



## "Please don't park in the way of wheelchairs!"

is the plea to Suburb drivers from Eileen Whelan who chairs Fellowship, the charity that does so much to look after our elderly residents.

A number of corners and other crossing points have had the pavement kerbs specially lowered to make crossing the road less bumpy, and for some less painful, for people confined to wheelchairs and electric invalid cars.

Eileen says she frequently sees cars parked across these and has met with far from polite comments when she asks the drivers to be more considerate.

Mollie Cattle, who has lived on the Suburb for seventy years, drives from her home in the Orchard to Fellowship House and to the shops at Temple Fortune and says: "These crossing points are marvellous and it is very

frustrating when drivers park across them. I'm sure they don't realise, or think they are only going to leave their cars for a minute, and wouldn't do it if they knew".

Please remember next time - a wheelchair or invalid car might want to cross the road just as soon as you've left your car in the way."

RICHARD WAKEFIELD

# Spring Gardening

I have said it before and I will say it again, spring has to be my favourite season. The witchhazels were stunning, the perfume of the Sarcococca and Chimonanthus almost mind blowing and again the wonderful clumps of snowdrops.

I purchased more snowdrops 'in the green' at a flower show in February and this will boost my collection for next year. I planted them in my so-called woodland corner where I also have primroses and bluebells, perfect! *Garrya elliptica* is another early favourite of mine, with the glorious tassels against a very dark evergreen foliage. There was a magnificent example of this in a front garden in Hampstead Way opposite the Heath extension and I am sure I wasn't the only person to spot it. I have also been adding more purple and white crocuses to my lawn and it's looking good but not quite up to the amazing collection at the crematorium. I make a point of going there each spring to see the bulbs; it really is worth a trip.

Last autumn I was having a 'bad hair day' and decided to do something drastic with my garden. I have lived in my house for twenty-seven years and the lawn has always been more or less in the same place with the exception of the edges which I have re-shaped from time to time, but not any more!

I proceeded to dig up a large area of lawn and moved all my herbaceous plants and some shrubs into this new bed, bold, heh! I was left with a large patch of bare soil and half a lawn, but hopefully a wonderful new freshly planted herbaceous bed. All through the winter I gazed out of the window at all this bare soil, wondering if I had gone mad.

What on earth was I going to do with it? Then Alan Tichmarsh whispered in my ear (through the television,) "decking".

Having lived here for so long I am aware of the dawn raids by the Suburb Trust if we



should build anything out of cement and brick so I decided to use polystyrene and old yoghurt pots - not really, that's just a joke. I used railway sleepers placed directly on the soil. Their weight alone determines the fact that they wouldn't be moving anywhere and my decking was placed on top.

I haven't planted around the decked area yet because I want to get it right. I do have the habit of rushing in and then regretting it so I am going to choose carefully.

I know the effect I want to achieve. I don't want the decked area to look like a mini bandstand but with careful planting just to drift gently into the rest of the garden. I shall definitely use *Phormiums* and grasses and pots of lilies, and if it looks good I will show you photos, but if it doesn't, you can forget it!

It is very strange how a garden can suddenly look dated and old fashioned.

I really do enjoy the TV programme *Home Front* in the garden with Diarmuid Gavin and I have mentioned in the past about pinching a few of his less outrageous ideas. I have always regarded myself as a traditional gardener, herbaceous bedding, old-fashioned roses and subtle tones, but recently I have become aware that a change is due.

I won't go too mad but hope to incorporate a gentle mix of new and old, rather like a Diarmuid Sackville West of NW11.

It is now the summer bedding time again but keep an eye on the weather reports in case of any late frosts. In the past I have given you a few suggestions for planting in containers but as I am now in my bold colour mode I shall suggest some more. I know that these will be available from Finchley Nurseries, so trust me. I am going to use *Heliotrope* "Marine". This is a deep violet blue with dark green foliage and the wonderful perfume, hence its common name *Cherry pie*. My great grandmother used to

grow this years ago - funny how things come back.

*Nicotiana* "Burgundy" has a deep plum colour and of course the perfume to die for. *Diascia* is available in a new colour "Ruby fields". I haven't seen this one but I shall certainly try it. I have had *Diascias* in the past and have enjoyed them immensely. "Rhodochiton" is another plant to try. I have seen this before, but only climbing on wires as it is also called the purple bell vine, but apparently it is being used in containers and it scrambles over other plants. This could be very pretty mixed with other plum-coloured plants.

Keep an eye on the roses and spray when necessary and check the stakes on the tall plants, as it's almost impossible to stake them once they have blown over, as I am constantly finding out.

I have noticed lots of young slugs gathering around the new shoots of my plants so now is the time to start watering with Murphy Slugit. This can be used on plants and bare soil and is probably better than slug pellets which can be eaten by birds or greedy children.

I noticed in the spring that some of my bulbs had gone blind so I have made a note to replace them in the autumn. Some say a good feed will correct this but then you have to wait another year to find out. Whereas if you replace them with new bulbs you are guaranteed to have flowers in the coming year.

Don't forget to visit the gardens in the National Garden Scheme. The booklet is out now at the cost of 50p. Try and get to visit 37 Heath Drive, NW3 on May 9th. This is a garden I mentioned last year with the black bamboo and *Davidia involucrata* (Handkerchief tree) and with any luck it will be in full hanky on that day.

I shall be off to Chelsea again in May, and hopefully come back with a few more ideas and gems for you.

Good gardening.

DIANE BERGER

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## Suburb Weather Watch

1998 was the wettest year in the Suburb. The year was unusual in that rainfall came in bouts, with April and June having over 5 inches and October an incredible 6.35 inches. January of 1999 contributed another 4.67 inches. With only four days without rain, everyone will remember January as a horribly wet month.

However, February and March showed a great improvement, at least as far as getting into the garden or onto the Heath was concerned. At last, with 1.3 inches in February and 1.7 inches in March, there has been below average rain. The first week of April has also seen virtually nothing. This means that gardeners might soon be out with the watering cans. At least we could be glad in February that on two thirds of the wet days rain fell at night, although in March we were not so lucky and saw more daytime rainfall.

DIANA IWI

News, pictures, articles and letters are welcomed by the Editor, 26 Hampstead Way, NW11 7JL. Deadline for the Spring issue is June 19 for publication July 25. Views expressed in Suburb News are those of the authors and not necessarily of the publishers, the Hampstead Garden Suburb Residents Association.

ON THE NET

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