there is a limited choice of fresh vegetables during the winter, but with the planting of later/ earlier species and some older, now obscure, food plants it should be possible eventually to reduce the fallow period down to weeks



rather than months. I adore mushrooms and know nothing about how to pick wild ones so would like to grow my own fungi, and 'Future Foods' sell a range of spores to make a start. The process takes up to a year to get going and it's the very next thing I'm going to have to have a bash at.

Strange but true the food value and taste of vegetables starts to decay as soon as it is picked. Sweetcorn tastes completely different half an hour later and fresh asparagus is not the same as shop bought. So we rarely buy processed food. We eat vegetables raw if possible, if not then steamed or sweated in oil. Never boiled. We don't use aluminium cookware. Cast-iron pans apparently provide a good source of iron

& you can never have enough compost, so everything from the house that will break down goes first into a kitchen bucket, under the sink, and then out to the heap. Including wood ash (not from ply, mdf or treated wood)/ contents of the Hoover/ hair, you name it

& when we have an impending glut of produce then it's time to try a find another secondhand chest freezer, hopefully for free, for some reason they don't seem to be very popular anymore. If it's old then I fit a 'savaplug' (which keeps the electricity consumption to a minimum) and it lives in the garage where the air temperature is a bit

cooler (especially in the winter). When I've finished writing this I'm off to convert part of the garage into a proper food store. Make it dark and arranging for a constant airflow to cool it in summer and stop the damp in winter - by way of an airbrick (with insect screen) fitted into an outside wall as low as possible (above dpc) and a flue exiting as high as possible connected to a wind-vane cowl

Maureen's freezer recipe for pasta sauce.

Heat some oil in a saucepan. Chop an onion and crush garlic to taste, add to pan and sweat with lid on. Chop 1lb of fresh tomatoes and a red/ green pepper into small pieces and add to onions, cook until soft. Add dessertspoon of tomato puree, couple of sprigs of fresh oregano, black pepper and half teaspoon of sugar. Simmer until thickened. Cool and freeze.

Courgette & tomato soup.

Slice three small courgettes (yellow ones make it look good) and cook in butter with a chopped onion and garlic until they start to brown. Add 1lb of chopped fresh tomatoes, black pepper and teaspoon of mixed herbs. Simmer until it starts to reduce. Add 1pt of vegetable stock and simmer for ten minutes. Cool and add balsamic vinegar or tamari. Freeze

& I've surprised myself by being able to make all our bread, and even cakes. A friend taught me his easy recipe and it's sufficiently foolproof for me to use and even adapt in recipes based on dough. It's not any cheaper than shop-bought but the quality, even though I say it myself, is superb and made of course using 100% organic materials

Mick Bean's easy recipe.

For two loaves (or where a dough is required).

gently warm to blood temperature about a pint of water. Into a pyrex measuring jug put one ounce of fresh yeast/ dessert spoon of honey/ 300ml of the warm water and stir together until dissolved. In a large bowl mix 2lbs of strong plain organic flour (any kind or combination) with a dessertspoon of salt. Place both bowl and jug separately in an oven at a temperature that feels warm, not hot, to the touch. Leave there until yeast mixture goes frothy, with a head. Mix yeast mixture into flour with tablespoon of olive oil and sufficient of the warm water (or part warm milk) until mixture is relatively easy to work. I use a long-handled wooden, if it gets too sticky add more flour. Then put bowl back into oven until dough has doubled in size (30+ mins). Oil two bread tins and flour a board. Turn the bowl out onto the board and sprinkle over with flour.

Knead for just two or three minutes so that the mixture gets wider and you have to fold it back onto itself to the original size. Cut into two and place in tins, using knuckles to push down into the corners and prick with a fork a couple of times. Place in oven until risen over top of tins. Then turn oven up to the bread setting for your oven and bake until well browned (take out too early and the base won't have cooked). Remove tins from oven and rest for 10 minutes before sliding a spatula round sides and turning out onto wire tray to cool

& I wanted to write something about complementary medicine but don't really have enough experience to be responsibly accurate. I have however had enough exposure to the NHS to know that contrary to what appears to be our blind faith in them they can't offer cure-alls, unless it's something dead simple like a broken bone. And even then of course they're not foolproof. If you can take some responsibility for your own health I feel it can only be a positive first step. That means finding out about the hazards of having routine treatment like x-rays and exploring the different alternatives to diagnosis and treatment. A rule of thumb to begin with - how healthy is the practitioner?

As living things we all need to take in regular and specific kinds of food and fluids to stay alive. The nutritional value and purity of both is obviously all important. I believe the bottom line is that everything is as fresh as possible and sourced 'organically', the latter because it doesn't make sense to poison ourselves unnecessarily, when everyday life is doing that already. If it came to having to see a practitioner they would have to share that simple belief. Unfortunately they are not concerned and that rules out most of the NHS GP's. I would also prefer someone who believes that the body itself has the best resource for treatment, if given the right help. This is the basis for homeopathy. I've tried self-treatment with homeopathic products for emergencies (I'm very allergic to wasp stings for example) and they really do work, but to be really effective I should have a consultation followed by regular visits with a practitioner. If I wasn't so frightened of doctors and dentists in general I would do what chinese medicine espouses and pay for them to keep me healthy. We've had one of our cats treated by a homeopathic vet, when the conventional one gave up on her, and I am full of admiration for the nothing short of miraculous and permanent change that occurred with his treatment. Not only were the symptoms cured but her personality and vitality has changed as well, she's a happier cat fourteen years young.

Aromatherapy works every time for me in alleviating minor ailments like headaches, sinusitis and coughs. Either using a burner or rubbing on oils. Again I should stress that a practitioner would be far more beneficial as use of these products is not as straightforward as is being marketed. As in homeopathy it is the person not the symptom that is treated in complementary medicine, and everyone responds differently to the preparations. So although in an emergency a particular treatment maybe effective for most people, in something more complex and for long-term success there has to be a more detailed investigation.

The 'alternative' approach of regarding the symptom as an indicator for a deeper problem rather than the problem itself gives me my ultimate faith in complementary medicine. I've known many people treated conventionally on the NHS for skin problems and prescribed hydro-cortisone. Often for years with no noticeable results (but the risk of nasty side-effects), until a trigger like a change of life-style, and then complete recovery. I had terrible brown marks appear all over my chest and neck which often itched really badly and turned bright red. They lasted several years until I

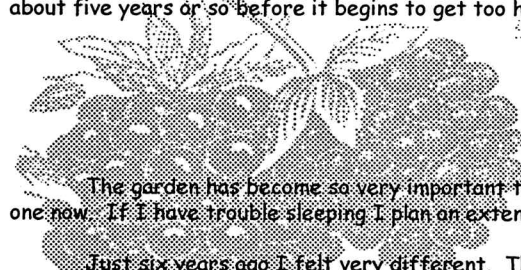
stopped working. Overnight, gone. Luckily I never put anything on them. Diet is often a cause as well - read Lawrence Hills autobiography 'Fighting Like The Flowers' for inspiration.

As it's not a good idea to eat food cultivated with pesticides and artificial fertilisers, using chemicals on the skin, hair and teeth is probably not wise either. I try to avoid anything which might be a hazard. Weleda makes homeopathic (and organic) skin and body care products that are as gentle as possible

& house plants can make the house a healthier place to be. Apparently not only can they improve the quality of the air (open up those fireplaces as well) but they can also have a positive effect on potentially harmful hazards in the home, or at least indicate they exist. There are plants for example that are either sensitive to, or can neutralise the emissions from tv's/ VDU's. I don't know much about it but we've have had one miraculous success that gives me hope. This winter the whole ground floor of the house was attacked by an infestation of ants (probably five or six nests that had grown unchecked over the years) and it was just incredible. They were everywhere, not just on the floor. You could kill over 200 hundred a day and it made absolutely no difference. We tried all the baits and the council sent us loads of information but basically there was

nothing we could do about it. Ants find places under impenetrable, and in our case structural, parts of the house so you can't get to them. Then a chance chat with a herb grower and she suggested having Pennyroyal plants around the house. I couldn't believe the effect. Within two days they'd all gone, not a single ant. Unfortunately the plants got greenfly and died, but then you can't win 'em all

& I swear by getting a good sleep to start the day in the best frame of mind. A good bed is one of those things you just can't skimp on. We bought an old frame at auction for £12 and exchanged the springs for wooden slats. On top of this goes a good quality double futon. This should be turned every day to air it and keep it soft but for obvious reasons it gets left to when we change the sheet. It's heaven. A good natural filled duvet and pillows and you're in the pound seats. A futon lasts us about five years or so before it begins to get too hard



## the garden

The garden has become so very important to me, I can't imagine living without one now. If I have trouble sleeping I plan an extension into the neighbouring fields.

Just six years ago I felt very different. The new orchard was something completely new and totally wild. Wilful even. I feared it. Although we hadn't a clue, we were going to have to make a start and it would be bloody (ours it turned out). I look back at the photos of that first summer, roping in colleagues from Leeds at the weekends (a day out in the country with plenty of free exercise and good food). Ending each day of toil - slashing, sawing and hacking - with huge bonfires. We must have burnt the equivalent of three large trees that first summer (it doesn't bear thinking about now). Today I'm happiest working alone, quietly, moving about lightly trying not to disturb the inhabitants. Actually I think I'm trying to put that 'wild' back, bit by bit, and the garden is showing me how.

Physical work is hard, and I started by digging ponds which is nothing less than a punishment. My initial thought was to define the larger space into smaller areas

using permanent landscaping, ponds being an ideal way to lower and raise (with the spoil) levels. But having been deskbound for the previous nineteen years it came as a nasty shock to the system. I found I could only do so much at a time before having to rest and cool down. I dug up the first of many huge boulders (where do they come from?), which fortuitously had a bum shaped indentation, and dragged it under the shade of a tree so that I could stop and rest. It was a perfect spot. This is where I became aware of the greater 'forces' at work. Within a few minutes of sitting there I would slip off, eyes still open, into what was probably a 'meditative' state. Half an hour or an hour would just disappear then I would come to, refreshed and having noticed a new relationship somewhere that could be emphasised with a planting or landscaping. I'd set about and do whatever was needed and before I'd finished the whole thing would happen again. It hasn't stopped since. I consider now that I work 'in the garden' as opposed to 'on' it. I've never had to get the squared paper out, I've always been too inspired.

I would describe what I'm doing now as recreating a diverse habitat, based on what will eventually look like a forest, covering the entire area, composed of different canopy levels - from the established trees of the orchard right down to herbs and root crops - a total opposite to the adjoining farmland. Hopefully it will crop a sufficiently wide range of produce for all our needs throughout the year. I am especially keen to grow with the minimum of annual disturbance, so there will be rather less emphasis on annual vegetables as the planting of permanent stock begins to bear fruit. Overall, what we take will be minimal to the greater eco-system, so that it will be more than able to supply its own food needs and support a diverse wildlife population. But actually I'm just doing what the garden tells me, it's turning out this way.

The pc reason why I spend so much time and money with the garden and doing it all without resort to chemicals or artificial inputs, is because I feel it's my chosen duty. We all do something because we think we ought, this is my particular church, party or dogma. Since becoming more self-sufficient I've begun to believe that our position on this planet is becoming rapidly untenable, even if the queue at Tesco et al seven days a week seem to be happy living in a completely parallel universe. The reasons I think this, are: first, mining great chunks of the planet, polluting the sea and air, tarmac and concreting over the land and poisoning the soil, just to bring the hordes 'choice' for their trolleys seems to be a rather silly move. At some point the planet will realise what's going on and catch a serious cold. Meanwhile we're fooling

around here with something so much bigger than any of us can comprehend, and we haven't even got the benefit of an owners manual to know know what to do when those warning lights start flashing. I want us to stop everything and start again, with less fortissimo, before it's too late. Second, why don't all those sad trolley pushers realise, the main reason we consume food is to live; we are what we eat, so why settle for consuming such crap?

Living here where they produce some of the supermarket glop (strangely most of what is grown locally is defined in terms of the subsidy it attracts, not what it is) I've been lucky enough to see first-hand how it's all done. Abandon those trolleys whilst you still have the use of what you were born with. At best what most of us eat does us no good at all, at worst, well don't even think about it.

Believe me, farmers no longer take any responsibility for the quality of what they grow. They can't, they don't understand any longer what they're doing. In the days gone by there was regional expertise, farmers growing

crops suited to the soil and climate of the area. Today it's just an ingredient in a 'product' (nobody eats fresh food), the one that attracts the most profit this year, and the 'industry' will provide the necessary to make it grow anywhere. The 'necessary' being a whole new ecology of altered seed and sprays to create the ideal conditions for growth wherever, whatever. Fine if you're a farmer, but what about the folk who have to eat the stuff. How safe is it?

Each product used on the farm is vetted by a government department who has to make the necessary approvals for use. However, what their term 'safe' means is neither clear, nor do we know whether if it means products have been tested together in a cocktail like they will be used in the fields (or just in isolation, one by one). I have a good idea how they do the testing. They can't afford to do much themselves (they don't have the resources), so spookily they put the responsibility back on the 'industry' to give them the relevant information. Hmmm. Believe that works? Nobody really knows, or cares whether our food is safe. If you have even the slightest cause for concern your best, and only, recourse is to avoid it. The bottom line in this society, as long as we behave so selfishly, is always going to be profit not people. Even if our food was 'safe' that doesn't imply it's good for you.

I know the farmers round here, and just like anyone else you get the few nasty greedy rich ones who will do whatever's necessary to screw the last penny's worth for the business, and the majority who keep their heads down and toe the industry line because they don't have an alternative, they have become with mechanisation so irredeemably bogged down in debt and ignorance. The agro-chemical industry has them both, either in bed or by the short and curlies. The condition of the soil, livestock and surrounding countryside are not even an issue, their life is about survival. Yet collectively farmers own over 80% of the landmass in the UK. We are not only reliant on them for the quality of our food, but by default the air we breathe, and the water we drink. You can't get a better reason for why we bought the orchard. To save it from a fate worse than death, being farmed.

We also realised eventually that we could use it to provide us with a 'healthy' food source and instead of ranting on about what was happening in farming and the food chain we could show people the difference, that it works. If our elected representatives have decided not to force a change to sustainable agriculture then it's up to us. The Shell Brent-Spar incident showed how much power we actually have as consumers. It's up to us to show people that if you don't eat organic already you should be even if only for your children's sake, that there's no other healthy alternative. Grow it yourself or buy organic - from a locally owned businesses, for the greedmarkets are part of the problem. I garden now in the hope we can turn this around. This garden and book are my contribution.

My inspirations to become a gardener were, obviously THE GOOD LIFE television programme. Much earlier, as a child my grandad had an allotment, and I remember playing in and around it whilst he worked. I used to love inspecting the mousetraps, and the smell of creosote was heaven. He made his own handcarts from old (I hope) pram wheels and scrap wood to transport things back and forth, I thought they were the best thing ever. I'm sure I must have inherited something from him (apart from his tools, which are still in daily use here), hopefully one day it'll be his expertise. The "All Muck & Magic" programme on C4, screened around the time we got the orchard explained how to grow food in the garden organically. I don't remember if I knew what it meant exactly but something in its presentation hooked me. Enough to go and visit the place it was filmed - Ryton Gardens, near Coventry. Home of a charity which aims to encourage more organic gardening - the Henry



Doubleday Research Association. At the time I think I must have been hoping to come back with either a book of answers or some new wizard tool that would do it all differently. I don't think I bought anything actually but I knew I was going to grow vegetables and do it organically. I had started off down a very particular road which at that time was not at all clearly signposted or well trod.

Permaculture came next. I don't remember how I heard about it, but it was a New Zealand/ Australian based idea and although I was impressed by what its author, Bill Mollison, was actually achieving rather than just writing about. I couldn't see at the time how it could translate to our colder climate where you assume we can only grow fresh food for a limited part of the year. However it has made its way here eventually, interpreted and it works. He's actually gone and created a blueprint for a sustainable self-sufficiency in food you can do in your garden. And it's good for the greater eco-system as well. A package for planting, and actually designing better homes, that you could pick up the phone and order today (there is an accredited course for 'designers'). Live as self-sufficiently and eco-friendly as is possible now, here, anywhere. What's more it works on lots of levels. Right up from the smallest city window-box space, to planning a new city. It is the design for today, for a future, if we want it. The question is, do we have the will or the nerve?

Permaculture is a very practical down-to-earth concept but for me lacked the final veneer of not having a deep spiritual focus (I'm not talking religion here, I'm an atheist, but the 'why are we here' stuff). For that you need look no further than Bio-dynamics. An Austrian/ German system, very much like permaculture, but apparently sitting in a more narrow vision of a sustainable society being based around organic farming communities that are totally self-sufficient. In fact it is far broader and richer, covering areas such as education, art & crafts, work, and religion (I chose to ignore the last bit). What attracted me to it was the way it views the importance of the soil. With bio-dynamics attention is focused not just on the choice of what to plant but on how to grow it to yield the optimum food value in a plant, and also another undefinable 'positive' spiritual values which are also taken in by the body. It treats the soil with utter respect, describing it as a living and highly complex organism. The intensity of this macro view is very powerful and useful, but there's more. Bio-dynamics zooms out for a wide angle of the entire planet and says, look, the living soil is also the skin of that larger eco-system, our planet Earth. Indeed imagine it as a breathing lifeform. Then hardly pausing to allow you to adjust your frame of refer-

ence - Earth breathing in the influences of the planets around it and exhaling the deep forces of creation from within. It heads off again, this time out into deepest space and then once more turns to look back. Now the Earth is just a dot of light among many. Illustrating we are in a relationship with millions of other lifeforms that form the vast universe. Everything is part of the larger whole.

We've become so myopic and human-centred we've lost touch with real ratios. In actuality we are as invisible as the micro-organisms of the soil, viewed from an appropriate distance, yet we are just as dependant on say the sun for life (how small do we rate from there?), so if we want to grow things properly - to their full potential - we need to respect the macro and try and understand something of the bigger picture.

Before I get too carried away by what must be said is purely my personal and probably very fuzzy interpretation of the work of Rudolf Steiner I'll come down to earth and explain how it helps on a practical level. One element of bio-dynamics is the planting calendar, published each year, it forecasts the best days to be sowing/ planting based on an observation of the

influence of the planets (*WORKING WITH THE STARS*). Crudely explained - if our Moon can determine the tidal movement of the seas then weaker influences of other planets can also have a positive/ negative effect on our natural world. Bio-dynamics believes the forces affect certain parts of the plant, and so depending on the part which we want to harvest the calendar assigns categories, either FRUIT @ LEAF @ ROOT @ FLOWER. ROOT for example would be a carrot/ parsnip/ onion for example. You sow ROOT seeds or transplant ROOT seedlings on favourable ROOT days. That's a very simplistic explanation, it is in fact far more complex - but for me it provides an ideal solution to when to sow the vast array of seeds. It gives something mundane meaning and possible a better chance.

It would probably take a lifetime to explain bio-dynamics properly. Luckily there are plenty of working examples in the UK to show it works, and for members the Newsletters are incredibly informative. It's one of those things you do because you need something to believe in. You don't delve too deeply for fear of disappointment. I do it for those reasons, because I'm the kind of person for whom everything has to have meaning.

So why hasn't someone in the UK come up with an organic solution to the

environmental crisis? Well they have. It's called Forest Gardening, and was created by Robert Hart in his garden in Shropshire. Allied to permaculture it's a purely practical planting solution. The design harks back to a time, not so long ago, when most of the landmass was forested and vegetables as we know them hadn't been hybridised. He advocates recreating a lush forest-like environment where weeds will find it difficult to survive but plenty of food plants adapted to shade will. Instead of planting all of one crop together (as in a vegetable bed), because of the need to have a continuous canopy they are scattered across the whole garden. Picking is replaced by foraging. All the planting is either edible (fruit/ nut/ leaf/ root/ seeds or flower), to provide plant nutrients or for mulching. He's lived off his quarter of an acre for many years and thrived. Many of the food crops will be unfamiliar and it'll take many years to establish but it's a perfect system. To make your own couldn't be simpler. Imagine a plot with nothing but grass. Plant trees that will grow full size around the perimeter at appropriate intervals. Then infill with dwarf rootstock varieties. In the gaps between them - shrubs/ bushes/ climbers/ herbs/ rhizomes/ fungi. I find it exciting because it promises low maintenance and high output plus the challenge of growing a whole new variety of things to eat, none of which I've tasted before.

Now, at the back of this booklet is a map of our garden. What I'd like to do next is to combine a tour around with explaining how I go about it.

Beginning at the front of the house which looks out over what we call the herb spiral, for obvious reasons, and here is where the sun rises and we sit out at breakfast/ evening on our very recently finished gravel patio - it only took us ten years to get round to doing it! We've also just installed a new pond here, on the site of our very first. It's meant to be a combined: feature, food source for our resident bat population, to reflect the summer sun onto the sweetcorn and apricots, and winter heat onto the house. We built it using powdered clay - sodium bentonite, a natural material and cheaper than a butyl liner. I dug out a shallow saucer profile (45 sq yards in area), about 12" deeper than needed, making sure the edges were absolutely level (see polytunnel), then sprinkled on the clay (which comes in 25kg bags), and rotavated it in (keep the rotavator level if it's a 4 stroke as inclines will deprive the pistons of oil and it will seize up), firming everything down with a garden roller. Finishing off by replacing the foot depth of soil. It is filled with rainwater off the roof, I diverted the downpipe directly into it.

At the edge we've built what we call frog world. This is not suprisingly a home for frogs, toads and newts. A large cold water tank was buried in the ground and filled with water and stones. Then covered over in a pyramid shape with stones, rocks and boulders, allowing plenty of spaces at the base for access. Finished it stands about five foot high and square.

It took about six months to complete the pond (and cost around £150 including plants), then I found out it mustn't be allowed to dry so I've built a reed bed (which uses the greywater from the bathroom sink) to maintain a regular water supply. I've been interested in water and sewage treatment for some time now and even went over to Ireland for a course on it. But at over £5000 for a home system it looked as if it would never happen. Now I have my own miniature version. It's made from an old plastic 20 gallon cold water tank. I filled the first 6" with fist sized stones, followed by 2" of three-quarter inch gravel, then 6" of pea gravel. Topped off with at least 4" of swimming pool filter sand (2 bags, which costs a fortune). The greywater is sprayed on top like a watering can rose directly from the wastepipe which has holes drilled in it suspended over the tank. It shoots straight through the sand, and exits via 20mm pipe at the base, directly into the pond. I've planted three kinds of reeds in the sand - *phragmites australis*/ *carex pendula*/ *typha angustifolia* (and there's some others in the pond). I assume it works by the sand stripping the water of the soap and toothpaste, etc. and the reeds then using it as food. It seems to work, it's only been going a few months, but we've already attracted a family of newts/ tadpoles who've moved into the pond. NB. We use only biodegradeable vegetable soap/ cleaning products and toothpaste in the sink.

Bees are a must for any sized garden (even if you've only got a rooftop one, in fact especially), giving it a whole new dimension; and you really don't need to know much about them to start. I hadn't a clue when my first colony arrived, in fact I'd only made a chance remark to a beekeeper that I was thinking of getting some bees and literally before I knew it she'd arrived on my doorstep armed with hive and swarm. Admittedly it was incredibly nerve-wracking at first, but I'm sure that was mainly because I felt uneasy in the presence of real beekeepers and tried too hard reading up. I joined a club to learn. That lasted all of three or four weeks. I found out clubs are for people that already know what they're doing. Full of well-intentioned souls who'll blithely promise you the earth, but when push comes to shove, turn out to be worse than useless - unreliable. I think it also slowed up my assimila-

tion, because I was letting them do things for me without really understanding what was happening. I gave up going. Then suddenly, with the pressure off, I felt more able to learn at my own pace. Testimony to this is - I've got three colonies and never been stung once in the four years I've had them. The crowning glory coming this season when I hived a swarm without a bee-suit - covered from head to toe in bees and for the first time I felt absolutely no fear. It was an indescribable moment of contact and trust. I read somewhere that bees can smell human sweat, and it really irritates them, so at last I must be doing something right.

For the scrimper the price of setting up, even second-hand, is a tad expensive (around £300 new). But if you're in no particular hurry, with patience it's easy to make a hive yourself. I've found plans in books from the library and copied them though it makes it easier to have an old one to look at as well (especially with things like 'frames' which you'll have to buy but come flatpacked and initially completely mystifying how to assemble). The minimum equipment needed to start up with is:

a hive - I have the traditional type which you usually see painted white (mine are treated with wood preservative so they are brown, it

keeps it warmer in winter), the design is called a 'WBC'. Professionals don't like them so much, because they're a hive within a hive so there are lots of sections to take apart and reassemble (more chances to get stung). But with the biting wind here the double-glazing effect is essential. I have mine set well off the ground with the entrance facing the morning sun, and the legs on tiles to stop them rotting. The outside of a WBC is just weatherproofing, an empty box. Inside is the actual hive - which is made up of several boxes, placed flush on top of each other. The bottom and tallest one (open at the top & bottom) has wooden frames hung inside which have wax sheets ('comb') fitted in them. Imagine a filing cabinet drawer. This is where the main colony live and it's called the 'brood box'. On top goes a metal grille which is spaced just wide enough for worker bees to get through the wires but not the queen, it's called a 'queen excluder'. Then a shallower box fits on top (again open top & bottom), and this (the 'super') has frames with 'comb' in as well but not so deep. Surplus honey is stored here, which the colony will use later to see them through the winter. If you want to take honey off you'll need another 'super' on top of this one, otherwise you'll end up having to feed them (not recommended). Finally on top of the last super (the number depends on the age and productivity of the colony) is placed a wooden board which acts as a lid to the

whole house and has two holes drilled, covered with perforated zinc, for through ventilation. Nothing is fixed together, the bees themselves will seal any joints with propolis.

protection - if you want to get into the hive or take a swarm you don't want to get stung. You'll need a white boiler suit with zip openings, long rubber gloves, wellingtons and a bee hat with a veil.

bee tool - something sharp and stiff to gently prise the boxes apart with.

'smoker' - (there will be letters) I feel is not necessary unless you are taking off honey. It's a real art to use one, and too much spoils the taste of the honey. It's meant to replicate the smell of fire to which the bees instinctively gather supplies and make to evacuate. I think it's cruel and no longer use one, but then I don't take off honey.

If you'd like to have a go, get some books from the library or mail-order and a catalogue (addresses at the back). If you need advice ring Steele & Brodie, they are incredibly helpful and understanding - especially to the beginner. When you start just take it very slowly and don't try to read too much about what you have to do. Aim in the first year to get the equipment together and hopefully a colony installed. Don't think about honey and don't worry about looking after the bees, they are quite capable of getting on with it without your clumsy help. The cheapest way to get a colony is to find yourself a swarm. This happens in the middle of spring when the hive begins to get overcrowded, a new queen is bred and she takes off with some of the workers to find new quarters. This year being very mild it started here in the first week of May. As the weeks go by the less time there is available for a new swarm to get established before the winter arrives and so chances of survival reduce. Contrary to popular paranoia 'swarms' are the most harmless of bees, it's very unlucky to get stung handling them, nevertheless it's wise to take precautions. Attempt to rescue a swarm around midday and when it's warm. Have a brood box with a few combs in and try and get the swarm inside intact. Leave the queen behind and it won't work. If they're on a branch cut it and carry them down. Elsewhere a sheet will suffice to knock them onto and placed leading up to the entrance of the hive. Otherwise go and see the local council pest control officer and ask if they'll

bring you a swarm when they're called out locally. You could just erect the hive and hope some bees will find it. Rub lemon balm leaves on the landing-board regularly during May and you may well be lucky. It's happened to me. Grow large amounts of a particular kind of bee flower - thyme/ catmint/ lemon balm/ pot majoram/ hyssop/ sweet basil/ summer savory/ mint (not a variety of them, they appreciate quantity, are after all there's up to 40 000 bees in a colony) to attract them and provide a shallow pond close by. And something I should have said at the beginning - it may be worthwhile getting stung first to see if you are allergic.

Bill Mollinson (permaculture guru) hates grass with a vengeance and apart from my patch under two mature apple trees for the odd summer party I totally agree. It is a total waste of time and money. Slowly we're replacing all the grass paths with gravel edged by bottles and planting up any remaining grassy corners. I look forward to the day when once again I can trade down to a push mower.

I need rainwater for the polytunnel, but rather stupidly erected it 50m away from the house and you don't get guttering on a polytunnel. So I've had to work out a simple way of transporting it across. Mark I was a washing-machine motor which worked rather well. Mark III is a small header tank fitted directly under the guttering and the rainwater uses the available 6' head to make its own way down a hose laid across the garden by gravity to two 400 gallon tanks buried in the ground. It's not really ideal but works unaided, it would be far more efficient with a wider bore pipe, more head and lots more storage tanks. There will probably have to be a Mark IV. Watch this space.

Close by to the rainwater storage is where the compost heap has finally come to rest after many attempts to design a successful working model have ended in defeat. I've given up on it at the moment and just chuck stuff into the 4' x 4' wooden frame. It's open to the soil and sky, chickens and cats, and there's an elder planted next to it which is supposed to be good. But it takes a year to get just half of it to a nice consistency, and then it won't have been hot enough to kill off weed seeds. Planted some yarrow this year which is part of the bio-dynamic compost preparation, and will cull the leaves and flowers to put in the heap when they are more established.

The polytunnel is my what I call my big-boy's toy, although given a lottery win I'd definitely go for a proper glasshouse instead, or three. I spend the greatest

proportion of my time and money on this 18' x 48' patch. Whether it'll ever recover the costs I've given up calculating but it's been worth everything and I can always write it off as my hobby. It's 8' 6" high and I really wouldn't feel comfortable working in anything lower. The frame is galvanized throughout which is essential and it uses 50mm diameter tube. The cover is 800 gauge. I consider the specification to be a minimum standard. I won't tell you who the company that supplied it is because they still owe me for some faulty goods, but alas I haven't found another one that sells anything better. It cost about £600 in 1994, so you'll be looking at around £900 today, that is by the time you're ready to start planting (there are loads of hidden extras). If you're thinking about getting one, here's an idea of what to expect.

First off anything less wide or tall is probably a "hobby" version, so I wouldn't consider it to be as durable or useful. Once you've chosen the model and ordered it you can start preparation by levelling the site. I did it with a spirit level taped to a long length of scaffolding tube (you could wait and use the ridge tube from the tunnel). Mark out the rectangle (both diagonals should be absolutely equal) and where the



'ground tubes' (they hold the hoops in) are to go with string. Each ground tube has to be set into about one cubic foot of concrete to be able to hold the hoop rigid. You'll need to hold these in position somehow whilst the concrete sets, with something like thick bamboo canes pushed through into the ground. It's essential that all of this is done with pinpoint accuracy, so allow enough time to do everything. As a rough guide we used about 45 wheelbarrows of cement (3 parts sand to one of cement) for the ground tubes and the main timbers on the ends. Assembling the frame, when the concrete had set, required at least two people, plus two stepladders, the appropriate spanners (if possible two of each) and a brace & bit. It took us most of the day, and we had to take it all down at least once. I wish now I'd also fitted additional clips on the hoops in order to run wires along the inside length of the tunnel at various intervals. With the completed frame up make sure it is clean and dry and then cover the outer edges with a foam adhesive (anti hot spot) tape. Get the widest sort. This stops the cover from burning and chaffing on the hoops. Almost there now, but believe me the nightmare hasn't even begun. This worst is yet to come.

To put the cover on you'll need first to dig a trench about 2' deep along both the outside lengths of the tunnel, just away from the footings. Then wait for a hot and windless day. This is extremely important.

Assemble as many friends together, with spades. Unwrap the cover nearby (at this point you've something as big as a yacht sail, that why it has to be windless) and then gently ease it over the ridge from one long side using the creases (or some have printing on) as a marker to keep it square. The length will include an amount to do the ends with, which has to be cut off (scary) but not quite yet. Starting at one end pull the cover down until it reaches just below the horizontal timber (just above head height). Roll the end in a length of lath and at then at the mid point nail it to the horizontal beam. Work outwards in both directions until it is nailed the length of the beam. Then go to the other end and two or three of you pull the cover tight along the ridge and cut off the cover just below the beam. Roll up as before but a bit higher. Now pull down as hard as possible, to really tighten it across the ridge (you can't tear it) then nail it as before.

Then starting from the middle of one long side start burying the cover in the trench, which will tighten it up, pull towards the ends at the same time to keep it square (don't distort the ridge line). At this stage you can really only do your best. When one side is complete you do the other. With luck you've kept it square with the ridge all the way along and it isn't baggy anywhere, otherwise you have to start again. It's finished off by pulling the sides round at the ends nice and tight, and nailing them, rolled in laths, to the vertical timbers. The whole thing should be like a drum. The rule is the tighter the whole thing is determines how long it will last. That's why you do it when it's warm, to get the maximum stretch. Covers are measured in 'seasons' or 'gauge', my 800 gauge is meant to last four seasons, hopefully five!

Doing the ends took two of us two days to erect the stud frames in 3" x 2" (treated softwood), make and hang a door/ window, and cover with the remaining plastic using the rolling round a lath and nailing technique. The window is at one end and door, wheel-barrow width, at the other. We also concreted a sturdy post (the same height as the door) vertically outside, to hold the door open against the wind. The ends were the worst; I'm not going to do it again, ever.

The difference in temperature when you first get that cover on is phenomenal. When it's sunny it can be well over 120F. It's then you realise, perhaps for the first time, that it doesn't rain inside and you're going to have to do all the watering, by hand. That's every evening in the spring/ summer/ autumn, and for a tunnel my size it's

around 40 gallons a time (picture an entire water butt worth). So when you install the tunnel don't neglect some kind of irrigation system. Depending on who you bought your tunnel from there's probably a wide range to choose from, and despite all the information in the catalogue you'll probably be none the wiser how they work, what bits you need, or even what plants they're suited for. Have no fear, all you need for growing a wide selection of crops successfully is a length of what is in effect a hosepipe full of holes. I use a 12mm diameter version manufactured from recycled tyres. It's full of holes so small it only allows water to seep out at a dripping rate. As it works so slowly you don't waste any water or drown the plants, and best of all you can be in the tunnel when it's on. It suits tomatoes in particular as they mark easily with an overhead spray. Mildew, a common problem with tunnels, caused by damp air is also eliminated. Installation couldn't be less technical, you just bury below the soil and connect to the mains. That's it, no maintenance. The trade name for mine is LEAKY PIPE and I've a 100m length which is enough to run twice along the outside (4') beds and four times down the centre (8'). Two hours watering an evening is sufficient, and you can see whether it's working because the soil darkens either side of where it is buried.

When you've spent a fortune on getting the tunnel operational you'll want to get started and reap the maximum benefit. Don't be so eager! The soil is moist, the conditions tropical, you can bet several unwanted guests will have already made it their home. Plan ahead. I've turned part of my precious growing area over to an indoor pond. I've dug it deep down to the clay so it also warms the air a bit in winter. Its role is to ensure frogs and toads feel totally at home and keep the giant slug and snail population in check (which they do brilliantly except during the mating season when they have other things on their mind). I also have one of my water tanks buried inside so I can use rainwater when it's too frosty to use the mains or the water tank outside. More valuable space is taken up with a grapevine and a hop, trained to grow up and along the ridge to offer some midday shading, and there's various clumps of permanent herbs for companion plant reasons. Finally there's two paths dividing what's left for plants into three beds. They run lengthways down the tunnel and are wide enough to weed from the path so I don't have to walk on the soil and compact it. All the beds in the garden are the same (apart from the circle), about 4' wide. The only digging in the garden is done with the rotavator on truly wild areas as yet not under cultivation.

There's one idea I've had for the garden from the beginning, and that's to have lots of water around. I know nothing about aquaculture except that it looks and feels right. I just love creating ponds, especially to have that dramatic change in ground level. The one next to the tunnel is around 25m long and dug down to the clay (about 5'). It took six months to dig by hand. As there's no liner it rises and falls with the water table, so in the summer there's none and in the winter it could be full to the top. Amazingly, with just a bucket of sludge from the nearby beck as a starter it's taken on a busy life all of its own, coping admirably with the extremes.

As well as for compost and mulching I grow particular plants to use as a foliar feed for the vegetables. One staple is comfrey ('stinging' nettles the other), and this year I'm also trying to get some valerian and chamomile started from seed to grow in the plot opposite. Comfrey grows in almost any conditions and prolifically enough to be cut by a third two or three times a season. To make my liquid feed I cram a standard water butt with the trimmed tops of leaves/ stalks/ flowers until I can't get any more in. Then fill with rainwater. Leave for at least a fortnight and then use the liquid. I find a

backpack sprayer is the handiest way of applying it and spray twice a week onto damp soil in the evening (dilution of 1:2), alternating between comfrey/ nettles/ and seaweed (bought in as a liquid concentrate). Filter it before using in a watering can as it will bung up the rose. When you buy comfrey plants make sure to get the "Bocking" variety otherwise it'll spread everywhere and I've never seen anything like it. Don't spend out on quantity, you can cut the root of each plant into 1" lengths and use them to start a new plant from. Just bury the slice a little below the soil in the autumn/ winter. You can use cut comfrey leaves directly on the soil, I lined my potato trench with them. They break down incredibly fast. When handling wear gloves as it has spines on the leaves and can cause a rash.

I was given some 6' high staples/ hoops so as a feature alongside the comfrey bed I've put them in across the path, and trained willow up each side. Eventually I'm hoping to create a living tunnel to walk through. Willow is very easy to grow, just cut 9" sticks from fresh growth and strike into the ground in the autumn/ winter. It is not unusual to get 5-6' growth a season. Cut and dried 6' lengths of straight growth, poked into the ground and tied at the top in three's make brilliant pea supports.

As the land was originally an orchard we have inherited several venerable fruit

trees, whilst continuing to add to the collection each year as funds allow. In November/ December we make juice from the fallen apples and pears, using a fruit press, amazingly enough to last us through to the following year. It's an investment I would encourage everyone to make who has access to tree/ vine fruit. It's great fun, especially for children, and will eventually pay for itself. Fresh apple and pear juice mixed with cinnamon, cloves and mixed spice makes a wonderful mulled drink for christmas. From our experience I would suggest a 36lt press rather than one of the smaller ones, and a 'crusher' (it pulps the fruit) with stainless steel knives rather than the standard plastic. Collect windfalls and leave out in bread trays until soft before juicing, it makes the job much easier.

I found soft fruit a bit of a let down - so fiddly - until last year and we started growing strawberries in the tunnel. The Soil Association in Edinburgh recently gave me some addresses of growers in Scotland and I ordered some raspberries and tayberries. If they take there's sufficient varieties to stretch the season from end to end. Next year I want to get some blueberries, juneberries and boysenberries. For the fruit not eaten straight off the plant I want to try out a juice steamer as an alternative to topping and tailing, a friend in Holland has one and swears by it. Maybe it'll be a way of dealing with that glut of plums as well. A tip for birds and soft fruit. We don't have a problem, so I think it's because they actually prefer water. A pond nearby or some containers kept topped up may be the answer. Having four cats of course is very helpful if somewhat distressing, and it certainly keeps the rabbit problem sorted!

We've grown pumpkins and gourds for a number of years because like courgettes they're so easy and look great. At last we are also discovering how wonderful they are to eat. There's nothing like baking the small ones, they taste wonderful. Brilliant also as an alternative to potato in soups, and sweet pumpkin pudding (the same as 'pie' but without the pastry) is great with vanilla ice-cream. They'll keep for up to a year if properly dried in the summer sun so they don't need to fill up valuable freezer space. When storing check them regularly as they will start rotting without warning, as the stains on our parquet will attest. Don't put the new plants outside out until all danger of frosts has passed.

I must be the worst gardener in history if I can't grow potatoes, but up 'til now

I have been both unlucky and of course totally ignored all good advice. It doesn't help either that they usually get consigned to the worst piece of ground and I never get round to weeding them because there's too much to do in the rest of the garden. Anyway everyone says how hardy they are. Rubbish. Last year I brought in loads of organic cow manure and rotted the entire crop to death. This year I was given a rotavator (thanks Alan & Joan!) and I'm trying a bit harder for success. I've got it to a fine tilth, rich with all that manure and planted out my chitted seed closer to the surface making sure not to compact the soil. I've also intercropped with mint which is apparently very good. Plenty of earthing up is keeping the weeds at bay and crossed fingers they look the best ever. Next year I'm thinking of trying interplanting broad beans with them as well.

We have chickens but they're not ours. The farmer adjacent has hundreds of very 'free range' ones and they prefer our 'range' to the prairie they're supposed to live on. It's a pain, we got rid of ours (and ducks/ geese) because I couldn't contain them sufficiently to stop them doing amazing amounts of damage. If only the cats could see them for what they are - just large birds. So now I have to put out every seedling with a collar made from a plastic drinks bottle, and I can't seed direct in the soil at all. A lot of extra work but with the unexpected result that the yields have risen dramatically. Sweetcorn especially benefits from this because they don't like the wind. So for them I use large plastic sweet jars from the newsagent, top and tailed, and pegged down firmly with galvanised wire hoops. I will probably get some ducks again at some point but they need protection from foxes so an electric fence will be necessary or a pond with an island. Now there's a thought!

Growing vegetables from seed is hard for a beginner - herbs and wildflowers a real nightmare, and I haven't even contemplated trees yet. I'm finding it easier each year, as I realise when and how to do a particular plant rather than following the printed instructions. I'm also getting better on quantity, but that's more to do with encouraging the cook to use the uneven gluts I've grown. First rule is ignore all the advice on the packet or in books. It can only be a rough guide, as good as useless. I usually start off by using the blank spaces in the Bio-dynamic calendar to roughly plan out the season of planting and quantities, relying on observation/ notes from the previous year to tell me when the time is right for each. Seeds are germinated in the cupboard under the stairs (luckily it's a constant 70F) until the temperature outside rises sufficiently and I can use the tunnel instead, it's more natural outside and even

though not as warm is very successful. I use 90mm pots and 215mm x 150mm trays. The pots for large seeds or plants that will have an extensive root ball before transplanting - bean/ pea/ gherkin/ pumpkin/ pepper/ aubergine/ sweetcorn/ tomato/ melon; and the trays for everything else. All the pots/ trays are labelled using cutdown white plastic from bottles of washing-up liquid and I write in waterproof ink. If the seeds are in the cupboard the pots or trays are placed into a cat litter tray (which takes 12 pots or 2 trays) and watered with rainwater in the tray. In the tunnel they stand on the soil and are watered with a fine watering can rose, rainwater again. I use a bog standard seed compost with no frills (the organic version is crap and outrageously expensive). Two major things I try and remember are, not to panic about getting everything off early, you've right through from February to the end of May for the bulk; so if it's cold outside don't waste expensive seed compost trying to get things started early, wait until it feels warmer. Celery / parsnip/ carrots/ okra and all the herbs seem to prefer to be started as late as possible for quick and maximum germination. A good indicator for me is when 'wild' seed from the compost or last years crop start appearing in the tunnel soil. Not only are conditions right but you

may not even have to sow any seed. Use non-F1 varieties (which come true year after year) and leave a few plants to run to seed then all you have to do is transplant the seedlings. There's a list of seed companies I use at the back. Try to avoid using 'treated seed'.

Transplanting seedlings to the soil using the bio-dynamic calendar is always done in the late afternoon. This plainly makes sense as they'll get burnt by the sun otherwise, before they've a chance to get acclimatised. Bio-dynamics views it rather more meaningfully. The earth, like any living thing breathes in and out. The cycle of in and out breaths is governed by the sun, so up until noon there is an outbreath followed until midnight by an intake. The inbreath (on the appropriate planting day) brings with it all the positive forces from the universe (other planets) and ensures a successful connection with the soil. This applies to planting/transplanting trees and shrubs as well.

Weeding is fine if there really is nothing else to do, and can be very restful. It does give you the opportunity to see what is going on close up. Until transplanting I like to leave them alone, they do a really useful job keeping the soil covered and bringing up useful nutrients from deep down. When they are pulled I leave them to mulch the same spot, along with grass cuttings and any weeds from uncultivated areas. This also keeps re-

growth to a minimum and retains the moisture. I was tempted by Robert Hart (Forest Gardening) to buy a shredder to increase the potential for mulching (and perhaps do something to speed up the compost). Luckily I thought to hire one first (a good tip for anything expensive, try someone else's first). What a total waste of money as well as being a really antisocial and dangerous piece of machinery. A sickle does fine and it comes with free aerobic exercise. A tip when using a sickle, apart from being very careful when sharpening, be vigilant for wasps - they nest in long grass and you'll get stung for certain if you cut through their particular patch. I get stung this way at least five times a season, and I know what I'm looking/ listening for. With this in mind it really makes sense to have some Apis Mel 30c (homeopathic remedy) handy the moment you get stung as you can swell up alarmingly and it can be fatal, especially if you begin to feel sleepy. Then get someone to call a doctor quickly.

As you can see from the map I'm into planting with circles, it's a visual thing and a form of containment into easily manageable lots. With it being so windy here the hazel hedge/ circle also acts as a brilliant windbreak - most of the time. I've divided the nearest circle to the house into four and practice crop rotation to make better use of the available nutrients and shortfall of compost. Obviously it's a four year system, with beetroot/ salad onions/ spinach/ leaf beet/ chinese leaves/ lettuce in the first; parsnips/ fallow in the second; peas/ beans/ garlic (not too close) in the third; leeks/ courgettes in the fourth. The straight beds and the pumpkin circle are not rotated but interchanged between potatoes/ peas/ beans/ cauliflower/ curly kale/ pak choi and pumpkins. I've permanent beds for sweetcorn and strawberries. In order not to overstretch the soil I don't plant intensively, everything has plenty of space.

Slowly I'm getting into companion planting, you'll find a rough guide on the back of the map. Not quite intercropping as yet, which takes a lot more confidence than I have, but beginning by using herbs with the vegetables. Plus making sure not to put plants which don't like each other close together. It's another one of those things you have to take on trust, because you'll never really know what effect it actually has.

There should be a companion planting solution for greenfly and whitefly. I've seen it suggested to use nasturtium and spearmint, and I'm trying it this season. So



far it's working very well. They love nettles I've noticed but I don't really need to be planting anymore of them. The best shot against pests to date has been to feed the plants so they outlive the aggressor. I managed to beat a nasty attack this way last year when my aubergines and peppers were absolutely covered in fly, but it does take a very long time. Brushing off the greenfly with a paintbrush onto my wet hand (or perhaps a sticky surface?) and drowning them in a bucket works to keep the numbers down but life is rather too short for this kind of carry-on. Bio-dynamics views fungal attacks as being the fault of the plant, the role of fungi being to break down dying plant matter. A healthy plant should have no problem surviving. Companion planting it must be said hasn't worked for me with carrot rootfly, I grow them in the tunnel now with a 3 ft high screen across the doorway and this definately stops them in their tracks.

I've not had any other serious strikes probably because on the scale of the garden the vegetables are safely outnumbered by the resident predators.

Never having enough compost is a big problem and although the farmer is very willing to let me have cow manure it's a long term process getting it to a useable state, a weed problem, and potentially it may undo all my work at growing organically. The vegetarian solution would appear to be the use of green manures, where a crop is planted in a fallow bed to create bulk compost material or to capture valuable nutrients (nitrogen from the air and trace elements/ minerals from deep below the soil). I've tried both with little success. The seed really is too expensive on my scale to make growing vegetables worthwhile; the weather being so unpredictable and dry it often means germination is very erratic and poor; the chickens and birds eat it; the cats scat it up; and some of the deep-rooted stuff and clover are a real pain in the neck getting out of dry ground. I'm not convinced. I think it would probably suit me better to grow comfrey or nettles on a poor spot for a year or two and then move them on to free the improved soil. The bio-dynamic view is that it is an unhealthy move to feed plants straight to other plants without them first passing through the digestive tract of an animal (fine if you've the space). Interestingly it also believes the 'spirit' of the plant and animal are passed on, so any unhealthy aspects (BSE) will enter the food chain.

After I've sown my seeds, they've germinated successfully, been transplanted out and managed to get away without being decimated by frost/ pests/ drought or any

other disaster (natural or otherwise), finally I can look forward to harvesting them. Bio-dynamics believes that the quality of food keeps best if picked at the right time of the day. Basically on outbreaths (morning) for fruit and crops above the ground, and breathing in (afternoon) for anything under the ground. Try it and see.

This is no time to think about slowing down in the garden, for before you know it autumn is upon us and for me it's the start of the real gardening year. Cool bright days, so not so sweaty now, and you can work for ages in comfort. Time for the major works. Though I'll not be changing my work pattern - the ozone layer is so thin or non-existent that from now through 'til March there's a very real danger from UV damage during the day, especially as there's none of the accompanying warning signs of heat.

The soil is soft, and when the leaves have fallen it's safe to start moving trees, shrubs and bushes; and planting out new ones. Avoiding frosty periods I try hard to get everything done before the end of February. New stock is bought from nurseries (never garden centres, they don't grow them) that are more northerly than here, that way I can be sure they'll be

acclimatised. Most of the nurseries listed at the back are small specialist ones so it is also important to order early (in October/ November) to ensure getting what you want. For trees and hedging I order 'whips' which are very young plants and small (2-3' high) but they get away with more vigour and if bought in bulk only cost between 30-40p each. When they arrive I soak them in rainwater before planting, as they may have been in transit for up to a week. If I can't plant straight away then I dig them in somewhere. A handy sign of whether trees will take in a new area is the presence of couch grass, nettles or blackberry. These plants prepare the soil for tree growth.

Physically this is the hardest time of the gardening year and psychologically the most frustrating because you can't imagine what everything is going to look like.

I'll be ordering my seed potatoes in November, as December and January tends to be the busiest period and orders received then fall behind a bit. I'll want to get them well 'chitted'. They do this in the upstairs sitting room, in boxes with open sides so they get sufficient daylight and stacked on top of each other to save space. The seed catalogues arrive around the same time, I leave them until the christmas holiday before thinking about what to order, sending off around the new year. In March and at regular intervals I spray bio-dynamic

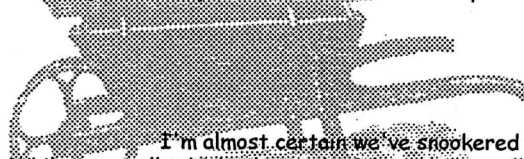
(and homeopathic) formulations (Preparations 500 & 501) which prepare the seedbeds and potentise the fruit respectively. There are other sprays too, but I've a way to go yet to understanding when to use them correctly.

Hedging. Our boundaries are planted and this is by far better than the hassle of maintaining walls or fencing. There's no reason why it can't be productive either. There are a lot of shrubs/ trees that bear edible fruit that can be used. Weeds choke young plants so it is probably worth having a nursery bed for your hedging until they are at least 3-4' high. Keeping them cut regularly or layering will increase the vitality at the base, making it stock proof and ensuring the maximum amount of daylight into the garden.

Well that's about it for the garden except for a list of tools etc. I use:

boiler suit @ rubber garden gloves (thornproof and with cuffs) @ various hats @ VIKING dry boots (wellingtons are not very healthy, and outdoor-type leather boots rot) @ 2 wheelbarrows with pneumatic tyre @ rotary petrol lawnmower (3.5hp) @ rotavator @ long handled fork and spade (the right size for me) @ hoe @ dibber @ hand trowel @ secateurs (good ones) @ long tape measure @ shears @ hedge trimmer @ sickle @ axes @ watering cans (2gal) @ 15ltr backpack sprayer @ lawn rake @ bow saw @ lawn edger/ shears

Keeping tools clean & sharp (especially the lawnmower blade), and maintained (anything with a motor) will make them work better and last longer. Sharpening the edge of a spade makes working clay much easier. If you break a wooden handle most ironmongers will replace it, don't throw it away.



*what next?*

I'm almost certain we've snookered ourselves here with this garden. Whilst we really think it's wonderful owning a small corner of Arcadia, most people wouldn't want the responsibility. That could be an epitaph for today. Anything more demanding than a lawn, some teak furniture (slowly drying out) and a barbecue

(rusting away) just isn't worth the hassle - there isn't enough time. What? When we moved here, ten years ago, it was a very plain 'modernised' cottage with a tiny strip of a lawn, nothing special but set against beautiful natural scenery - it was obvious that we had to do whatever necessary to reflect that and the first thing to go was the grass. The same with the orchard. But I suppose we've always been interested in how things look and definitely up for a challenge. Why else would we willingly to scare ourselves silly moving here in the first place, from a lifetime in the city. To somewhere where it got really dark (no street lighting) and kept us up all night for months with all those strange country night noises.

We desperately now want to sell up and build our own home. Wave goodbye to mortgage interest rate rises and the whole world of credit, living for once on what we can actually afford. We'd also like some more land and definitely fewer neighbours. The house I helped to build, in Leeds, gave me the inspiration to do something I never thought possible. Have a go myself. It was designed to a system that enabled it to be built by people who had no previous building experience and limited money for materials. There were no 'wet trades' involved (bricklaying/ plastering/ foundations), and the house was made entirely of wood. In a couple of weeks three of us had cut timber and assembled the entire framework by simply bolting it together. Adult meccano. Boarding the roof made it 'dry' and ready to clad walls and fit windows and doors in relative comfort out of the elements. This 'system' is quite widespread now in the UK and was dreamt up originally by an architect called Walter Segal. Although he's no longer around there is a charity set up to carry on his work and help people through the entire process. The beauty of the design for me is that the houses stand on stilts, something I've dreamt of since the terrapin huts at school. The structural load is taken entirely by the frame, so the interior walls can easily be changed and you can even extend when you need to. Because it's built without the need for foundations it's perfect for difficult and uneven sites, sloping ones and even surrounded by dense vegetation. No massive site clearance required - instant mature garden. Constructed using the latest energy-efficient materials means a single wood burner is all that is required to heat the entire house. The whole construction makes eco-logically sense. The frame and the cladding are built from softwood and treated with a 'natural' wood preservative. The walls use a natural 'breathing' design, which allows moisture to escape and condensation becomes a thing of the past. And when you've built something like this yourself of course it no longer is a mystery, you know how everything was done, where the services are and how to repair it - you'll never need or want to

employ a builder again. Perfect.

Fixed to the roof would definitely be a solar water heater. This is really an old technology now but there are new versions available which are designed to work on a far wider spectrum of light, so even on cloudy days. They are not cheap to buy but once installed they work automatically, for free and require no maintenance. Someone locally has had a small panel for over ten years now and they have more than enough hot water for seven months of the year, plus useful pre-heating the rest.

We've dabbled with reed bed technology here, so I have no qualms about going the whole hog in a new house and building a system to deal with all the grey water. I've just seen one for 300 people at a nearby biodynamic farm and it is truly idyllic. I would incorporate this with collecting rainwater more efficiently and there should be no reason why we couldn't be self-sufficient in water (including for drinking).

The sewage system I dream of would be the latest scandinavian composting toilet, which looks just like an ordinary one but uses a tenth of the water and separates liquids out for use in the garden as a feed, and

composts the solid waste into a safe mulch for non-food plants (there is some discussion in bio-dynamics at the moment as to what is 'right'). Nothing wasted.

If we were very lucky with the site there would be a stream running nearby and we could lay in a water turbine. These generate around 2KW of 240v AC electricity so we could use conventional lighting/ appliances without the need for massive and very expensive battery storage. Otherwise, rather than be on the grid, I'd love to have a go at a mixed system of 12v DC solar and wind power and give up some of the more power hungry appliances.

With more land the possibilities for new projects become endless, it'll be just time we're short of. To have an acre or two of woodland to develop and provide for fuel would be great. Coppicing woodland apart from fuel produces valuable thinings which can be composted - the heat they generate, combined with some copper tubing could heat our water over the winter months when the panel isn't working. It also gives off a gas which for the real Tom Good's of this world (that isn't me - I know nothing about machines) could be collected and used as a fuel.

All these changes actually tie one to the house more or less full-time, and even though the costs of fuel, energy and food

drop considerably there's still a real need to earn some income. So it would be good to be able to tie in the house and garden in some way, perhaps by running a small business connected with gardening, or courses. Whatever, it should be something that I can continue through that psychological barrier of 'retirement' and beyond. I don't want to be poor, neither do I want to stop doing what I enjoy because I'm physically less able. This is where I totally disagree with the usual concept of 'self-sufficiency'. To me it's just farming on a small and inefficient scale, growing stuff to sell. Hard physical work and pointless. It makes far more sense to keep the 'growing things' to a manageable scale - ie. just for yourself - and find income from a non-physical activity which isn't dependant on the vagaries of nature.

With my forties I entered a new phase of reflection, change and at last - responsibility. It also marked a period when some of my friends and family started to pass away, die. Although I've always been obsessed with illness this was the first time I'd thought about a death being anyone else's but mine. A chance meeting with John Bradfield, who has written a book on green burials got me interested in the whole area of alternative funeral services and ecologically sound burial.

The death of a loved one/ relative is another issue people would rather not think about and preferably not have to take responsibility for dealing with. It's still very much a taboo. So it's no surprise that we treat funerals in this country much as a kind of privatised offshoot to the refuse collection. It's been so successfully hidden from us as children, ignored when teenagers/ young adults and feared for the rest of our lives that we end up with absolutely no experience or idea what to do. When it happens we pay people to handle it/ take it away.

I find undertakers and the whole service thing so distasteful I would rather not attend. Even of a close friend. What is the point? We seem to be so inept at it. I was at a wedding reception and there was this chap from the hotel all dressed up in some regalia who all the way through kept telling us what to do..."be upstanding for the bride & groom"....."the bride & groom will now cut the cake"...and I thought who's wedding is this? I didn't feel part of it, we were all being led through some alien charade that had nothing to do with the couple, their parents, me or anyone there. Funerals if anything are worse, you don't even get the opportunity to plan ahead. Instead some municipal clerk leads a meaningless service, in a dire and morbid venue,

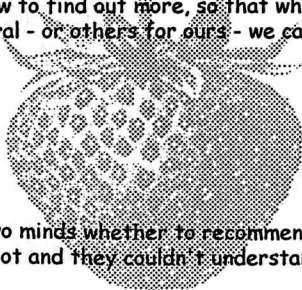
ending with yet another landfill or polluting cremation. Why?

I can only assume funerals today are some sort of analogy (and thus opposite) to weddings (black/ white ..."til death us do part"... ) but what is the real connection? Surely a death is more related to the miracle of birth.

When a child is born the family and loved ones are gathered together in celebration, this is also how we should mark our goodbyes. Those closest prepare the body and organise a fitting burial/ event. Between them create a unique moment, a witness by a body of disparate people each wanting to make a personal final farewell and express gratitude at having known the recently deceased. The function should be held in a suitable setting, conducive for taking as much time as is needed so that those attending can play as active a part in expression as they wish (in reading aloud, speeches, singing, playing music, eating, dancing, whatever). There's no role for business here, no pro-forma.

Death maybe an end for one but it creates new life for many others. To act responsibly we should return the deceased to the earth to be recycled as Nature intended. The practice of embalming and placing the body in a coffin is just one more final defiant act against Nature - pollution.

John Bradfield and the charity 'AB Welfare & Wildlife Trust' exist to explain the myths behind the death 'business' and 'out' the real facts - what we can and can't do as a final goodbye. They have also been buying land to provide nature reserves where burials can play a true environmental function. Perhaps we should all take time out now to find out more, so that when we are called upon to take responsibility for a funeral - or others for ours - we can do it in a way that has meaning and responsibility.



## places to visit

I'm in two minds whether to recommend anywhere. Recently I took someone to a favourite spot and they couldn't understand why on earth they'd been dragged all

the way up there. It was crushing. So if you do decide to go to any of these please don't make a special effort and don't blame me.

Ryton Gardens, the first HDRA showgarden, was incredibly important in getting me started on organic gardening. Six years ago it had only been open a short while and having just seen the "All Muck & Magic" programme on C4 I remember being very excited at going somewhere so special. Here was an idea - which contradicted the tide of popular understanding and practice - translated into reality on a ten-acre field (that's a hell of a lot of garden). Living proof there was indeed another way. It felt at the time as if we were witnessing the beginning of something really important.

In those days we popped in whenever we were passing and it was great if the place was empty. Just us and the presenters from the programme, a great tingle factor. It's really popular now.

To adequately prepare for a visit you have to read Lawrence Hill's book "Fighting Like The Flowers" (he started HDRA). The site is just off the M1 near Coventry, very handy for breaking a long journey. It has a well-stocked shop if like me you enjoy



browsing, though it's gone a bit National Trust which is sad. There's a restaurant for snacks or lunch which is organic but rather pricey and has all the charm of a Little Chef. Don't expect anything eco-stylish about the place, which is such a wasted opportunity. Given it was a green-field site, they've missed out on being a flagship for so many other green ideas, like Walter Segal buildings and wind/ solar energy .

Ryton sits like an oasis in an area of outstanding agricultural blandness, fringed with car factories. Even if I sound scathing about the place (you've not noticed?) you'll not be disappointed. The permanent displays cover everything there is to know about flowers, vegetables and fruit. There's even a reedbed (though you couldn't see it when I went).

If you don't manage to get to Ryton or its sister garden Yalding (which I haven't been to) you can always support the work of HDRA by becoming a member, apparently they are very popular. An ordinary subscription gets you a quarterly magazine (which definitely reminds me of our parish magazine), a chance to take part in the research side of the organisation (trials of plants and organic methods), free entrance to the HDRA (and other) gardens, and a mail-order catalogue for seeds/ plants and sundries (which for some reason is more expensive than most). For an extra sub you can also

join your local HDRA group, which runs a programme of meetings/ events and publishes their own newsletters. They meet for self-help and passing on the organic message by example. There's also a seed-library you can subscribe to if you'd like to try out varieties that are no longer available for sale. A good organisation for beginners but it soon feels very dull, like going to church, you wish they were a bit more energetic and radical, and they seem to have a very woolly ethical stance.

**RYTON ORGANIC GARDENS** Ryton-on-Dunsmore, Coventry CV8 3LG (5 miles south east of Coventry)

Contact: Sally Furness - Marketing & Public Relations Manager  
phone: 01203 303517 fax: 01203 639229 e-mail: enquiry@hdra.org.uk  
Hours: open every day 10am-5pm except for Christmas week

**YALDING GARDENS** Benover Road, Yalding, nr Maidstone, Kent (6 miles south west of Maidstone)

Hours: open Wednesday - Sunday (between May & September). Bank Holiday Mondays. Weekends in April & October. 10am-5pm.

**The Centre for Alternative Technology.** I saw a programme about this place when I was at school and even then I thought it looked very exciting and somewhere I'd like to go one day. Today it's the bees knees, and even better.

Imagine a hilly/ mountainous and densely forested North Wales where there's more sheep than people. It looks and feels like it rains every day, there are streams and verdant lushness everywhere. Every shade of green you could imagine. What few houses you come across have local-slate roofs. CAT is in the middle of it, a bright coloured flower in a disused slate tip high up on the side of a deep valley. Three miles from the nearest town and without any connection to mains power, water or sewage.

It started in the seventies, with a group of energy enthusiasts who rented the remote tip to try out some experiments with harnessing power from natural sources. They haven't stopped. From the start they attracted inquisitive visitors (it was the North Wales of John Seymour and the self-sufficiency movement) and started

setting up exhibits of their work by way of explanation. It has just snowballed on. Today the 41 acre site which generates its own power, uses only rainwater, treats all its own (and the visitors) sewage and grows organic food (which in itself is amazing because there's very little soil) has over 100 000 visitors a year (which also is stunning because it's not the easiest place to get to). Once you get there it's obvious why it's so popular and people come back time and time again, there's so much to see and the atmosphere is like going to a favourite aunt's. It's very homey. To get the best out a first visit I'd advise arriving in Machynlleth the day before and having a leisurely look round this small and delightful town, with craft shops in abundance, there's even a CAT wholefood cafe to whet your appetite. Find a B&B and get a good night's sleep before making your way up to the centre. If you haven't the puff to walk the last bit (no cars allowed right up to the Centre, carpark at bottom of the hill) there's a wooden cliff railway run by water power to whisk you up. Just the first of many marvels to come. On the 7 acre visitor site (it's mostly outdoors so bring wet-weather gear) there are working displays of wind, water and solar power systems (including the largest roof of solar tiles); low energy buildings (Walter Segal designs - used for staff & student accommodation); organic gardening displays; farm animals; and working alternative sewage treatment systems. It'll take you a good half day to walk round. Then there's the amazing bookshop (it must be the best in the country), you'll wish you could buy up everything it's so inspiring (they do a good mail-order catalogue as well). The best of course 'til last, and that's the restaurant. I had my all-time greatest meal (sorry Maureen) here, the food is out of this world. Fed and watered, just enough time to have another quick look round!

The best way to see CAT without doubt is to go on one of their residential courses (they run all year round, mainly weekends), or take a school party and rent one of the 'eco-cabins' (the students have to generate all their own power, etc.). Either way you'll get more of the real flavour of self-sufficiency experience doing it this way (plus the bookshop is often open to course members when the visitors have gone home), the food of course is non-stop yummy, and if you've got enough energy at the end of the day the pubs locally are really friendly. If you're really hooked by then they even have a subsidiary company which sells all the equipment you'll ever need to be self-sufficient - Dulas Ltd (see 'suppliers'). Nothing short of wonderful. You'll wonder why you've never been before.

P.S. If you can afford to go to Europe, the CAT's there are probably even more

impressive. I was in Holland several years ago and saw some really great ideas. Worth investigating further on the Internet.

THE CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGY Machynlleth, Powys SY20 9AZ (3 miles north of Machynlleth)  
Contact: Andy Rowland  
phone: 01654 702400 fax: 01654 702782  
e-mail: [help@catinfo.demon.co.uk](mailto:help@catinfo.demon.co.uk) web site:  
<http://www.foe.co.uk/CAT>  
hours: open every day 10am-6pm (or dusk if earlier, last entry 5pm)

Bottom Village. This is my all-time favourite spot in the UK for spiritual inspiration. It's a large bio-dynamic enterprise (500 acres) based around small traditional farms, which to the casual observer is just another unspoilt valley high up on the North York Moors. About three-quarters of an hour away from us in Sessay, through country lanes via Helmsley - a small town which is absolutely idyllic (don't miss morning coffee or afternoon tea at 'The Black Swan', and pay a visit to both 'Frobishers' & 'Craft Basics'). Close by to other lovely places - Lealholm, where there's a tiny plant nursery called 'Poets Corner'; the town and harbour of Whitby; and not to

be missed 'The North York Moors Railway' (13 miles of steam!). Whichever direction, there's bags of potential for a great day out.

Botton is one of a world-wide network of Camphill Villages. It's home to about 320 people, who have chosen to live there because they care for or have some kind of mental dysfunction ('special need'). The role of Camphill being to provide a 'family' for life for people with such a 'disability' and they offer a unique opportunity for each individual to explore his/ her potential/ gifts. They achieve this through various activities, one being the therapeutic value of work. To ensure that everyone is treated equally the community provides for all needs and no one receives any financial remuneration. Residents are housed in a small group with a carer couple/ family ('houseparents') based in one of the many beautiful farms or houses dotted across the meticulously kept valley. Everyone shares the day-to-day tasks. They also work on the farm (Botton is totally self-sufficient in food), or in one of fifteen craft based workshops making: high class wooden toys, glass engraving, dolls, weaving and candles. The finished products are sold in the Botton shop, and mail-order around the world. Botton also sells surplus fresh organic produce to local shops - bread, cakes, cheese, yoghurt, ice-cream, mayonnaise and fruit based items. A tiny bookshop runs the

UK Camphill mail-order book business and they even have their own state of the art printing facility. For outsiders who want to share in the Camphill philosophy there is also a Steiner school for children as well. Professional is an understatement. The place has an eye for detail which is definitely not anglo-saxon, and to me that's what makes it so wonderful. It's a little piece of 'abroad'.

If you join the Camphill movement, and they'll take you on and train you in return for a minimum commitment of your time, you can move around the different centres in all the different countries. Botton's membership is therefore constantly changing and truly international.

I make a point of going to both of their Open Days (first sunday in July and a date in November) which are unbelievably uplifting - and worth it for the food alone; and often pop up during the week for a coffee and a chat. They have the most divine coffee bar and cakes to die for. Visitors are always welcome, and you are free to walk around or they'll arrange a guided tour. For those who can tune into it, the place (especially the landscape) recharges the flagging spirit.

It's also a real working example of how sustainable 'farming' (this is not a garden or smallholding) does work, if only there was a political will for such a future. It's my bolt-hole from the stupidity of everyday folk who couldn't give a toss for the planet, but vehemently defend their right to private schools, healthcare and 4WD vehicles. Don't ever feel alone, Camphill has a place for the rest of us. If you're looking for somewhere really useful to leave your estate when you shrug off this mortal coil then without doubt it's definitely worth a visit, you'll not be disappointed.

BOTTON VILLAGE Danby, Nr Whitby, North Yorkshire YO21 2NJ  
phone: 01287 660871 fax: 01287 660888  
hours: 10am-16.30pm (cafe/ shop/ store closed at lunchtime, groups should phone beforehand)



## *useful organisations*

5

**AB WELFARE & WILDLIFE TRUST** 7 Knox Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 3EF  
Contact: John Bradfield 01423 530900

Helping wildlife and those who are ill, dying and bereaved. Advice and help with funerals, burials in nature reserves, protection of graves, exhumations and reburials. For more information please send 5 second class stamps

**AGROFORESTRY RESEARCH TRUST** 46 Hunters Moon, Dartington, Totnes, Devon TQ9 6JT  
Contact: Martin Crawford (no phone)

Study of the integration of trees and agriculture/ horticulture to create a more diverse growing system (Forest Gardening being a good example). No membership but publishes a quarterly magazine, books, and sells the most amazing seeds/ plants. I recommend sending off for the catalogue right away. For more details send 3 first class stamps to address above

**BIO-DYNAMIC AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION** Rudolf Steiner House, 35 Park Road, London NW1 6XT  
Contact: Jutta Patterson 01562 884933 fax: 01562 886219

Members receive the journal 'Star & Furrow' twice a year and a newsletter roughly twice a year also. You'll never come across such wonderfully written publications anywhere else, it's worth the membership for these alone. The association administers the 'DEMETER' labelling scheme for bio-dynamically produced food

**BRITISH EARTH SHELTERING ASSOCIATION** Caer Llan Berrn House, Lydart, Monmouth, Gwent NP5 4JJ  
Contact: David Woods 01993 703619  
in the first instance c/o 20 The Old Coach Yard, Witney, Oxon

Building with a layer of earth on the top, from housing upwards. Membership includes regular newsletters and a library

**BRITISH HOMEOPATHIC ASSOCIATION** 27a Devonshire Street, London W1N 1RJ  
phone: 0171 935 2163

If you are interested in finding out more or for a list of practitioners in your area (including GP's practising) send a s.a.e. There are even homeopathic dentists

**BRITISH HYDROPOWER ASSOCIATION** Riverside House, Heron Way, Newham, Truro, Cornwall TR1 2XN  
phone: 01872 260423 fax: 01872 222424 e-mail: Brithydro@aol.com

An organisation for people seriously interested in using water power - not for the faint-hearted or those without at least GCSE in a relevant science subject. They don't seem to be organised for the small user but are very helpful

BRITISH WIND ENERGY ASSOCIATION 26 Spring Street, London W2 1JA  
Phone: 0171 402 7102 fax: 0171 402 7107 e-mail: [bwea@gn.apc.org](mailto:bwea@gn.apc.org) web-site: <http://www.bwea.com>  
Mainly for very large (commercial) wind turbine users

CENTRE FOR ALTERNATIVE TECHNOLOGY  
see page thirty-four

ECOLOGICAL DESIGN ASSOCIATION The British School, Slad Road, Stroud, Glous GL5 1QW  
Contact: Heather Stopher 01453 765575 fax: 01453 759211 web-site: <http://www.salvo.co.uk/mags/EcoDesign.htm>

The EDA is a seriously under-resourced group which aims perhaps too high to represent practitioners who use/ want to use green techniques in building - from the smallest to the biggest projects and covering an international perspective. I joined for a year after picking up a copy of their journal ECODESIGN which was awe inspiring, and immediately regretted it. The journal unfortunately varies between spectacularly brilliant or downright awful, you also receive a newsletter which is packed full of listings which are of most use to practitioners. Join for a year and see

HENRY DOUBLEDAY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION  
see page thirty-three

PERMACULTURE ASSOCIATION PO Box 1, Buckfastleigh, Devon TQ11 0LH  
Contact: Sue Cameron 01654 712188 e-mail: [pcbritain@gn.apc.org](mailto:pcbritain@gn.apc.org) web-site: <http://www.netlink.co.uk/users/susinfo/permbrit.html>  
Quarterly newsletter. Magazine. Seed exchange system. Local group network. Training network. Worth joining for a year to see if it's for you, or better still get a few copies of the magazine (see below 'Permanent Publications'), personally I think as a group they are an acquired taste

THE SOIL ASSOCIATION 86 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB  
phone: 0117 929 0661 fax: 0117 925 2504 e-mail: [soilassoc@gn.apc.org](mailto:soilassoc@gn.apc.org)

I used to belong but found it too geared towards growing organically 'commercially' to feel a useful member, but they are the only pressure group for organic farming and forestry, so it is worth supporting if you can afford the subscription or a donation. They administer the 'labelling' scheme for organic food/ wood so if you want to know who grows or sells organic produce they hold the national directory (copies for sale). Another incredibly under-resourced group who truly lack a sense of direction and confidence outside the role of certifying the labelling scheme. They offer a good wide-ranging mail-order book catalogue but so do lots of other people, so why waste valuable resources? Their quarterly magazine is very flash but a total waste of trees. A local group network exists which is similar/ if not usually the same as the HDRA network. Could do a great deal better and deserves to



THE WALTER SEGAL SELF BUILD TRUST 57 Chalton Street, London NW1 1HU

Contact: Mike Daligan 0171 388 9582 fax: 0171 383 3545

Definitely deserves your support. Brilliant idea but seriously underfunded. The only help of its kind for people who want to build their own homes using one of the simplest, most economical, adaptable and environmentally friendly methods of building

## suppliers

- please mention this booklet when making enquiries of the following -

**APPROPRIATE ENERGY SYSTEMS LTD** solar water heating panels

Contact: George Goudsmit 01309 690132 fax: 01309 690933

The Park, Findhorn Bay, Forres IV36 0TZ

**BIO-DYNAMIC SUPPLIES** preparations (members only)

Contact: Paul Van Midden 01224 733778(fax also)

Crannoch Ree, Kingcausie Estate, Maryculter, Aberdeen AB12 5FR

**CETCO-EUROPE LTD** sodium bentonite pond liner

Contact: Dave Rogers 0151 606 5900 fax: 0151 606 5949

Birch House, Scotts Quays, Birkenhead, Merseyside L41 1FB

**DAVID LEIGH LANDSCAPES** designs ecological water treatment systems

Contact: David Leigh 01494 482900 fax: 01494 484260

Eastwood Farm Cottage, New Road, Stokenchurch, Bucks HP14 3SF

**DULAS LTD** all your self-sufficiency hardware needs (if you can afford it, and not for the feint-hearted) - design and implement renewable energy systems (CAT)

Contact: Dilwyn Jenkins 01654 781332 fax: 01654 781390 e-mail: dulas@gn.apc.org

The Old School, Eglwysfach, Machynlleth, Powys SY20 8SX

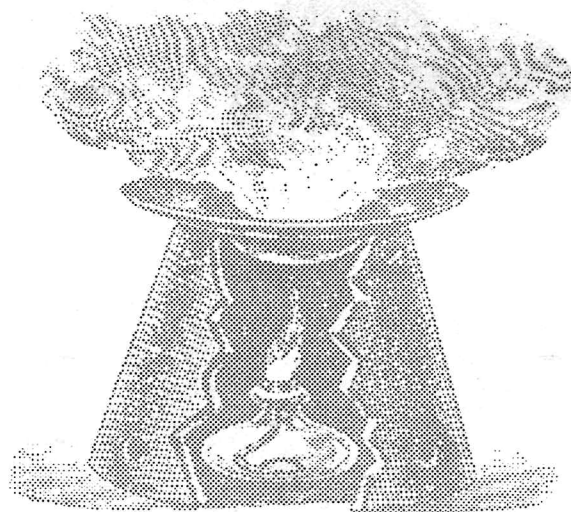
**EASTWOOD SERVICES** importer of Scandinavian compost & low flush toilets + reed bed water designer

Contact: Adam East 01502 478165(fax also)

Kitty Mill, Wash Lane, Wenhamston, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 9DX

**ELEMENTAL SOLUTIONS** consultants and designers in sewage treatment, compost toilets, water conservation & rainwater harvesting (expensive but they know their stuff - at the cutting edge!)

Contact: Nick Grant 01981 540728 fax: 0171 6811724 e-mail: nicgrant@wildnet.co.uk (see over)



Withy Cottage, Little Hill, Orcop, Hereford HR2 8SE  
Contact: Mark Moodie 01594 516063 fax: 01594 516821 e-mail: mmoodie@wildnet.co.uk  
Oaklands Park, Newnham, Gloucestershire GL14 1EF

ICS ELECTRONICS LTD weather recording systems used to evaluate potential of local wind/ solar energy prior to buying equipment  
Contact: Robin George 01903 731101 fax: 01903 731105 compuServe: 100072,1470 e-mail: 100072.1470@compuserve.com  
Unit V, Rudford Industrial Estate, Ford, Arundel, West Sussex BN18 0BD

IRIS WATER & DESIGN sell 'flowforms' - a bio-dynamic water oxygenating system based on a waterfall/ sculpture  
Contact: Chris Hudson 01287 660002 fax: 01287 660004  
Langburn Bank, Castleton, Whitby, North Yorkshire YO21 2EU

LEAKY PIPE GARDEN SYSTEMS the perfect no-maintenance drip irrigation system for tunnels and gardens - as used here  
Contact: Richard Youngman 01473 738280 fax: 01473 735101 e-mail: 101376, 2046 compuServe  
White House Farm, Grundisburgh, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 6RR

MARLEC renewable energy and low energy products - wind chargers & solar panels  
Contact: Teresa Auciello 01536 201588 fax: 01536 400211 e-mail: Marlec@dial.pipex.com  
web-site: <http://dialspace.dial.pipex.com/marlec>  
Rutland House, Trevithick Road, Corby, Northants NN17 5XY

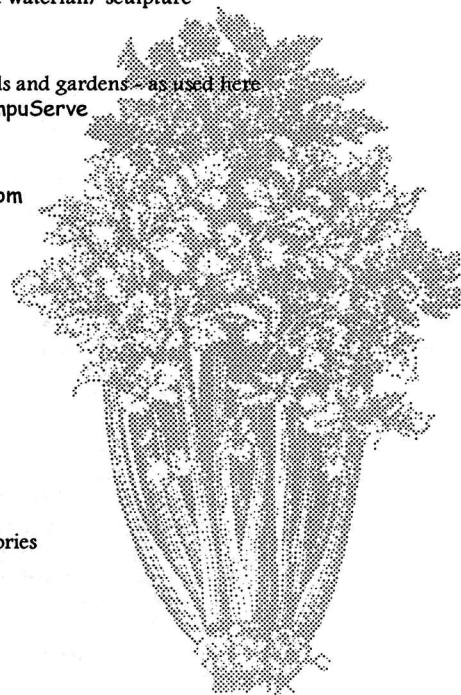
'O' WINDOWS Danish triple glazed windows & doors  
Contact: Richard Llewellyn 01263 735454 fax: 01263 732781  
Aylsham Road, Tuttington, Norwich, Norfolk NR11 6TE

PAUL GINNS cardboard coffins  
Phone: 01455 828642  
2 Newbold Road, Desford, Leicester LE9 9GS

PINETUM PRODUCTS DIRECT organic fertilisers  
Phone: 01452 750402  
Pinetum, Churcham, Glos GL2 8AD

H C SLINGSBY the reference 'catalogue', for professional tools & products used by shops & factories  
Phone: 01274 721591 fax: 01274 723044  
Preston Street, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD7 1JF

SMALLHOLDING SUPPLIES you've guessed it - smallholding supplies  
Phone: 01749 860688(fax also)  
Oikes Farmhouse, East Pennard, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 6RR



**STEELE & BRODIE LTD** manufactures & supplies beekeeping equipment - very friendly  
Contact: Mike Osborne local rate number: 0345 697228 otherwise 01382 541728 fax: 01382 543022 e-mail:  
steele&brodie@taynet.co.uk

Beehive Works, Kilmany Road, Wormit, Newport-on-Tay, Fife DD6 8PG

**FORWOOD** Scandinavian triple glazing products

Contact: Peter Howe 01332 349161 fax: 01332 291119

13 Ashlyn Road, West Meadows Industrial Estate, Derby DE21 6XE

**VIGO VINEYARD SUPPLIES** *the* supplier of equipment for making wine, cider and fruit juice

Contact: Alexander Hill 01823 680 230 fax: 01823 68 08 07

Station Road, Hemyock, Devon EX15 3SE

**VINCEREMOS WINES & SPIRITS LTD** organic & vegetarian wines, spirits & beers

Contact: Jem Gardener 0113 257 7545 fax: 0113 257 6906 e-mail: Vinceremos@aol.com

261 Upper Town Street, Bramley, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS13 3JT

**WARMCEL** recycled insulation material

Contact: Ieuan Compton 01495 350655 fax: 01495 350146 e-mail: techsales.warmcel@btinternet.com

Excel Industries Ltd, 13 Rassau Industrial Estate, Ebbw Vale, Gwent NP3 5SD

**WATERSHED SYSTEMS LTD** suppliers of natural wastewater treatment systems

Contact: Angus Marland 0131 668 1550 fax: 0131 662 4678

Edinburgh Technology Transfer Centre, King's Buildings, Mayfield Road, Edinburgh EH9 3JL

**WELEDA** homeopathic medicines for people and animals & body care products

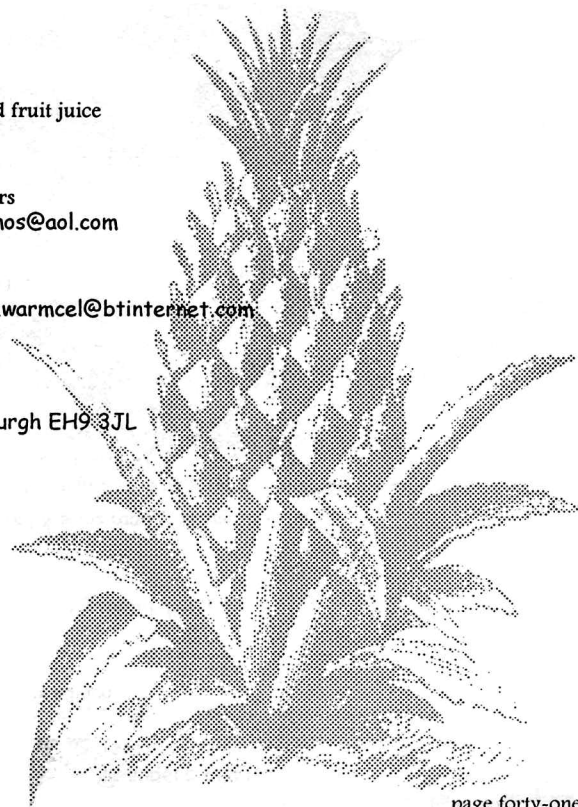
Phone: 0115 9448222 fax: 0115 9448210 web-site: <http://www.weleda.co.uk>

Hearon Road, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 8DR

**WIND & SUN** wind & solar equipment (not very quick to reply - if at all)

Contact: Steve Wade 01491 613859 fax: 01491 614164

Britwell Hill Farm, Britwell Hill, Watlington, Oxon OX9 5HD



## nurseries & seed

**BUTTERWORTHS' ORGANIC NURSERY** superb organic fruit trees - friendly and offer advice

Contact: John Butterworth 01290 551088

Garden Cottage, Auchinleck Estate, Cumnock, Ayrshire KA18 2LR

**COOL TEMPERATE** all your permaculture (edible/ useful) plants & trees at good prices + very useful directory

Contact: Phil Corbett 01335 347 067

Newhouse Farm, Kniveton, Ashbourne, Derbyshire DE6 1JL

**FUTURE FOODS** brilliant catalogue of unusual/ old species of edible plants (mostly seed & some root) + ferments & fungi

Contact: Jeremy Cherfas 01934 713602

PO Box 1564, Wedmore, Somerset BS28 4DP

**E.W.KING** vegetable & flower seeds

Contact: Brian Haynes 01376 570000 fax: 01376 571189

Monks Farm, Kelvedon, Colchester, Essex CO5 9PG

**JAMES MCINTYRE & SONS** soft fruit

Phone: 01250 873135 fax: 01250 875014

Coupar Angus Road, Blairgowrie, Perthshire PH10 6UT

**MERTON HALL POND LTD** aquatic plants at trade prices

Contact: Jeremy Driscoll 01953 881763/ 884020 fax: 01953 884020

Merton, Near Watton, Thetford, Norfolk IP25 6QJ

**NUTWOOD NURSERIES** nut-bearing trees

Phone: 01782 750913(fax also)

School Farm, Onneley, Nr Crewe, Cheshire CW3 9QJ

**ORGANIC TREES** woodland trees (whips) in quantity

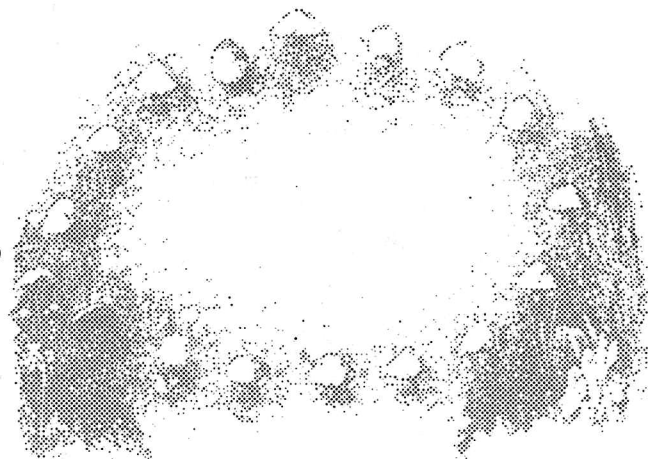
Contact: Donald Kennedy 01967 421203

Doire Na Mairst, Morvern, By Oban, Argyll PA34 5XE

**PLANTS FOR A FUTURE** truly amazing and a 'must' for the ultimate range of edible/ useful plants + database

Contact: Ken Fern (for catalogue send A5 sae + 5 second-class stamps) web-site: <http://www.axisnet.com/pfaf/plants.html>

The Field, Penpol, Lostwithiel, Cornwall PL22 0NG



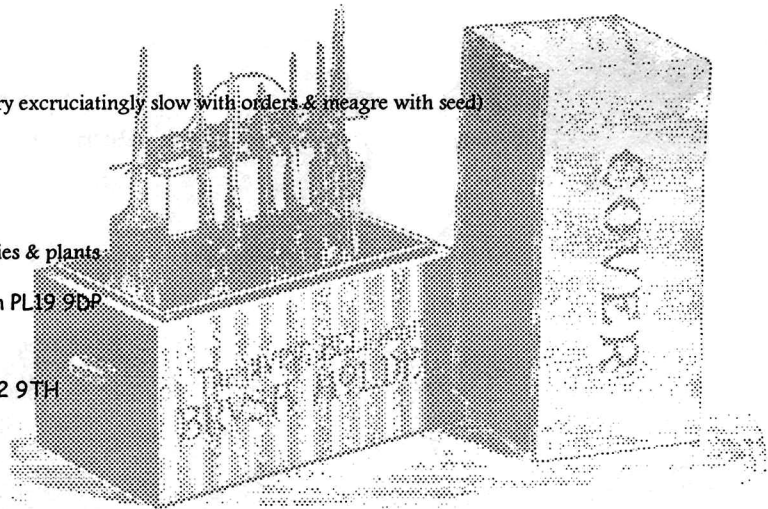
READ'S NURSERY grapevines  
Phone: 01508 548395 fax: 01508 548040  
Hales Hall, Lodden, Norfolk NR14 6QW

SIMPSON'S SEEDS best selection of tomato seeds & potatoes (but very exorciatingly slow with orders & meagre with seed)  
Phone: 01883 715242(fax also)  
27 Meadowbrook, Old Oxted, Surrey RH8 9LT

STORMY HALL SEEDS Bio-dynamic vegetable seed  
Botton Village, Danby, Nr Whitby YO21 2NJ

TAMAR ORGANICS wide selection of untreated seed, organic sundries & plants  
Contact: Cathy 01822 618765  
Unit 10, West Devon Business Park, Brook Lane, Tavistock, Devon PL19 9DP

J TWEEDIE FRUIT FARMS fruit trees and soft fruit  
Contact: J Tweedie 01387 720880  
Maryfield Road Nursery, Maryfield, Nr. Terregles, Dumfries DG2 9TH



BRUSH HOLDER WITH ZINC LINED TANK AND COVER COMPLETE.

ECO-DESIGN journal of the Ecological Design Association, see entry under *useful organisations*

PERMACULTURE MAGAZINE journal of the Permaculture Association, available from Permanent Publications see entry under books by post

## further reading

ANOTHER KIND OF GARDEN Ida & Jean Pain

a French couple self-publish how they run their garden and use coppice thinings for heating water/ fuel

INDEPENDENT ENERGY GUIDE - ELECTRICAL POWER FOR HOME, BOAT & RV Kevin Jeffrey

explains what equipment is required for solar, wind and water power systems - even I could understand it



THE TOILET PAPERS Sim Van Der Ryan  
the first book everyone reads on composting toilets and greywater treatment, a bit out-of-date now

THE NATURAL HOUSE BOOK David Pearson  
beautiful photographs

THE SELF-BUILD BOOK Jon Broome & Brian Richardson  
the best introduction to self-build and very inspiring

A PATTERN LANGUAGE C Alexander et al  
if you're building your own house don't start thinking about it without having this as a reference

SIMPLY BUILD GREEN J Talbot & The Findhorn Foundation  
excellent practical self-build book

LIVING WATER Olof Alexandersson  
this book changed my life - and helped develop my obsession with water

SECRETS OF THE SOIL Peter Tompkins & Christopher Bird  
a look at the weirder end of organic gardening/ farming - and I think I must be among their number

FIGHTING LIKE THE FLOWERS Lawrence Hills  
brilliant autobiography from the founder of the HDRA

THE FOREST GARDEN Robert Hart  
explains the theory

THE MAN WHO PLANTED TREES Jean Giono  
it should be a true story it's so moving (available in book/ tape/ video)

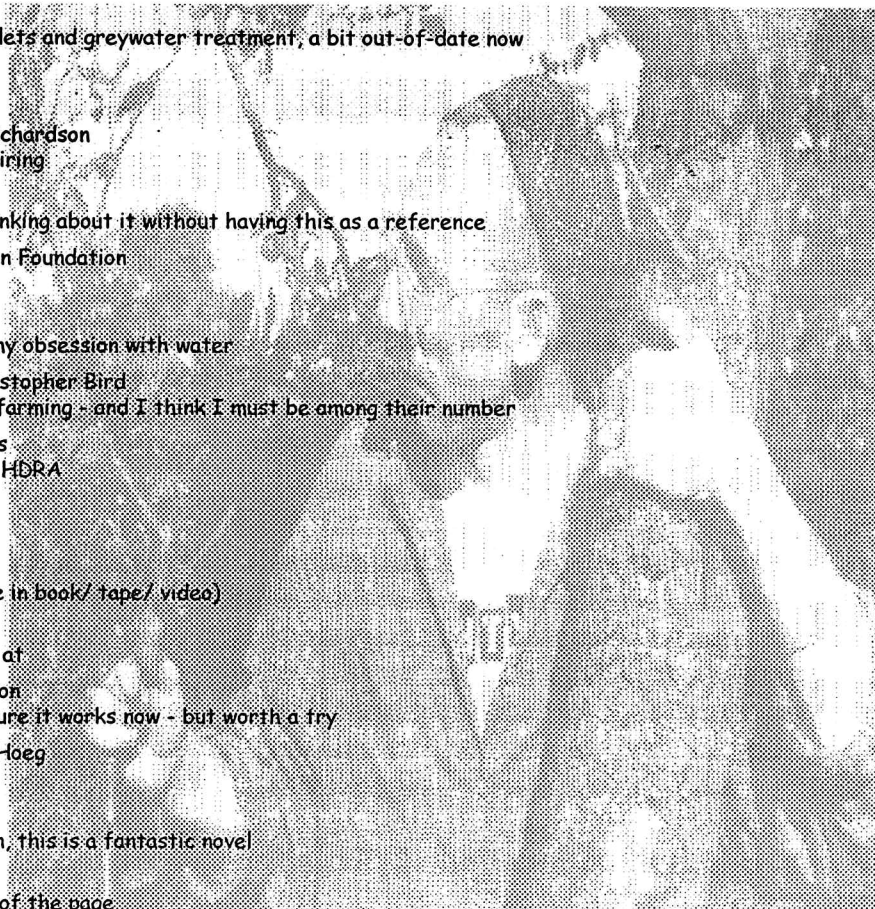
DEREK JARMAN'S GARDEN  
a gorgeous book to own and feel inspired looking at

SOLAR GARDENING Leandre & Gretchen Poisson  
I found this irresistible when I read it, not so sure it works now - but worth a try

MISS SMILLA'S FEELING FOR SNOW Peter Hoeg  
classic thriller

WHIT Iain Banks  
we are all searching for our own personal religion, this is a fantastic novel

THE GOOD LIFE John Esmonde & Bob Larbey  
the one and only original for me, laughs just lift of the page



**BODY OF GLASS** Marge Piercy

this is my all time favourite novel and 'desert island discs' book. Read about the future before it happens

**GREEN BURIAL - THE DIY GUIDE TO LAW & PRACTICE** John Bradfield

read it now, for later

**NEW NATURAL DEATH HANDBOOK** Natural Death Centre (£12.95 incl. p&p from NDC 20 Heber Road, London NW2 6AA)

**WILDLIFE GARDENING** Fran Hill

easy to use reference

**THE USBORNE NATURE TRAIL BOOK OF PONDS & STREAMS**

even easier

**VEGETABLES** Roger Phillips & Martyn Rix

get this if you're just starting - stunning colour photographs of about every vegetable there is

**THE NEW NARROWBOAT BUILDER'S BOOK** Graham Booth & Andy Burnett

an invaluable 'how to' book which I intend to use for converting a lorry into a mobile home

## videos

**GLOBAL GARDENER - GARDENING THE WORLD BACK TO LIFE** Bill Mollinson

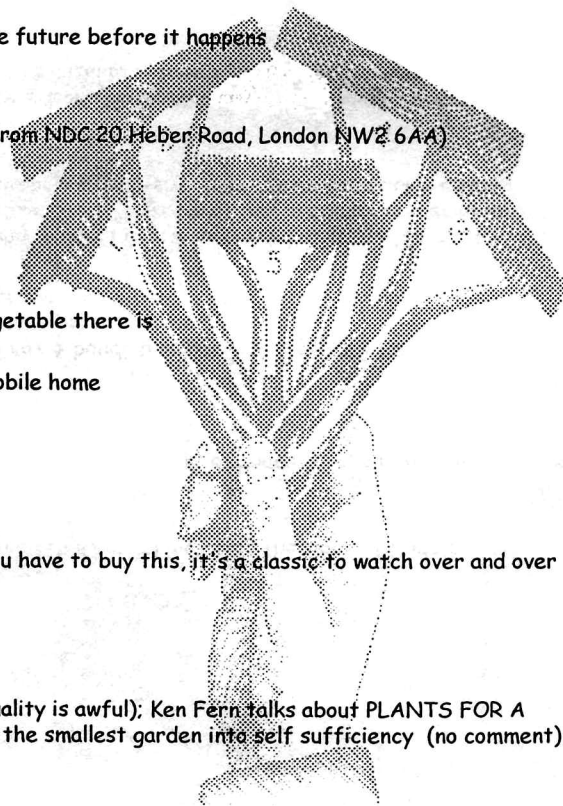
the permaculture guru takes you round the world and explains permaculture - you have to buy this, it's a classic to watch over and over and lend out to friends

**THE GOOD LIFE**

the BBC series is still very funny and incredibly real

**FOREST GARDENING** Robert Hart

three videos in one - R Hart takes us round his garden (the sound and picture quality is awful); Ken Fern talks about **PLANTS FOR A FUTURE** (embarrassing but inspirational); Michael Guerra shows how to convert the smallest garden into self sufficiency (no comment)



BYRON GARDENING TOOLS

# finance

THE ECOLOGY BUILDING SOCIETY ethical savings and mortgages for energy-efficient building, renovation of derelict/ old/ inner-city or rural properties, organic smallholdings and small businesses  
Contact: Paul Ellis 01535 635933 fax: 01535 636166  
18 Station Road, Cross Hills, Near Keighley, West Yorkshire BD20 7EH

## books by post

- most of the listings under *useful/organisations* will have a catalogue:-

BOTTON BOOKS vast selection of spiritual and gardening books (and lovely children's books) Including the work of Rudolf Steiner and Bio-dynamics

Contact: see entry for Botton Village page thirty-six

ECO-LOGIC BOOKS self-sufficiency, energy-efficient building and self-build, 'green gardening', permaculture, sustainable systems design and books that provide practical solutions to environmental problems

Contact: Peter Andrews 01225 484472 fax: 0117 942 0164  
(large sae) 19 Maple Grove, Bath BA2 3AF

GREEN BOOKS politics, economic & community, eco-philosophy, renewable energy & building, organic gardening & farming, indigenous cultures, Native American, spirituality & consciousness, biography, and much more

Contact: John Elford 01830 863260 fax: 01803 863843 e-mail: [greenbooks@gn.apc.org](mailto:greenbooks@gn.apc.org) web-site: <http://www.greenbooks.co.uk/books>  
Foxhole, Dartington, Totnes, Devon TQ9 6EB

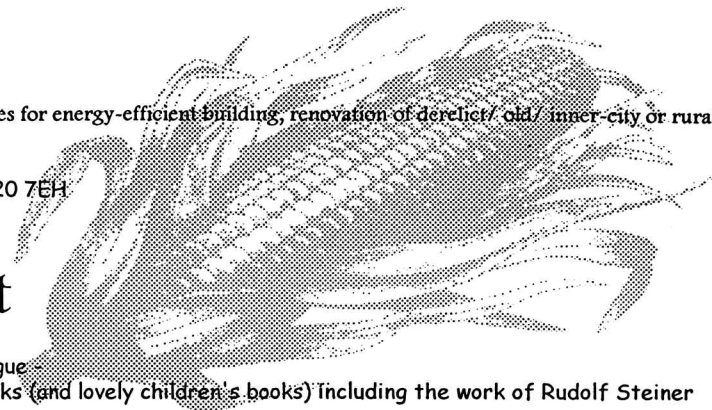
PERMANENT PUBLICATIONS publish 'Permaculture Magazine' (for sample copy send £1 in coin or stamps) and the 'Earth Repair Catalogue' containing 220 books and videos on permaculture and other related subjects (donation of 50p in stamps appreciated)

Contact: Glen Finn 01705 596500 fax: 01705 595834 e-mail: [permaculture@gn.apc.org](mailto:permaculture@gn.apc.org) web-site: <http://www.uea.ac.uk/~e415/home.html>

Hyden House Limited, Little Hyden Lane, Clanfield, Hampshire PO8 0PS

If you enjoyed reading this and have any positive comments please let me know. Visitors are welcome anytime Monday-Friday, though it's worth ringing beforehand - please bring biscuits/ cake as we never have any in. If you know of someone who might be interested in buying Midsummer Cottage please pass on the address and phone number.

© Phil Rooksby - June 1997.



# companion planting guide

plants highlighted are *especially likes*

APPLE *likes* blackberry · chive · garlic · mint · nasturtium · tansy *but not* · potato  
 APRICOT *likes* basil · nasturtium · tansy *but not* · potato · southernwood · tomato  
 ARTICHOKE *likes* parsley *but not* · garlic  
 ASPARAGUS *likes* basil · cabbage · grape · marigold · parsley · tomato *but not* · chive · garlic · leek · onion  
 AUBERGINE *likes* dwarf bean · nasturtium · runner bean · pea · potato · tarragon · thyme *but not* · garlic · onion  
 BROAD BEAN *likes* beetroot · borage · cabbage · carrot · cauliflower · chervil · cucumber · gooseberry · marigold · marjoram · pea · potato · rosemary · spinach · summer savory · sweetcorn · thyme · winter savory *but not* · chive · fennel · garlic · horseradish · leek · nasturtium · onion  
 DWARF BEAN *likes* aubergine · beetroot · cabbage · celery · cucumber · marigold · marjoram · pea · potato · rosemary · squash · strawberry · summer savory · sweetcorn · thyme · tomato · winter savory *but not* · garlic · fennel · horseradish · leek · onion  
 RUNNER BEAN *likes* aubergine · marigold · marjoram · pea · rosemary · summer savory · sweetcorn · winter savory *but not* · beetroot · broccoli · brussels sprout · cabbage · cauliflower · chive · garlic · horseradish · leek · nasturtium · onion · strawberry · swede  
 BEETROOT *likes* broad bean · dwarf bean · cabbage · chervil · cucumber · garlic · lettuce · onion  
 BLACKBERRY *likes* apple · garlic · tansy  
 BROCCOLI *likes* caraway · celery · chamomile · dill · hyssop · mint · potato · rosemary · sage · southernwood · thyme *but not* · runner bean · lettuce · spinach · strawberry · tomato  
 BRUSSELS SPROUT *likes* caraway · celery · chamomile · dill · hyssop · mint · potato · rosemary · sage · southernwood · sweetcorn · thyme *but not* · runner bean · radish · spinach · strawberry · tomato  
 CABBAGE *likes* asparagus · broad bean · dwarf bean · beetroot · bergamot · caraway · celery · chamomile · chervil · chive · dill · fennel · hyssop · lavender · marjoram · mint · onion · pennyroyal · potato · rosemary · sage · southernwood · thyme *but not* · runner bean · garlic · grape · radish · spinach · strawberry · tomato  
 CARROT *likes* broad bean · chive · cucumber · garlic · leek · onion · pea · radish · rosemary · sage · tomato · *but not* · dill  
 CAULIFLOWER *likes* broad bean · caraway · celery · chamomile · dill · hyssop · mint · potato · rosemary · sage · southernwood · thyme *but not* · beetroot · radish · spinach · strawberry · tomato  
 CELERY *likes* dwarf bean · broad bean · brussels sprout · cabbage · cauliflower · chervil · dill · leek · lettuce · tomato *but not* · angelica · lovage  
 CHERRY *does not like* · plum  
 COURGETTE *likes* borage · fennel · nasturtium · sweetcorn · tansy *but not* · potato · rosemary · rue · sage · thyme  
 CUCUMBER *likes* broad bean · dwarf bean · beetroot · borage · carrot · dill · horseradish · lettuce · lovage · nasturtium · pear · pea · radish · sunflower · sweetcorn · tansy · yarrow *but not* · potato · rosemary · sage · thyme  
 CURRANT *likes* garlic · plum

GARLIC *likes* apple · beetroot · blackberry · carrot · chervil · currant · gooseberry · lettuce · peach · pear · plum · raspberry · rhubarb · strawberry *but not* · artichoke · asparagus · aubergine · broad bean · dwarf bean · runner bean · cabbage · marjoram · pea  
 GOOSEBERRY *likes* broad bean · currant · garlic · tansy · tomato  
 GRAPE *likes* asparagus · basil · blackberry · borage · elm · hyssop · mulberry · sage · tansy *but not* · cabbage · radish  
 LEEK *likes* carrot · celery · chive · dill · fennel · onion *but not* · asparagus · broad bean · dwarf bean · runner bean · marjoram · pea  
 LETTUCE *likes* beetroot · carrot · celery · chervil · cucumber · garlic · onion · parsley · parsnip · radish · strawberry · thyme *but not* · broccoli · fennel · lavender · rue  
 MARROW *likes* borage · fennel · nasturtium · sweetcorn *but not* · potato · sage · thyme  
 MULBERRY *likes* grape  
 ONION *likes* beetroot · cabbage · carrot · chamomile · dill · leek · lettuce · parsnip · strawberry · summer savory · thyme · tomato *but not* · asparagus · aubergine · broad bean · dwarf bean · runner bean · marjoram · pea  
 PARSNIP *likes* lettuce · onion *but not* · sweet pepper  
 PEACH *likes* garlic  
 PEAR *likes* cucumber · garlic · mint · nasturtium · spinach · sweetcorn · tansy  
 PEA *likes* aubergine · broad bean · dwarf bean · runner bean · carrot · cucumber · marigold · mint · potato · radish · swede · sweetcorn · turnip *but not* · garlic · horseradish · leek · onion  
 PLUM *likes* currant · garlic · raspberry *but not* · chervil  
 POTATO *likes* aubergine · broad bean · dwarf bean · broccoli · brussels sprout · cabbage · cauliflower · celery · cherry · horseradish · lavender · lemon balm · marigold · marjoram · mint · nasturtium · parsley · pea · strawberry · summer savory · sweetcorn · tarragon · valerian *but not* · apple · apricot · courgette · cucumber · pumpkin · raspberry · squash · sunflower · tomato  
 PUMPKIN *likes* nasturtium · radish · sweetcorn · tansy *but not* · potato · rosemary · sage · thyme  
 RADISH *likes* catmint · carrot · chive · coriander · cucumber · dill · lettuce · nasturtium · pea · turnip *but not* · brussels sprout · cabbage · cauliflower · grape · hyssop · spinach · summer savory · winter savory  
 RASPBERRY *likes* garlic · plum · rue · yarrow *but not* · blackberry · potato  
 RHUBARB *likes* garlic · spinach  
 SPINACH *likes* broad bean · coriander · dill · horseradish · pear · rhubarb · salsify · strawberry · sweetcorn *but not* · broccoli · brussels sprout · cabbage · cauliflower · radish  
 SQUASH *likes* dwarf bean · borage · fennel · nasturtium · potato · sweetcorn *but not* · rosemary · sage · thyme  
 STRAWBERRY *likes* dwarf bean · borage · leek · lettuce · onion · spinach · tansy *but not* · broccoli · brussels sprout · cabbage · cauliflower · garlic · nasturtium  
 SWEDE *likes* catmint · pear · pea  
 SWEETCORN *likes* broad bean · dwarf bean · runner bean · brussels sprout · courgette · dill · marrow · pear · pea · potato · pumpkin · spinach · squash · sunflower · yarrow  
 SWEET PEPPER *likes* aubergine · nasturtium *but not* · parsnip  
 TOMATO *likes* asparagus · basil · dwarf bean · borage · carrot · celery · chive · dill · gooseberry · horseradish · lemon balm · marigold · mint · nasturtium · onion · parsley · rosemary · sage · thyme *but not* · apricot · broccoli · brussels sprout · cabbage · caraway · cauliflower · fennel · potato  
 TURNIP *likes* catmint · pea · radish · thyme *but not* · fennel · summer savory

