MAKING A DECISION

Decide To CHANGE Your LIFE

READ A GENERIC BUT INSPIRING QUOTE and INTERPRET IT AS A SIGN

AGONIZE

ANALYZE

GET NOSTALGic FOR Your LIFE AS IS
This surprisingly all-purpose mantra can be applied to anything from broken vases (above) to delayed flights (page 42). And while there’s not always an answer to hand, it does at least nudge you towards thinking positively.

When you are an independent magazine, as we are, thinking positively is important – we’ve learned to celebrate the good times quickly because pear-shaped is sometimes only hours away!

Our gift to you this month is a fresh new issue, and permission to spend a few hours contemplating the simple things that really matter – sharing good food with family and friends, spending time outdoors, loving your home inside and out, and learning a thing or two. Should you need further encouragement, here’s just some of what you’ll discover if you spend a bit of time with this issue of The Simple Things. Go on, put the kettle on…

Beer punch & caviar crisps (p92)
Why otters are wonderful (p54)
Good reasons to visit Hamburg (p36)
The best time of day to pick elderflowers (p9)
How to clean windows well (p111)
The island where Nelson learned to sail (p23)
We’re gathering together to make the most of this month’s longer days and warmer weather. We’ll be meeting for picnics, cleaning beaches and going on bug hunts — who’s coming with us?

Share pictures of you and your family gathering this month, whether that simply be memories, or shells on the beach, and you could win a family getaway worth £1,000. Visit joules.com/makingmemories to find out more. #JoulesMakingMemories
A could-do list for May

Wear something yellow

Have a screen-free bank holiday Monday

Go a day without complaining

Gather friends for a bike ride or a walk

Pick flowers for the table

If you had an extra hour in the day, what would you do? Make a list of ideas here, then be inspired to act on one…
Hawthorn leaf tips can be used as salad or herbs. Opposite: Who knew? Elderflower is best picked early in the morning (snooze button allowing).
Foraged crops are free, abundant and flavourful. All you need do is get yourself to a good spot at the right time, basket and secateurs in hand, and you have some of the best crops available. Through the foraging seasons of spring, summer and autumn, we’ll show you where to find these crops, how to pick them, and ways to turn them into delicious dishes.

**THE MONTH OF MAY**

Trees and hedgerows are greening up and blossom and flowers are appearing in abundance, as spring comes to a head. There is pollination and fruiting on the horizon, but right now is all about the flowers, and some of the great clouds of white that billow from the hedgerow are edible, including the delicious delicacy that is elderflower. It is the very taste of early summer – subtle, lemony and fragrant. It won’t fill you up, but it will sprinkle its magic over everything it touches. The hawthorn that makes up the bulk of the hedgerow is edible, too. But, in this case, it is the leaves rather than the flowers that are worth seeking. The shoots can be used as a wild salad leaf, if picked early, when they are tender and mild.
Basil and hawthorn flavoured mayonnaise

Once you’ve mastered the making of mayonnaise, you can use it as a base for all sorts of herbs and additions. Flavouring it with hawthorn and basil leaves creates a great springtime salad dressing. It will keep for a week in the fridge.

Makes 1 jar

A handful of hawthorn tips
A handful of basil leaves
2 egg yolks
½ tsp mustard powder
1 tsp salt
Good grind of black pepper
290ml groundnut or olive oil (not extra virgin)
1 tsp white wine vinegar

1 Finely chop the hawthorn tips and basil leaves before you start on the mayonnaise.
2 Drop the yolks into a bowl with the mustard powder, salt and black pepper and start to whisk using an electric hand whisk. Add one small drop of oil, then whisk away until thoroughly emulsified and the mixture starts to thicken.
3 Add another tiny drop of oil and do the same again; then another and do the same again. This stage is crucial, so don’t rush it.
4 Once the mixture starts to turn thick and lumpy, whisk in the vinegar, which will thin it down. You can then start to add the rest of the oil with a little less caution, as a thin stream, whisking all the time. Stop pouring from time to time to make sure the mayonnaise is being properly amalgamated.
5 Once you’ve added all the oil, stir in the chopped leaves and basil; taste and season if it needs it. Serve with a crunchy spring salad.
Both elderflower and hawthorn can be found in hedgerows, but you might also find lone elder trees in gardens and allotments.

Choose trees and hedgerows that are away from busy roads, otherwise you will be picking flowers and leaf tips affected by pollution.

Pick hawthorn tips when they are young and flushed pink. When they have just turned fully green, they are still fairly tender. Once they turn darker green, they’re still edible but a little tough.

Early morning is the best time to pick heads of elderflower, before the insects have visited and taken the nectar.

Choose elderflower heads that are not yet entirely open – the flowers will be younger and sweeter.

Take a plastic bag and a pair of secateurs when foraging, and drop the tips or the flowerheads straight into it to keep them fresh.
This is one of the great delicacies of the hedgerow year, and you have a brief moment in which to make it. Real elderflower champagne makes use of wild yeasts on the flowers themselves, so it's highly unpredictable – you may get a few civilised bubbles or an explosive froth – but it's all the more fun for it. For this, it's best to use glass bottles with a stopper that you can release occasionally to prevent too much pressure building up.

Makes about 4 litres
2 litres boiling water
650g sugar
2 litres cold water
Zest and skins of 4 lemons
2 tbsp white wine vinegar
15 heads elderflower
5g champagne yeast (if needed)

1 Take a large bucket and tip in the sugar and the boiling water and stir to dissolve. Add the cold water, lemon juice, zest, vinegar and flower heads and cover the bucket with muslin.
2 After three days, check it; if it hasn’t started to froth up, add the yeast.
3 Once it has been fermenting for six days, sieve through a muslin into a sterilised bucket. Allow the sediment to settle for a few hours, then syphon off into swing-top-stopper glass bottles or screw-top plastic bottles. It should be ready to drink after about a week, but you can leave it to mature longer, provided you release the pressure on a weekly basis.
**Elderflower custard toasts**

You can use elderflower to gently flavour any milk-based dessert by steeping the flower heads in warm milk before you start. Here, the result is an elderflower-scented custard in which to soak bread, to make buttery, crunchy custard toasts.

**Serves 4**
- 500ml full fat milk
- 6 heads of elderflower
- About half a loaf of unsliced white bread
- 125g caster sugar
- 6 egg yolks
- 50g butter

1. Pour the milk into a large pan and heat it until it is warm but not boiling. Add the elderflower heads, push them under the milk, then leave to steep for at least an hour.
2. Cut four chunky slices of bread in half to give you eight batons of bread. Lay them in a baking tray with high sides that will just hold them with a little space around them. Sieve the infused milk into another pan, heat to boiling then remove from the heat.
3. Whisk together the sugar and egg yolks in a bowl, then pour in a little of the hot milk, whisking as you go. Gradually add the rest of the milk, a little at a time, whisking. Clean the pan and pour the mixture back in, heating and stirring. You don’t need it to thicken like normal custard, as you want it thin enough to soak into the bread, but just heat it for about 5 mins to make sure the sugar is dissolved.
4. Pour it over the batons of bread, then turn so they’re coated on all sides. Leave to soak for 10 mins.
5. Heat half the butter in a frying pan and fry four bread batons until browned all over. Keep warm while you repeat with the remaining butter and soaked bread.
6. Serve warm with gently poached fruit such as (very seasonal) gooseberries and strawberries. »
FORAGING IN YOUR GARDEN

Elder makes a great shrub for a garden, although it does grow pretty large. You can keep it down to size by pruning out the oldest branches and shoots, right down to the base, every winter. Take out about a third of the bush each time. This will also help to keep the bush abundant in blooms, as older branches do not produce as many flowers.

Hawthorn provides a lovely garden hedge; it’s hugely wildlife friendly and has enough thorns to see off intruders, too. It’s easy to keep down to size with regular clipping, which should be done outside of nesting time, when it is bound to attract birds with its dense growth and abundance of insect life.

Lia Leendertz writes about gardens, food and the British year, and is the author of *The Almanac: A Seasonal Guide to 2019* (Mitchell Beazley).
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A PASSION FOR SOLO TRAVEL AND SWIMMING LED ELLA FOOTE ON A ROAD TRIP TO SEEK OUT SCOTLAND’S WILDEST WATERS
I’m no stranger to solo travel. It’s something I urge everyone to do. While I love the company of others, and I would describe myself as extrovert, I have learnt in recent years the joy of solitary exploring. There is a magical thing that happens over time spent alone, particularly when travelling. The first few days are a whirlwind as you begin the journey, excited, discovering and moving. Then, as you settle into routine, you make space for your fears and worries to visit. They can sit at the table while you drink wine and eat shellfish on the Amalfi Coast, or lie on the hot stone with you while you enjoy the lick of the Adriatic Sea in Croatia. I have found there isn’t much to do other than to pull out the chair and let them join you. Facing them rather than numbing them, like we do in our day-to-day lives, gives you a chance to understand and accept them. This is followed by the best bit of travelling alone: you create a huge opening for the new. You see, hear, smell, taste and dream bigger than you remember you are capable of.

My plan was simple: acquire a campervan and drive from my home in Berkshire up the east coast of England, to Edinburgh. Then wiggle my way north through the Cairngorms up to Ullapool before crossing to the Outer Hebrides, winding south through the Western Isles and down the west coast before finishing in the Lake District. The trip would take 16 days and I would swim outdoors every day, seeking other swimmers through social media to join me. I wanted the experience of isolation, discovery, wonder, and, most of all, I wanted the water.

I have been swimming in wild and open water for over a decade. What started as a way to challenge myself, a mile’s sea swim for charity, is now an addiction and part of my daily life. Scotland is an outdoor swimming paradise – I had briefly visited before, but it was largely unexplored to me. I was eager to visit the white sandy beaches in the Outer Hebrides, desperate to sink into the turquoise clear water at the Fairy Pools in Skye and keen to feel the kelp against my skin on the Isle of Mull.

Camping isn’t something I do. Friends and family know how passionate I am about a comfy bed and a flushing toilet. Choosing to take a campervan across Scotland was about pushing myself, facing a few fears, a bit of discomfort. The van I borrowed was basic: beds and electric hook-up. After four days on the road, as well as having all my worries join me in the passenger seat, I hit three days of severe storms, and genuine fear kicked in. News reported deaths, including a woman whose caravan blew off a cliff, and I was kept awake by the wind swaying the van.

One evening I pulled into a wild camping spot beside the sea, where an HGV lorry was already parked up, with curtains drawn. It was almost midnight, I couldn’t drive any further. I was spooked by the lorry. What if the driver was a thief? Or even a murderer? The wind blew hard and I desperately tugged the sleeping roof back into the secure clasps and chose to sleep below behind the driving seat. At around 3am the sound of rain lashing against the van woke me. In and out of sleep I imagined and dreamt of a storm sea swell flooding the car park, taking me out into the cold North Sea. In the light of day, »
I was a good half mile from the breaking waves – the lorry was nowhere to be seen.

By the time I reached the Outer Hebrides, the wind still blew, but I had settled into the rhythm of van life. I was covered in cuts and bruises – they mapped my journey. Hitting my head, bashing knees and elbows in the van became the norm. Scrapes and scratches from clumsy launches into water were standard. Getting the van ready for bed and then for the road became like a dance. I named the grape-yellow van Monty; it was like an early romance – joyful, yet daily anxieties kept me on my toes. I thought I would camp in wild spaces more, but as I travelled I felt the pull of company and stayed at campsites, the smaller the better. Knowing there was a toilet block and someone beside me at night was a small comfort – particularly in the bad weather.

Waking up to breathtaking views, sounds of wildlife and the smells of Scotland made me feel full. Most days I whispered “wow” to myself as I rolled through the Scottish landscape. I spent a two-hour ferry crossing discussing mystics, spirituality and standing stones with a stranger while dolphins swam alongside. I swam in the most north-westerly point in the UK and ran across the white sands at Luskentyre Beach. I finally settled in my mind that I wouldn’t die of carbon monoxide poisoning from the gas bottle that lay below my head each night!

Overall the trip was transformational; loneliness appeared but was soon disrupted by the kindness of strangers. I spent one evening with a friend near Findhorn Bay, met another for a swim at Portobello near Edinburgh. The rest of the trip was a blend of strangers or vast time alone; some days the most I spoke was saying good morning to fellow campers and goodnight. Instagram was a great way for me to connect and I gained following as I travelled. People who knew me well noticed if I looked tired or slightly dishevelled and ensured I was actually okay. Of course, there were plenty of times I had no connection and there was beauty in this. I tried to put up daily posts and photos. I ensured someone knew where I stayed each night; apart from that I had lots of uh-oh moments when out walking and swimming, considering dark, yet liberating thoughts that no one knew exactly where I was at that moment.

I was reminded of how beautiful our country is and that adventure sits right there on our doorstep. I made it to Mull, Skye, Lewis and Harris, as I had hoped, and ended up in places I hadn’t planned. The length of time I was away, the wildness of the spots I ended up in and the challenging weather made for a very different kind of trip to any I had taken before. I loved seeing our country up close and immersing myself in it. Understanding my fears and learning about van life was a wonder. Every journey is different and I was reminded that you can’t live in fear and faith at the same time, so I chose faith – it is far more rewarding.

"The trip was transformational: loneliness was soon disrupted by the kindness of strangers"
Figs, flour, salt, water, and over 1,000 years of tradition go into the famous bread of Matera. It’s like having a slice of Italy for breakfast.

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Back from the brink

ONCE-ENDANGERED CARNIVOROUS SPECIES SUCH AS OTTERS AND POLECATS ARE MAKING A REMARKABLE COMEBACK

By GAVIN HAINES

The fortunes of otter**, pine marten and polecat populations in Britain have “markedly improved” since the 1960s, according to new research. Each has bounced back from near extinction, meaning the only carnivorous mammal that remains in danger of being wiped out in Britain is the wildcat. Its Scottish population is at risk from hybridisation with domestic cats.

The findings came in a report released earlier this year by scientists at Exeter University, Vincent Wildlife Trust and the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology. They discovered that otters have almost completely recolonised Great Britain, polecats have expanded their range in southern Britain from Wales, and pine martens have expanded their range from the Scottish Highlands.

Badger populations are estimated to have doubled since the 1980s, helped by a decline in persecution since their legal protection in 1973 and protection of setts in 1992. Foxes, weasels and stoats also enjoy improved fortunes.

The carnivores mentioned recovered often unexpectedly quickly when harmful human activities ceased. These include control by gamekeepers, hunting and the use of toxic chemicals.

“Unlike most carnivores across the world, which are declining rapidly, British carnivores declined to their low points decades ago and are now bouncing back,” said lead author Katie Sainsbury, a PhD researcher at the Environment and Sustainability Institute at the University of Exeter.

“Carnivores have recovered in a way that would have seemed highly unlikely in the 1970s, when extinction of some species looked like a real possibility.”

Sainsbury and her colleagues collected survey reports dating back 40 years, comparing species' distribution and populations, as well as human activity.

The report’s authors warned that, while carnivore populations have recovered in the past 50 years, most remain at long-term historical lows. There is much more scope for recovery in distribution and density, they emphasise. “Better understanding of the social aspects of interactions between humans and expanding predator populations is needed if conflict is to be avoided and long-term coexistence with people is to be possible,” read the study’s conclusion.
**SMALL CHANGE**

**Fridge pleaser**
The Community Fridge Network was founded in 2017. Its fridges provide a place for residents and businesses to donate surplus food, which is available for anybody who needs it to take for free. Environmental charity Hubbub, the organisation behind the network, has already launched 50 since 2017 and aims to support the opening of a further 50 by the end of 2020.

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**Farming’s future?**
Europe could be farmed entirely using agroecological approaches such as organic and still feed a growing population – as long as diets shift to being more plant-based, says European thinktank IDDRI. Its Ten Years for Agroecology report shows that pesticides could be phased out and greenhouse gas emissions radically reduced. This approach to farming puts ‘ecological principles first, chemicals last’.

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**Pre-loved boom**
According to the latest annual fashion resale report by US secondhand clothing retailer Thredup, the pre-loved market is thriving. Thredup reports that, over the past three years, resale has grown 21 times faster in the US than new ‘apparel retail’. The secondhand market, which is currently worth $24bn (£18bn) there, is expected to reach $51 billion (£39bn) in five years.

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**GOOD FIGURES**

**11**
11 EU states have already met their 2020 renewable energy targets – to source 20% or more of their power from renewable sources. The 2020 target is a stepping stone to the goal of 32% by 2030.

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**90m**
90m toilets have been built since 2014, as a result of India’s sanitation drive. Some 93% of households now have access, and 500 million people no longer need to go to the toilet out in the open.

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**1st**
Scientists have turned human stem cells into insulin-producing cells for the first time, raising hope for a cure for type 1 diabetes. The breakthrough comes from the University of California, San Francisco.

* These articles have been written by our friends at Positive News, the magazine for good journalism about good things. See the world from a different angle; positive.news/subscribe.
How often do you sit down with a great bowl of pasta and a fine glass of wine and know precisely what you’re eating? Knowing where your food comes from and exactly what’s in it is a luxury that’s largely been wiped out by mass production. Fattoria La Vialla offers a (wonderful) way back to products and ingredients that are big on taste, small on waste and come from an ethical, family-run company.

A FAMILY-RUN FARM
This farm and wine estate in the Chianti area of Tuscany is run by three brothers, Antonio, Bandino and Gianni Lo Franco. Fattoria La Vialla is a role model for biodynamic farming on a large scale: its 1,600 hectares are home to vineyards, olive groves, vegetable gardens and pastures, as well as crop fields. Around half of the site is preserved as forest that helps to offset the farm’s already low CO2 output, making La Vialla carbon neutral. As a pioneering enterprise that marries sustainability with preserving cultural heritage, the farm is a focus for various university research projects.

BUONISSIMO!
Ethical credentials, however, do not a nice bowl of pasta make. Luckily, the proof of La Vialla’s methods is in the tasting. You can buy La Vialla’s wines, sauces, pasta, extra virgin olive oil, pecorino cheese and honey online direct from the farm. Wines are low in sulphites; sauces have few ingredients and no added preservatives, and its oils, vinegars and pastas are reassuringly – and deliciously – rustic.

To find out more, visit lavialla.it/uk.

WIN A HAMPER
Now, La Vialla is offering readers of The Simple Things the chance to win one of their hampers, chock full of delicious organic Tuscan food and drink. The competition is online at thesimplethings.com/blog/lavialla.
SECRET LANDS

BRITAIN’S MAGICAL ARCHIPELAGO INCLUDES MANY ISLANDS YOU CAN CROSS TO BETWEEN THE TIDES. LISA DREWE, AUTHOR OF ISLANDEERING, EXPLORES SOME OF THE BEST FOR A DAY-TRIP ADVENTURE

Photography: LISA DREWE
There are people, and I am most definitely one of them, who find islands somehow irresistible. The mere knowledge that they are on a little world surrounded by the sea fills them with an indescribable intoxication. Islands have been the setting for both great literary works and world-changing scientific discovery. So what is it about them that touches our psyche so deeply? I think the answer is different for each of us. Maybe it’s because they are whole, delineated and fathomable entities – some can even be walked around in a day. Perhaps we also look to places on the periphery for escape, inspiration, and freedom. The values of island life – self-sufficiency, the importance of community and being accountable to each other – connect us more closely to what it is to be human.

Arguably, it is also where we can feel the greatest connection to the ocean. This outer edge offers uncluttered horizons that give us a cognitive break, freeing the mind from a daily overload of information. They also offer up the wild; the greatest wilderness left on Britain today is the intertidal zone. At the frontier between two worlds, the ocean reveals its secrets twice a day and offers a unique window into life beneath the waves. For us terrestrial beings this is the only place where most of us can touch, see and experience underwater creatures and landscapes.

What may look like a rock in the distance cannot be judged from the mainland. You won’t know its secrets until you have made the effort to walk, scramble, wade and sometimes even swim to discover it. To an islandeer, every island is a treasure island.

Escape the South-Coast Crowds
Thorney
Emsworth, West Sussex

Crossing the bridge over the Great Deep, you reach the MoD’s formidable barbed-wire fence, with its CCTV cameras and intercom-controlled access. But once on the other side of the metal gate, the contrast couldn’t be sharper. Reclaimed mudflats open out, alive with the sounds of the creeping tides, the alarm calls of oystercatchers and Brent geese taking flight. Earthy aromas of seaweed and salty mud drying in the sun soon fill your nostrils. The lack of commercial development on the island makes this a wonderful haven for wildlife, and the wild, sandy beach at the southern tip is a great place for a warm swim.

Good fact In the tiny hamlet of West Thorney, the graveyard of St Nicholas’ Church is the poignant resting place for World War II servicemen, both Allied and German, who now lie side by side.

Don’t miss Ospreys in autumn at Pilsey Island Reserve.
ONE OF NATURE’S GREAT BEACHES
SCOLT HEAD
near Wells-next-the-Sea, North Norfolk

There are two ways to get here, depending on how adventurous you are feeling. You can cross two tidal creeks then wade along the main channel around the southern length of Scolt Head. Even at low tide there will be water in most of the creeks, but it is fairly shallow – no more than knee-high. If you prefer to keep your feet dry, take the seasonal ferry from Burnham Overy Staithe and enjoy an uplifting, wild walk along the north shore.

Owned by the National Trust, this small paradise of sand dunes, salt marsh, mudflats and shingle is internationally important for its birdlife. At Overy Cockle Strand, the main crossing point to the island, there are showstopping views to the broad sweep of golden sand and high marram-topped dunes that form the spine of Scolt Head Island.

There are several places for good swims, thanks to the sun-warmed mud and sand, and vast wild sands to walk on the north shore. In summer, the ferry is the easy way back but a swim makes a refreshing end to a walk. Let the incoming tide carry you all the way.

**Good fact** Burnham Overy Staithe, an idyllic harbour with a historic boathouse, inspired famous resident Horatio Nelson to learn to sail.

**Don’t miss** Foraging for salty, crunchy samphire – its small, vibrant green stalks push up through the mud like miniature pine trees.

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PATH ACROSS THE SANDS
CHAPEL ISLAND
Ulverston, South Cumbria

Crossing the channels of the River Leven, the cold rushing water from Coniston and Windermere against your legs is exhilarating, then it is across the main sands of notorious Morecambe Bay to reach the island. The Queen’s Guide to the Sands is your best guide; it’s dangerous to attempt to cross without one, with fast tides, shifting channels and sinking sands a real threat. Chapel is a mile or so offshore, just 400 metres long and 100 metres wide, an impenetrable tangle of undergrowth – as you walk the foreshore, oxeye daisies and pink campion bow their heads in the breeze. Take a circuit to the south are views of the seaside town of Morecambe and distant Blackpool Tower further down the coast. Eider ducks breed at the southern end and there are surprising sheer cliffs on the eastern side. Then it is back across the peace and solitude of the treacherous sands.

**Good fact** Once the site of a 14th-century chapel built by monks, the ruins on Chapel are actually the remains of a folly built in the early 1800s to romanticise the sea view from nearby Conishead Priory.

**Don’t miss** Trying to catch flatfish with your feet, and eating hand-picked brown shrimps as a post-walk snack.
A MINIATURE ARCHIPELAGO
HILBRE
West Kirby, Wirral, Merseyside

Almost a rite of passage for the people of Merseyside, this crossing of the vast sands of Liverpool Bay offers an insight into a natural world right on the doorstep of the metropolis. Tucked into the mouth of the Dee estuary, Hilbre is part of a long rocky strand featuring wave-sculpted cliffs, arches and caves. Even on the lowest ebb of the tide you are pretty much guaranteed a dip from the northern tip of the island. Maroon yourself for the five hours or so of high tide to explore the geology and birdlife – there is a lot to enjoy.

**Good fact** The fastest recorded response time to a message sent from Liverpool to Holyhead via the old telegraph station on Hilbre was 23 seconds, faster than many broadband services today!

**Don’t miss** The Wirral’s very own Ayers Rock, as you walk up the ramp to Hilbre. The grey seal colony hauled out of the water on Hoyle Bank.

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ROLLERCOASTER ROUTE
WORM’S HEAD
Rhossili, Gower, South Wales

More of an adventure than a walk, the route takes you along the dragon’s spine of an island full of natural wonders. From the coast path and across the rocky tidal causeway, you ascend the island to reach the spiral-shaped Outer Head, a short scramble making for a spectacular finale.

Worm’s Head is the most westerly point of the beautiful Gower peninsula and each section is uniquely stunning. Middle Head is split into two by Devil’s Bridge, a natural rock arch, while Low Neck is a landscape of jagged, upended rock layers arranged row after row with deep chasms in between. It leaves you in no doubt as to the massive upheavals that formed these strata. Seabirds accompany visitors throughout the Worm to its raw and elemental end where waves crash on the rocks below.

**Good fact** At Rhossili Bay, voted best beach in Wales and in the world’s top 10, some 400 people attempted to break the world record for the largest number of people skinny-dipping at one time.

**Don’t miss** Listening to the blowhole at Outer Head. The siren to warn stragglers of the incoming tide.
PARTY CAPITAL FOR ANCIENT MAN
ORONSNAY
Off Colonsay*, Inner Hebrides

Secret swimming off deserted white-sand beaches is the main attraction here, your only company likely to be grey seals, a chough or two and a handful of rare plants. Tràigh Uamha Seilbhe is one of the best, a gorgeous protected beach.

Cross the still-wet sands of The Strand that separates Oronsay from neighbouring Colonsay and, from May onwards, the machair (rare dune grassland) is covered with wild flowers that sparkle like gems against the white sands of the beach.

The well-preserved Augustinian priory ruins probably date from the mid-14th century. There is an amazing set of carved gravestones and the beautiful Celtic Oronsay Cross is one of the best examples of its kind. In autumn, more than 1,000 grey seals come to the skerries at the southern tip, noisily pupping and fishing in a scene worthy of a David Attenborough voiceover.

A single visit for the duration of low tide will not be enough to explore all that drew Mesolithic peoples to this peaceful and special place.

**Good fact** Along the east coast are shell middens – mounds of kitchen waste left by early man. It is thought that Oronsay was once the venue for parties thrown by the hunter-gatherers, with much feasting, matchmaking, and gossip, although the menu was mainly limpets, limpets, and more limpets.

**Don’t miss** Trying to spot the elusive corncrake. Stop at the spring near Seal Cottage and drink cold, clear water from the metal cup provided.

*Technically Oronsay is only really possible as a day trip if you are already on the island of Colonsay in the Inner Hebrides, but would you look at the colour of that sea? How could we resist?*
To get to this family-owned island, you must first negotiate a tidal crossing to a wild and remote peninsula in the east, Shona Beag. Crossing just before the causeway floods leaves the maximum time for exploring. For the super-adventurous it’s possible to ascend Beinn a’ Bhaillidh – a ‘Marilyn’ for those interested in bagging a summit. The views from the hills at the heart of the island, across to Skye, Rum, Muck and Eigg, are spectacular. Eilean Shona is at the narrow entrance to Loch Moidart and has several idyllic holiday cottages and bolt-holes. There’s a right to roam but it is polite to announce your arrival at the main house and respect the privacy of island guests. The fantasy forest surrounding the main house, full of rare pines and ancient woodland.

After a day here, you can appreciate why the author of Peter Pan, J.M. Barrie, chose it as his summer retreat. Although encounters with Captain Hook are unlikely, it is possible to spot pine martens, white-tailed sea eagles, otters, red squirrels, and even golden eagles here and simply enjoy the magic.

The family keeps a ‘Book of Feats’, in which alleged achievements include eating a raw jellyfish, swimming ten hours across open water to the Isle of Eigg and climbing the mountain at midnight.

Don’t miss Foraging for clams (and spotting otters feasting) on the Caribbean-like sands at Shoe Bay. The fantasy forest surrounding the main house, full of rare pines and ancient woodland.

Most of these islands are accessible via causeways, bridges, beaches or sands that are safe to cross only at lower tides. Ensure you check tide timetables when planning a walk. Some islands restrict seasonal access to protect nesting birds.

* A Marilyn is a hill or mountain exceeding 150 metres. There are 2,011 of them across the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland and the Isle of Man; the term was coined by Alan Dawson in his 1992 book The Relative Hills of Britain.
ONE OF BRITAIN’S NEWEST ISLANDS
CEI BALLAST
Porthmadog, Gwynedd

Cei Ballast sits in almost complete secrecy in the northern upper reaches of the River Glaslyn, just a few hundred metres from busy Porthmadog. Low-lying and now covered with trees and shrubs, this man-made island was formed around 200 years ago from discarded ships’ ballast.

The most interesting approach is to drop down onto the sands from the Cob at low tide, the stone embankment that spans the estuary and carries the steam trains of the Welsh Highland and Ffestiniog railways. Once on the sands, the short route to the island crosses a tidal stream before it heads into the salt marsh, samphire beds, and cockle-filled sands beyond. The colourful foreshore of Cei Ballast is like no other: a mix of chalk, red granite, brick, limestone, industrial slag, flint, and the occasional piece of pottery.

Back on the Cob after your island adventure, it’s hard not to feel slightly smug. Among the crowds on the platforms observing steam trains or enjoying refreshments, few realise that this island even exists.

**Good fact** In the 1800s ships carried Welsh slate from the Ffestiniog quarries across the world; ballast was added to the return cargoes before being dumped on a sandbank to the east of the river.

**Don’t miss** Diving into the deep warm waters of the pool in the sandbanks of the secluded southern tip.

Adapted from Islandeering: Adventures Around the Edge of Britain’s Hidden Islands by Lisa Drewe (Wild Things Publishing), which features walks, sights and swims on 50 islands.
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CAKE IN THE HOUSE

Banana cakes come in many guises: made with walnuts, spices and maple syrup, this delicious loaf is a good one

BANANA WALNUT LOAF
Makes 1 x 450g loaf

35g walnuts
Rapeseed oil, for greasing
85g Doves Farm Organic Wholemeal Spelt Flour
20g cornflour
1 tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp ground nutmeg
½ tsp bicarbonate of soda
2 large ripe bananas, plus an extra half to decorate
45g rapeseed oil
80g maple syrup
1 tsp cider vinegar
1 tsp vanilla paste
Demerara sugar, to sprinkle

1 Preheat oven to 200C/Fan 180C/Gas 6 and toast the walnuts on a baking sheet for 5–6 mins until lightly browned. Cool, then roughly chop.

2 Reduce oven temperature to 180C/Fan 160C/Gas 4 and grease a 450g (1lb) loaf tin with a little rapeseed oil and line with baking parchment.

3 Sift together the flours with the spices and raising agents in a bowl.

4 Weigh the peeled bananas – you need 165g – and mash well. Put the mashed bananas in a bowl and blend with the oil, maple syrup, vinegar and vanilla using a balloon whisk.

5 Tip the dry ingredients into the banana mix. Fold through with a spatula until just blended, then fold in the walnuts.

6 Scrape the mixture into the prepared loaf tin, leaving it slightly domed in the middle. Slice the extra half piece of banana lengthways and use to decorate the top. Sprinkle with a little demerara sugar and bake for 45 mins, or until the cake is browned and springs back when pressed and an inserted skewer comes out clean.

7 Let the cake cool in the tin until just warm, then turn out onto a wire rack to cool completely. Brush the banana with a little extra maple syrup to add shine.

Recipe from Nourish Cakes by Marianne Stewart (Quadrille). Photography: Catherine Frawley.
Morning! How do you like to start your day? It’s a bit of a family ritual. Normally at around 7am, when the boys have woken us, either me or my husband heads downstairs and makes an English breakfast tea. If time allows, we enjoy our tea in bed with our two boys – a moment of calm before the day begins.

And how do you like your tea? Strong with a good splash of milk. I can’t stand weak, milky tea – my mum drinks it like that and I never allow her to make me a cuppa!

Tell us a bit about what you do.
I’m a floral artist and creative, with a focus on working with dried flowers. Everything from running workshops to creating content for brands and, of course, making my art. I’ve recently quit corporate life after many years and my pace of life has slowed down immensely. I normally drink herbal tea throughout the morning but, if I’m struggling, I may have another coffee, made on the stove.

Do you have a mug of choice?
I like a fine china mug and it mustn’t be too big. My husband thinks that I’m fancy for caring about the cup I drink my tea out of...

How do you like to spend a tea break? I love to sit at the corner seat in our living room, with a magazine or creative book. I sometimes have lunch as early as 11.30am, but always follow it with a cup of tea. Lately, we’ve been making an effort to consume more consciously and I’ve been enjoying a fresh leaf pot in the afternoons, before it’s time to pick the boys up from school.

One last cup for the day? I always end the day with a herbal tea. I take it to bed with me and read a few pages of my book. My favourites are Pukka tea’s Nighttime or a camomile – something calming and soothing.
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MAY

EXPLORE

NO-ROLL SUSHI, WISDOM FROM A MONK, SOUTH BEACH STYLE, AND THINGS TO HELP YOU STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN
No one can find what will work for our cities by looking at... suburban garden cities, manipulating scale models, or inventing dream cities. You’ve got to get out and walk.” So wrote Jane Jacobs in 1958. Getting out and walking inspired her idea of the city – and still inspires us to rethink the spaces in which we live, work and play.

When she moved to New York in 1935, she relished exploring its neighbourhoods and walking its streets and sidewalks, until she found where she wanted to live – Greenwich Village. Working as a journalist, her experiences began finding their way into her writings. Post-war, it was an era when planners were in love with grand statements: tearing down higgledy-piggledy historic streets and replacing them with orderly zoned areas, with residents organised into high rises. Jacobs believed that what worked on paper wouldn’t necessarily work with people.

What Jacobs especially loved about cities and how they worked was their mix. Citizens, schools, shops, parks – the blend was unique to each place. They worked best – the shops kept busy and the streets safe – when they worked together. So it should be its users who should decide how things changed. In her 1961 book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, she advocated decisions being made locally. She wrote, “Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody”.

Written from the point of view of a dedicated city dweller, not a planner; an impassioned citizen not an academic, the book hit a nerve with the public and professionals alike.

Jacobs is especially inspiring because she didn’t just write the theory, but also took direct action. Rousing her local community, she was arrested in the 1960s protesting the demolition of parts of Soho, Greenwich Village and Little Italy to make way for a highway. And she succeeded; they are still crammed full of local, historical character (you’ll find a block renamed Jane Jacobs Way in her honour). She continued campaigning until her death in 2006.

Jacobs’ feet-first philosophy continues to inspire. The first weekend of May sees community-run Jane Jacobs Walks take place in cities around the world to mark what would have been her birthday; see if there’s one near you – or find out how to set your own – at janejacobswalk.org.

It’s not hard to put some of Jacobs’ values into action: take a walk around your local community – stop, take a proper look at what’s going on, and think about the role you play in it.

*“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody when they are created by everybody”*
SUSHI CONES
Makes 12
400g sushi rice
30ml rice vinegar
25g caster sugar
½ tsp salt
12 nori sheets
6 tsp hoisin sauce
Black sesame seeds, for sprinkling
Pickled ginger, soy sauce and wasabi to serve
FOR THE TOPPINGS
Red pepper, carrot, cucumber, avocado, radishes, fresh chives
YOU WILL NEED
A 14cm saucer and a 12-hole muffin tin (or 2 x 6-hole muffin tins)

1. Cook the sushi rice following the instructions on the packet, until dry and sticky.
2. Put a pan on a medium heat. Pour in the rice vinegar, sugar and salt, and heat until the sugar has dissolved. Leave to cool to room temperature, then pour over the cooked rice, gently stirring until all the liquid is absorbed.
3. Grease a baking tray with oil, spread the rice over it and cool to room temperature.
4. Stack the nori sheets and lay the saucer on top. Cut around it to make circles. Find the centre of the nori stack and cut a neat, straight slit from the edge to the centre.
5. Take one circle and fashion a cone roughly 8cm wide at the base. Wet your finger and lightly brush along the cut to stick it in place. Transfer to the tin and repeat to fill all holes.
6. Wet your hands and roll a golf ball-sized ball of rice. Poke a hole in the centre and pour in ½ tsp hoisin sauce, then pack more rice over the hole to seal. Pop into one of the nori muffin cases. Repeat to fill all the cases.
7. Next, prepare toppings: thinly slice the pepper; cut carrots into matchsticks; radishes and cucumber into thin rounds or ribbons. Finely slice the avocado; chop the chives and finely chop the pickled ginger.
8. Decorate your sushi cupcakes with the prepared veg and sprinkle with black sesame seeds. Serve with soy sauce, wasabi and pickled ginger.

Taken from Bish Bash Bosh! by Henry Firth and Ian Theasby (HQ). Photography: Lizzie Mason
MY CITY*

HAMBURG

AN HISTORIC PORT CITY WITH A VIBRANT ARTS SCENE. COULD HARRIET DOHMEYER’S HOME BE GERMANY’S BEST SECRET?
How long have you lived in the city?
I've lived in Hamburg for six years. I grew up just outside the city and as a child we visited a lot. Once I finished school, I moved to Hamburg to study.

Tell us what makes your city unique.
Hamburg is a historic port city, and it's full of contrasts; in HafenCity you'll find old merchants’ warehouses next to the curved windows of our iconic concert hall, Elbphilharmonie. The posh borough of Rotherbaum is just a walk away from the Sternschanze quarter, where the historical building Rote Flora has been occupied by squatters since 1989.

What's it like in May?
Mostly warm with plenty of light, although there will possibly (OK, probably) be a few rainy days. Hamburg is known for its schietwetter (crappy weather)! Because we get a lot of rain and wind, as soon as the first rays of sunshine poke through, we’re lured outside to the squares in front of the cafés and restaurants.

What time of day do you most enjoy and why?
I work mostly on my own, which I really enjoy, but I do love the early evening, when I go out and meet friends for a late coffee or a wine, bread and cheese date in the park and appreciate the conversation after a quiet day.

What's the nature like?
Water dominates the city. It’s divided into the north side of the Elbe (the major part) and the south (the harbour and the lively district of Wilhelmsburg). On the north side we have a 20-hectare lake called Alster, and from this many small canals flow through the city.

Where's your favourite outdoor space?
Hamburg is a very green city, with more than 250,000 trees and many green spaces. My favourite is Park Fiction – a small vibrant urban area with green hills, a basketball court and plastic palm trees.

Tell us about the light and colours of your city.
The most beautiful light is by the harbour in the really early morning when the first rays of sun hit the water.
“People in Hamburg care about what happens around them and many are involved in shaping the city”

The main colour of Hamburg has to be blue because of all the water. I also associate the city with the colour red – it’s in our coat of arms and there’s our red-light district Reeperbahn, where you’ll find many music clubs. Music is a key part of the city, The Beatles are said to have begun their stage career in the Indra club, just off Reeperbahn.

Tell us about the people who live in your city.
Some say the people in Hamburg are a bit cold, I’d say they’re just reserved but still friendly! We’ve been a multicultural and open city since way back, probably due to the harbour. Honesty and respect matter a lot for Hamburger – in our economic history it’s always been considered important to be a “ehrbarer Kaufmann”, or honourable merchant.

Where are your favourite places to go with friends?
You can often find us in the Vietnamese kitchen, Ban Canteen, and at weekends, enjoying the sun at the café Hermetic in Sternschanze with a coffee from their roastery and slices of amazing New York cheesecake or apple pie. We might have a walk in the park at Planten un Blomen and end up watching a movie in the arthouse cinema, Abaton.

Tell us about eating in your city?
Two typical foods are Franzbrötchen and fischbrötchen. Brötchen means bread roll, but these are two totally different things. The first is a cinnamon bun found in almost every bakery (for an award-winning bun, go to Kleine Konditorei in Eimsbüttel district). Fischbrötchen is a sandwich filled with fresh fish, which you can eat at one of the stalls at the harbour. There’s fine Nordic cuisine at Haco in St Pauli and top-notch Mexican in Salt & Silver at Hafenstraße. If you’re on a tight budget, the best falafel is from Kimo and for pizza the no-frills spot Pizza Bande, next to the Reeperbahn, is popular.

What’s your favourite way to get about the city?
Hamburg is flat and the perfect size to walk around. For a quick overview of the city I recommend the subway U3. It rides above ground most of the way and stops at a lot of important spots (central station, town hall, harbour, St Pauli and Sternschanze). A day ticket also gives you access to the ferry line. The best ferry for a harbour tour is the no62 to Altona, a slightly forgotten part of town, but definitely worth a visit.

What types of shop do you most like to visit?
The street Marktstraße is especially good and has two of the best vinyl record shops: Groove City and Zardoz
Records. For books and indie magazines, visit Gudberg Nerger in the Neustadt district. Hello Love is a colourful concept store in Eppendorf. Human Empire is known for its great art and design – I love the posters and beautiful Hamburg postcards.

**Where do you like to escape to?**
I love to visit the museum of modern art and photography, Deichtorhallen, and then explore Oberhafen, which is home to many creative studios. Here you’ll find Hobenköök, a market hall with hundreds of local products and its own restaurant. The antiques shop Johanna Schultz Wohnen here is famous for the big old letters of neon signs.

**What are the best kept secrets about your city?**
In a way Hamburg itself is a well kept secret! Compared with Munich or Berlin, it’s not overrun by tourists. Another is the bar, Vu Speak Easy, near the exhibition halls. You enter by knocking or ringing the bell and once inside you’ll find there’s no drinks menu; the barkeeper just asks what you like and then offers his recommendation.

**What do you miss most if you’ve been away?**
The beautiful view from the subway U3 as it enters the harbour area. That makes me feel like I’m home.

**What would surprise a newcomer to your city?**
It could be the fact that we’re a historic port city yet also a very a modern and sustainable place. When it comes to food, culture and society, we are highly progressive. If you need convincing, stop by the HFBK University’s annual exhibition, visit the big club festival Reeperbahn Festival on St Pauli or check out local businesses like Viva con Agua or Lemonaid. People in Hamburg care about what happens around them and many are involved in shaping the city.

**Where would you recommend staying?**
For a special treat, stay in the hotel of the concert hall Elbphilharmonie and combine it with a concert. Not a fan of classical music? The hip urban hotel group 25hours originated in Hamburg, and Altes Hafenamt, one of their three hotels, is well positioned for the harbour. In the lively Sternschanze district, August the Boardinghouse is a good choice.

**What keeps you here and where else would you live?**
I’m in love with my hometown! It’s a combination of the nature and water, the diversity of people and districts, my awesome friends, favourite coffee spots, the music scene and even the slightly cold character of the people and the weather! If I couldn’t live here, I might move to Amsterdam – it’s like a second home for me as I visit friends there every year. I’d also like to be close to the sea. Water makes me happy. »
HARRIET’S PERSONAL TOUR

**Favourite shops**
**B-LAGE**
Well curated, beautiful products from small labels.
b-lage.hamburg

**Favourite gallery**
**AFFENFAUST GALERIE**
A small privately owned gallery known for its young, urban art.
affenfaustgalerie.de

**Favourite cafés**
**TÖRNQVIST**
Excellent coffee from Scandinavia served with huge amounts of knowledge.
tornqvistcoffee.com

**BALZ UND BALZ**
A café run by two siblings known for their hospitality and homemade stullen (sandwiches).
balzundbalz.de

**Favourite restaurant**
**SIMBIOSA**
Beautiful new restaurant with food from the Middle East. Everything is vegan but without making a big thing out of it.
simbiosa.eu

**Favourite market**
The Isemarkt is found under a subway bridge; it’s a bit like Notting Hill. Stroll between the two underground stations Eppendorfer Baum and Hoheluft before finishing off with an ice-cream at Eis & Innig on the canal.
ismarkt.com

**How to spend an hour**
Visiting the alternative and historical area of Gängeviertel. Artists, left-wing activists and supporters decided to occupy the old houses here when they were due to be demolished and the result is a special place, full of art. If you have time, pop into the vegan café, Nasch.

**Place to see by night**
For a relaxed evening with wine, I recommend Weinladen, which feels like visiting friends.
weinladen.de

**Best view**
You get a great 360-degree view of the city from the platform of our concert hall building, Elbphilharmonie.
elbphilharmonie.de/en/

**One thing you must see**
The historic Elbe underwater tunnel connects the two sides of the city. Coming up on the other side after a 20-minute walk gives a new perspective on the city.

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**HARRIET DOHMeyer** is an author and photographer. She has produced a series of guidebooks for Copenhagen, Amsterdam and Hamburg. Her blog is at fraeuleinanker.de, and she’s on Instagram, @fraeul_ein_anker.
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When you care for yourself first, the world will find you worthy of care. Go to bed an hour early, or get up an hour later

If we stop striving for perfection and embrace our flaws, not only will we become happier, but we’ll better understand those who are close to us, Zen Buddhist monk Haemin Sunim tells Ruth Chandler
interested in helping people psychologically.” He lives in Seoul and attends a meditation retreat every autumn. Haemin’s interaction with others, in person and via social media, is a key part of his work: “It opens my heart and gives me inspiration to write, too.” Haemin also runs a not-for-profit School for Broken Hearts in Seoul and in South Korea’s second city Busan, offering courses that relate to people’s lives, including one for parents who have lost a child and another for people diagnosed with cancer.

**A BORN THINKER**

Haemin's own spiritual journey began as a teenager in South Korea when he asked himself philosophical questions; “I felt very much as if I was thrown into this world. Someone once described it as waking up in a movie theatre when the film’s been playing for ten minutes already. I felt I had to identify myself with this body, this nationality.” Desperately trying to achieve affluence, South Korea was raising its children with a relentless regime of all work and no play. “We were forced to study until 10pm every night in the high school library. And the thing was, I wasn’t even allowed to discuss what I was curious about – Who am I? Why am I here?” He sought books that would help sate his appetite for philosophy, including *Freedom from the Known* by J. Krishnamurti, in which Haemin first learned that revolution starts not out in society but in one’s own mind. At 18, as soon as he was able to, he fled his country to study in California: “It was a difficult decision, I was scared to death, but I had to do it. The social pressure was incredible. I listened to what my spirit was saying to me.”

He went to study film at the University of California in Berkeley. “I was moved by some of the beautiful stories in movies – such as the minister’s struggle with his younger son’s bad behaviour and yet his deep love for him in *A River Runs Through It*.” Disillusioned by the film-making process, which he found too time-consuming and felt he couldn’t control as much as he wished, he soon switched to Religious Studies, in a bid to explore the big unanswered questions, which led him to discover more about Buddhism. There was no looking back: he trained to become a monk in the US
and Korea, and was ordained in 2000, after which he continued his studies and worked in the New York temple of his master, going on to teach Asian religions at Hampshire College in Massachusetts.

HAPPINESS NOW

The Things You Can See Only When You Slow Down, a collection of Haemin’s teachings and advice to help “connect with the kinder and wiser side of yourself,” published seven years ago, surprised both him and his publishers by selling three million copies to date, a hit both in the East and West.

Haemin believes that there is an equal need for mindful teachings on both sides of the world and that living too fast isn’t just a symptom of Western lifestyles. The main inspiration for the book was another lesson learned from his South Korean childhood: that material ambitions often turn out to be a mirage. “Society was better, the political system was better, but we were still unhappy, so what was happening? It’s like when you buy what you thought was your dream house and you think you’ll be happier when you have it and you then see something better. We must stop this train or we’ll never reach the destination we dream of.” How do you apply the brakes then, Haemin? “It’s about bringing your mind to the present moment and appreciating what’s here.” He gestures by opening his hand towards the table in front of him, then holding up the white bone china cup. Against the chatter and clatter of a London hotel lobby, he says: “If I can appreciate this English Breakfast tea, which I will not have when I get back to Korea, then it makes me happy.” He takes a sip. “And the thing I love to do wherever I am is walk. I take an hour, preferably in nature, after meditation and breakfast. I practise what [Vietnamese monk] Thich Nhat Hanh says: ‘Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet.’”

GOOD INTENTIONS

Hand in hand with mindfulness is what Haemin calls intentional living: taking control of your life and planning your time. “When you care for yourself first, the world will also find you worthy of care,” he says. “In the same way that when you’re in love and you want to spend time with that person only – you deserve your care and attention. Treat yourself to a delicious meal, a good book, a nice walk with a lovely view.” If a Buddhist monk tells us to be kind to ourselves, who are we to argue?

“We are so busy using phones, computers, TV, that we go to bed late – so the next morning, we are already tired as we have only had six hours instead of seven or eight. So, one of the kindest things you can do is go to bed an hour early… or get up an hour later.” And on the theme of technology: “Rather than being in reactive mode, when you feel as if you’re not in control of your life and you waste time, have an intention not to respond to every message as soon as it appears, but tell yourself you are going to check your phone only once in the morning, afternoon and evening.”

Despite Haemin’s prolific advice, he admits – with typical humility – that he is still a work in progress and perhaps this is as encouraging as his other insights: “The hardest thing in the world is putting what you know into practice, and making sure your actions don’t contradict your words. Looking at myself, the gap between the two still seems very wide.”

Love for Imperfect Things by Haemin Sunim (Penguin) is available now. Visit haeminsunim.com for more or follow Haemin on Instagram at @haemin_sunim.
ARMCHAIR TOURIST
INTRODUCE A BURST OF SUNSHINE INTO YOUR HOME INSPRED BY THE CANDY-COLOURED BUILDINGS AND SWAYING PALMS OF THIS FLORIDA HOTSPOT

Words: CLARE GOGERTY
Here can be few places on earth that match the islands of Miami for sun-kissed glamour. Cross one of the causeways from Downtown, over Biscayne Bay, to the island of South Beach (SoBe to the locals) and you enter a world where the beautiful people posture and parade on white sand beaches, palm trees sway, and Art Deco buildings glow in the sun.

This is especially true on Ocean Drive, whose terrace cafés and candy-coloured buildings have appeared in too many movies and TV dramas to mention here. This is where you will find around 900 well-preserved buildings that exemplify Streamline Moderne, the international version of Art Deco. Their geometric forms, chrome lettering and long horizontal lines are what most people think of when they think ‘Miami’.

To bring a little of South Beach’s shiny glamour into your home, keep your colour palette as pale as a sun-bleached lounger, and introduce a few shiny accessories – a bar cart or a lamp with a marble base – to reference the architecture. Throw the curtains wide to let the sun in, sit beneath your most palm-like houseplant and pour yourself a mojito*.

* Note that in the slightly soggy UK it is perfectly acceptable to use a fern as a stand-in for a palm – it looks surprisingly similar after a second mojito.
THEY’VE FED OUR APPETITES – AND IMAGINATIONS – FOR CENTURIES. STEP INSIDE THE WORLD OF THE WALLED GARDEN

Words: RUTH CHANDLER

WONDER WALLS

THEY’VE FED OUR APPETITES – AND IMAGINATIONS – FOR CENTURIES. STEP INSIDE THE WORLD OF THE WALLED GARDEN

Words: RUTH CHANDLER
Wind NE in morning & all day, changing in evening to S, dull all day but mild. Fruit trees on walls disbudded, French beans raised in boxes, planted out & covered at night with mats to protect from frost.' So wrote William Cresswell in his diary for 13 May 1874. Discovered at a flea market a century later, it provided such a detailed account of his work at Audley End House in Essex that it enabled English Heritage and Garden Organic to restore the walled kitchen garden to its 19th-century splendour, when it supplied flowers, fruit, vegetables and herbs to the vast Jacobean manor house. Today, the 2.5-acre plot is as beautiful as it is productive, with 50 varieties of pear and plum currently frothy with blossom, and grapevines that date to its Victorian heyday. Sadly, walled gardens such as this are now a rarity.

THE FRESHEST FARE
“Until the middle of the last century, every well established household of any sizeable family would have had a walled kitchen garden,” says expert and author Susan Campbell, co-founder of The Walled Kitchen Garden Network and vice-president of the Gardens Trust. Most were established to feed country estates: the residing family, their visitors and the armies of staff. They were the original plot-to-plate: trugfuls of produce delivered to Cook within hours of being dug up, picked or snipped. The Georgians and Victorians are to thank for many of our surviving walled kitchen gardens. According to Campbell, they were at their most productive between 1800
and 1939. Churchill’s Kent home, Chartwell, had one (featuring bricks laid by the PM himself) that supplied virtually all the produce needed to keep the family fed during the Second World War. It was also common for everywhere – from schools to hospitals to factories and mills to prisons, monasteries and convents – to have their own walled kitchen garden.

WHY WALLS?

Their cob, stone or brick-built enclosures served a number of purposes, including keeping out pests such as deer and rabbits. The walls not only prevented wind damage to plants but created a microclimate, enabling tender crops to be grown. Against a wall the temperature can reach as many as five degrees Celsius higher than elsewhere. Every age brought new innovations: the Elizabethan era included hot beds (a far earlier Arab invention), created with warmth-generating manure, for fruits such as melons.

By the 18th century, a new fashion for naturalistic garden designs meant that walled gardens were often placed away from the house to make for uninterrupted sweeping views. To prevent frost damage to tender fruit including peaches, figs and grapes, fires were lit at the base of hollow walls (tended day and night by young gardeners who lived in the bothies on site). Many had lean-to glasshouses and pine-pits where pineapples were raised in heat generated from the fermenting bark of oak (waste from the tanning industry). ‘The walls seemed countless in number, endless in length; a village of hot-houses seemed to arise among them, and a whole parish to be at work within the enclosure,’ wrote Jane Austen at the end of the 1700s, describing Catherine Morland on a tour of General Tilney’s kitchen garden in Northanger Abbey. ‘There were great vexations, however, attending such a garden as his. The utmost care could not always secure the most valuable fruits. The pinery had yielded only one hundred in the last year.’ Such was the difficulty of growing pineapples that they became a status symbol – and soon appeared in architectural details such as walls and gates, and even country houses themselves, such as The Pineapple, a folly-cum-summerhouse built for the Earl of Dunmore in 1761, which looks out onto the walled garden of his estate near Stirling (now owned by the National Trust for Scotland).

By the 19th century, the invention of the boiler meant that structures including hothouses,
The repeal of the glass tax in 1845 and the invention of cheap plate glass led to a proliferation of hot houses,” Campbell says. Delicacies such as forced asparagus and strawberries began appearing on the Christmas table.

**Gone But Not Forgotten**

The scarcity of labour and changing social structures brought about by the Second World War also meant the end of walled gardens as they had been. Among the most beautiful was the 31-acre Royal Kitchen Garden at Windsor, which Prince Albert designed for Queen Victoria in 1840. Sadly it is among those now abandoned. A lack of formal records means experts aren’t able to guess at the number of those that still exist or that have been lost, but even the National Trust admits to managing to restore just 30 of the 140 walled gardens in its care that need rescuing, and runs the Walled Gardens Appeal in order to help raise necessary funds.

Hearteningly, there are signs of a modest revival, and the Walled Kitchen Garden Network (walledgardens.net), was established to support their renaissance. A number have been rescued recently, including the magnificent 400-year-old Easton Walled Gardens in Lincolnshire, derelict for five decades. Bridgewater in Salford, a new RHS site due to open in 2020, includes the restoration of an 11-acre walled edible plot.

These spaces hold a special appeal: they have a romance about them and offer a haven in which to relax. “People like the feeling, in a walled kitchen garden, of enclosure, safety, hiddenness, shelter, warmth and calm,” Campbell says. Let’s cherish those that remain and dig deep to help the new generation flourish.

Susan Campbell’s books include *A History of Kitchen Gardening* (Unicorn) and *Walled Kitchen Gardens* (Shire Library).
ANNE WANTS TO END FGM/C

AND SO DO WE

Amref Health Africa works with Maasai communities in Kenya and Tanzania to end the practice of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting.

Anne took part in our Alternative Rites of Passage ceremony, marking her transition into adulthood without ‘the cut’. This meant she could claim her rights and take control of her future. Help us empower more girls like Anne. #InHerHands

All donations made to Amref Health Africa before 7th June will be DOUBLED by the UK government. Your donation will help us support more women and girls across Africa.

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Skies Recorded by the Cyanometer

Suzannah Evans

Lavender, delicious, forget-me-not
jazz-note, nautical, electric, sea-ice
atlantic trench, speedwell, recycling bin
facebook, whale, harebell, himalayan snow
earth-from-space, eucalyptus leaf, shadow
willow-pattern, nurse's scrubs, double denim
sailor's trousers, salt-and-vinegar, adriatic
braveheart's face, twilit fjordland, eight-day bruise
cold moorland tarn, freezer buildup, thin ink
cursed sapphire, canal on a bad day, chilled octopus
lost orca, unfeasible purple, wet woodpigeon
pea-souper, sack-bottom, chemical sunset
tarmac puddle, remembrance of blue.

About the author
Suzannah Evans lives in Sheffield and works as a creative writing teacher and poetry editor. As a teen she had an obsessive fear of the apocalypse, which has inspired many of the poems in her collection Near Future (Nine Arches Press). This poem is about the intriguing, unexpected colours above us when someone with a poetic, occasionally doomy disposition measures the 'blueness' of the sky.
When I was ten years old, I was given a copy of one of the most evocative animal stories to read. On the cover was a scene of a riverbank with moonlit reeds. Before them skulked a shadowy silhouette. With his glistening eyes, whiskered muzzle and stealthy form, Tarka the Otter enticed me into his world. For years after reading Henry Williamson’s *Tarka* I searched for them in the River Ouse in Lewes, Sussex, where I was brought up. But due to pollution, destruction of habitat and persecution, they were extinct in most counties in England and Wales. Later I moved to Devon where, high on Dartmoor, the otter had still been breeding in small numbers. But it was not until I was an adult, when the otter had been awarded European protection and its habitats were restored, that their numbers recovered. I eventually saw an otter in the wild. Thanks to the National Otter Surveys, we now know that every county in England has a returning population of this shy mustelid.

Tarka Country in North Devon has been designated the UK’s first Unesco Biosphere Reserve due to its uniquely rich ecosystem, partly thanks to the attraction of Henry Williamson’s writing. We have the Tarka trail and the Tarka line, but for me it will always be this description in the story that first connected me to the animal:

“Twilight upon meadow and water, the eve-star shining above the hill, and Old Nog the heron crying kra-a-ark! as his slow wings carried him down to the estuary. A whiteness drifting above the sere reeds of the riverside, for the owl had flown from under the middle arch of the stone bridge that once carried the canal across the river.”

The poet Ted Hughes once remarked that when he read Tarka as an 11-year-old, it “entered me and gave shape and words to my world, as no book has ever done since…”

It is often stories that alert our sensitivity to nature. These days, living in our towns and cosseted by central heating and entertained by digital technology, getting out is not easy for everyone and books are a good start. Sometimes, nature comes to us, though: spending long hours by the River Dart near my home, I began to learn about how to identify signs that otters were there. I found their tracks and their oily black droppings, called spraint. Once you understand the otter’s shy habits, you’re more likely to know where to see them. Witnessing an otter is one of life’s special gifts. They remind us, as the poet Ken Steven once said, “that we are still alive/ that the land’s edges have not lost their map-less unknown.”

The otter became an icon of nature conservation, cherished by all. Its recovery and return to our rivers is a heartening success story. *Miriam Darlington’s books are Otter Country (Granta) and Owl Sense (Faber).*
Next month, in the interests of fairness, we’re putting together a playlist of Songs About Dogs. Do you have a favourite? Leave us a comment on our blog page (address above) and your suggestion might be included.
To most people, threatened wildlife conjures up pictures of gorillas, tigers and rhinos – exotic wildlife in far-flung places. But the truth is that in many countries hundreds of domestic species are fighting a losing battle for survival in our own backyards. These beautiful posters were created to highlight 50 endangered species in the US states they call home. “Humans are responsible for 99 per cent of those at risk, according to The Center for Biological Diversity,” said Luke Doyle from NeoMam Studios, who helped devise the project. It is hoped that it will start conversations about lesser-known animals, birds and insects, not just the iconic species often featured on nature documentaries.

See the full set at netcredit.com/blog/illustrated-tribute-to-the-most-endangered-wildlife-in-every-us-state/
Whalers hunted humpbacks to near extinction, despite a humpback being the size of a bus; outcompeted by a fellow salamander, this species is now limited to the high peaks of Shenandoah National Park; this warbler needs young jack pines, which flourish after fire, now often suppressed; disturbing these bats during hibernation uses up precious fat reserves and they can starve before spring comes; a small but magnificent darter, this fish likes clear running waters, which are getting harder to find; thanks to drastic logging, there are so few of Idaho’s lichen-eating caribou left that the focus is on saving those in Canada instead; the draining of sphagnum bogs has left Connecticut’s turtles high, dry and endangered.
A victim of climate change, captive falcons are now being introduced to the wild; this beautiful and exotically spelled fritillary lives high in the mountains but that didn’t stop it being hunted by collectors; the elegant red wolf’s diet of rabbit, raccoon and rodent has extended to livestock, which led to culling; a female whooper may only produce one chick every two to three years, hindering its recovery following habitat loss in Montana’s prairie marshes; Alabama’s dune-dwelling mouse is threatened by oil spills, hurricanes and predators; once ubiquitous in a Wyoming river basin, this warty toad is considered extinct in the wild and so far reintroducing tadpoles and toadlets has only had mixed success.
Like bees everywhere, populations of this Minnesota resident have plummeted due to a reduction in pollen sites resulting from intensive farming and climate change; human beach goers have a tendency to stand on or drive over this plover's nests so safe areas are being designated; an important food for many creatures, unfortunately, these crayfish live in polluted waters; this woodpecker was thought to be extinct as early as 1944 but, like Elvis, sightings keep coming in and, despite logging, it may be prospering; looking like Star Wars Darth Maul, this beetle's eating habits are suitably sinister – it feeds on a decreasing supply of fresh corpses; New York State's smallest venomous snake is often killed on sight despite only one or two people being bitten a year.
GIVE COILING GRASSES A GO. THESE SIMPLE AND ELEGANT COASTERS MIGHT LEAD ON TO MUCH MORE

Photography PENNY WINCER  Project TABARA N’DIAYE
You may not have realised but basket-making is one of the world’s most common crafts, practised by every civilisation in the world at some point.

Tabara N’Diaye became entranced when spending her school summer holidays in her parents’ hometown of Thiès in Senegal, eagerly buying up the baskets made from local grasses and coloured strings to use for anything and everything. When she launched her homeware brand, La Basketry, with her sister, she learnt to weave baskets for herself. This beginner’s project echoes the Senegalese baskets Tabara fell in love with, made by wrapping plastic strings with a needle around the core material – a bundle of grasses. It uses the basic technique of coiling. Practise a few times and, once mastered, you can move on to shaped bowls and baskets.

There are many natural grasses found in and around the garden that can be harvested and prepared for basket-weaving. Depending on where you live and the time of the year, Tabara suggests hard rush, pendulous sedge, reed, sweetgrass, pine needle, hay, wheat bunch or skep-making straw as good options. You could also buy online from somewhere like wildflowers.co.uk or try your local garden centre. Whatever material you choose, make sure it’s thoroughly dried out before use.

An alternative to grass is raffia, available from most craft shops. Tabara also suggests using plastic strings to begin (search ‘scoubidou’ or ‘plastic lacing string’ to buy online) or, if you want to go plastic free, try fabric. As you may have gathered, this is a technique that’s adaptable to all sorts of different materials, colours and designs, so enjoy experimenting and seeing what you can create as your skills build over time.

As Tabara says, “If you focus on loving the process rather than just the results, you’ll be building a hobby that will provide joy throughout your life.”

Drinks coasters

A GREAT WAY TO TRY YOUR HAND AT THE COILING TECHNIQUE

YOU WILL NEED
1.2m lengths of core material (dried grass of your choice or raffia), making a bundle 1.3cm in diameter (approx 10 pieces)
4 x 1m lengths of white plastic string
Large-eyed needle
Ruler or measuring tape
Scissors

1 Gather 10 pieces of core material into a bundle about 1.3cm in diameter, cut ends level. Hold the bundle a thumb’s width from the end and secure tightly with plastic string in an overhand knot (aka, a half hitch): wrap your string around and along the bundle and hold both ends on one side of the bundle – you want the left end to be about 5cm long. Then cross the left end over the right end, creating a loop, then pass it under (through the loop) and pull tightly. See picture 1.
Thread a needle with plastic string to prepare for stitching. Start coiling the bundle into a flat circle around the knot, stitching through the centre of the coil to keep the grass in place. This is the trickiest bit, so don’t be discouraged if at first it seems a bit difficult.

Continue to coil a circle, stitching the plastic string through the core material in the previous row. The stitches should be about 5mm apart. Once the first couple of rows are completed, it becomes easier as you have more material to grip. See picture 2 (previous page). Try to maintain an even tension all round for a neatly rounded coaster. If the circle becomes a bit a wonky, gently manipulate it back into a circle (grasses are quite easy to manipulate, particularly early on, so it’s important to keep an eye on the first few rows of coiling).

When the bundle of core material thins out, incorporate new strands into the bundle to keep the diameter consistent. See picture 3 (previous page).

When you’re left with only a short length of stitching material, thread the end into the previous row. To introduce a new length of string, thread it a couple of wraps back (you may have to hold it in place while you make the next couple of stitches to ensure it stays secure). See picture 4.

Stitch your coaster until it measures roughly 9cm in diameter, or until you have 6-8 concentric rows. Finish by threading the string into the previous row several times, then cross stitch it to the previous row to secure.

Trim any excess materials, and your coaster is done! Repeat to make a set, using different colours of string if you like.

Taken from Baskets by Tabara N’Diaye (Quadrille). Photography: Penny Wincer. Illustration: Aurelia Lange
Keeping it in the family

SMALL COMPANIES THAT ARE BIG ON HERITAGE — WE ASK TWO FAMILY-RUN BUSINESSES TO SHARE THEIR STORIES

In an age when we prize provenance and traceability, a small-scale family-run business is a great fit. How much nicer to buy something knowing a little of the people involved - the story behind a brand helps you see its products in a whole new light. Here at The Simple Things, we love a family-run business, and often feature them in the magazine. Over the page we talk to two of our favourites »
Isle of Wight-based stove makers Charnwood is family run, British built and committed to its Hampshire roots. Ced Wells tells us more about it.

How did Charnwood come about?
The company was established in 1972 by Alfred Wells and two of his sons, John and Alistair. Oil prices rocketed in the 1970s and this coincided with Dutch Elm disease, meaning there was a plentiful supply of wood across the UK. One night, while sitting by an open fire, the trio came up with the idea of making a small stove that could fit into a typical British fireplace. Today, the company is still in the Wells family. However, from three men in a shed, Charnwood has grown to employ around 150 people (10 of which are family!) in a large factory in Newport, on the Isle of Wight.

Have your products changed much since the 70s?
We use the best combination of plate steel, cast iron and firebrick, and craftsmanship is at the heart of everything we do. In this digital age, I think we crave the analogue, and a stove that has been beautifully hand-built with care and attention provides just this. All of our stoves are built to last, finished by hand and rigorously tested. Many of our original models are still giving good service. And this is how it should be: of course, not everyone will want a 45-year-old stove, but it’s good to know that an investment in Charnwood is more than just a short-term relationship.

Sounds very sustainable! Any other green credentials?
Over the years we have developed our stoves to be as clean burning and as efficient as possible. They’re now among the most environmentally friendly appliances available on the market. And most of our ranges now meet the new Ecodesign regulation coming into force in 2022. Within the factory, we’re always looking at reducing waste – getting the most out of our raw materials right through to minimising our packaging. Plus the stoves’ modular design means components can be replaced over time, again reducing waste.

What makes you stand out from other companies?
We’re passionate about what we do. We have over 45 years of in-depth knowledge of real-fire heating and continue to invest in innovative stove design and development.

Tell us a bit about being a British manufacturer.
By designing and manufacturing in the UK and basing our company on the Isle of Wight we can provide local jobs and give back to our community. The Island is home for us; it is a part of our story and we have a great team working for us. As for the production process itself, there is a tremendous satisfaction in physically making a product from scratch.

Any little-known trivia to share?
As well as making stoves, we make the signage you see on London Underground – and more recently the new Elizabeth Line.

What comes next?
Our new range of ‘Ecodesign Ready’ stoves are doing well – in terms of emissions, they’re around 90% cleaner than an open fire. Over the years we’ve grown quite organically, investing in all sorts of equipment and knowledge, and adapting the products we offer to the economic climate. We’re designers and makers at heart, so we like to think our future lies in British manufacturing.
From top: Alfred and Eileen Wells with their nine children; the new, highly efficient Bay BX; the first Charnwood stove, the 1974 Beacon; Rona is Ced’s black labrador and star of their ads. Opposite: Ced (front right) and family, all of whom work for Charnwood
“Most of our goods are made as they’ve always been, by locals in their homes, in small batches”

Making heritage workwear that’s produced ethically, Carrier Company has always been ahead of the curve. Enzo Cilenti shares their story

How did it all start?
My mother-in-law, Tina Guillory, a landscape gardener and environmentalist, needed garden tools that could be transported by bicycle. She had been searching for a rather strange thing she remembered from her youth, a thing she could only describe as a ‘carrier’. It was large and flat; big enough to catch up huge sprays of pruned or pulled foliage, but with a handle at each corner enabling the contents to be enveloped and easily flung onto the compost heap. Coming across a large roll of natural jute cloth, she decided to not only make her own, but to make them for other people, too.

Where did Tina go from there?
Carrier Company has been steadily evolving since 1995. Tina began by spending her evenings making things on the kitchen floor; during the day, she organised local artisan fairs to sell her creations, worked as a gardener and cared for her children. Friends in the local community also needed work they could do from home so, as the company grew and Tina’s own children grew, she harnessed the resources at hand to expand into a true family business.

How different is the company today?
In the past few years Carrier Company has adapted dramatically; Tina used to drive all over England selling her gardening apparel and bags at country fairs, with the help of her sisters. These days the majority of sales are online. Tina’s daughter Sienna (my wife) and I both have years of experience in the fashion industry, and collaborate in everything from development to production to photography. Tina still works from her dining room table, and cooks lunch every day for whichever workers are around, and Sienna and I live in London with our children, fitting Carrier Company work around our day jobs.

Tell us a bit about the process.
The majority of goods are made locally, in Norfolk, just as they always have been. Bags and clothes are made by local people in their homes, in small batches. Tina’s ethic is ‘work to live, not live to work’, so workers are encouraged to do so in a way that suits them and enables their families. Sustainability has always been a priority, and using natural materials such as jute, cotton, linen and wool to adapt to the changing seasons in a way that defies passing trends drives Carrier Company’s designs.

What company achievements make you most proud and why?
It feels good to be ahead of the curve, in terms of ethical production values and also the resurgence in heritage workwear – but it feels even better to know that our customers come back again and again, because they love wearing our clothes.

What makes Carrier stand out?
Carrier Company produces all of its collection within the UK.

Any little-known trivia to share?
Most of our models are family members. Manufacturing in the UK is incredibly expensive so the majority of our photography is done in house, or snapped while going for walks.

What comes next?
As always, looking for more sustainable materials with which to produce beautiful, useful things.
Founder Tina (above and opposite). Many of the company’s models are Tina’s relations, with photography snapped out and about on family walks. Top right: Sienna as a child with her brother, Jace, grandparents and friends.
LIVING

MAKING A PET-FRIENDLY GARDEN, LETTING IN NATURAL LIGHT, EATING BY THE SEA, AND THINGS TO NOTE AND NOTICE
Dandelion
The *dent-de-lion* (meaning lion’s tooth in French), despite its cheery yellow flowers and many uses as a herb, is sadly still thought of as a weed. Although largely by old-school gardeners striving for a manicured green lawn. Celebrate this humble plant by arranging a few stems and admiring a dandelion clock, whose tiny parachutes carries seed heads to disperse in the wind.
“Simply pop open the tin, roll up your sleeves and work Chalk Paint™ magic into your home.” — Annie Sloan

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MAKING A SPLASH

NATASHA NUTTALL TRANSFORMED A TIRED MANSION BLOCK FLAT OVERLOOKING A 1930S LIDO WITH VINTAGE PIECES AND PLENTY OF PLANTS

Photographs RACHAEL SMITH Words RACHEL LEEDHAM

Old and new live side by side in Natasha’s kitchen. The clever corner unit houses a coffee machine and boiling water tap. Opposite: The mid-century shelving unit by Danish designer Kai Kristiansen was from Etsy.
NATASHA NUTTALL
is a landscape designer
who lives in north London
with her husband, two
children and their
sproodle, Rockford.
natashanuttallgardens.com
t isn’t difficult to see why Natasha Nuttall, who was born and bred in north London, completely fell for this flat on the top floor of an Edwardian mansion block overlooking Hampstead Heath: it has tantalising views of Parliament Hill Lido.

“The blue is so vibrant, particularly on a sunny day,” says Natasha who, together with her husband and their two children, aged 13 and 11, holds a pass to the pool for six months of the year. “We’re not quite at the stage of swimming throughout the winter, but we may get there.”

While the flat’s views and location were ideal for them, the interior was a little less so: the property had been tenanted for nearly half a century and felt pretty unloved.

The couple began by replacing the polystyrene ceiling tiles and some potentially life-threatening electrics, painting the walls and refurbishing the two bathrooms. “We lived in it like that for five years, just to give ourselves time to work out what we really wanted to do,” says Natasha.

TAILORING THE SPACE

Helped by their architect, David Stanley, the couple drew up plans to knock the living and dining rooms into one in order to create a light, open-plan kitchen and dining area, with double sliding doors leading to a living area at the core of the flat. With a modest 1,000 square feet to play with for a family of four plus their dog, Rockford, storage was also of paramount importance.

“You need to be able to put everything away sometimes,” says Natasha. “It was also crucial that both children had decent-sized bedrooms, which are at the other end of the flat to ours.”

The catalyst for the kitchen design was the purchase of a cabinet reclaimed from the »
The vintage cabinet originally came from the British Museum. The 1950s cupboards are from Retrouvius and the pretty Zellige tiles, which mirror the colours of the Lido, are by Emery & Cie.
NATASHA’S STYLE

- Introduce as much greenery as possible. Plants bring movement and life to a home.
- Be patient. Live in your home for a few months to work out how you will make the space work.
- Keep your colour palette consistent throughout your home: I was inspired by the cool blues of the lido, the tiles, and the warmth of wood.
- Use bold, floral fabrics sparingly on cushions and blinds.
The couple chose large sliding pocket doors to separate the living area from the kitchen, which fold right back for an airy, open-plan feel.
British Museum by salvage experts Retrouvius. A joiner was found to craft it into a workable kitchen island, and the cupboard doors were glazed to display the couple's collection of tableware, including Art Deco cups, plates and glassware.

“We don’t really do new,” says Natasha, who thinks nothing of rising at the crack of dawn to be at Ardingly's antiques and collectors fair in Sussex for opening time.

**WATER COLOURS**
The rest of the cabinetry is made from wood stained to match the four rich tones of the island – or painted in blues that echo the watery hues of Moroccan Zellige tiles cladding the former chimney breast.

“The palette was influenced by the pool; it’s a big part of our lives,” says Natasha. To help demarcate her office area within the dining space, she painted the wall by her desk in Blue Blood by Paint & Paper Library.

Danish mid-century modular shelving shipped over from Poland displays plants potted in all manner of unusual vessels – something Natasha now offers as part of her range of horticultural services.

In the living room, a striking banquette-style sofa in deep blue velvet makes the most of the space, and a bentwood planter by Tom Raffield – one of the couple’s few concessions to “new” objects – hangs elegantly from the ceiling.

Cushions by House of Hackney are in a flamboyant reworking of a William Morris print; while an equally leafy fabric by Matthew Williamson for Osborne & Little dresses the couple’s bedroom window overlooking the Heath.

“I guess it comes back to my love of nature and plants,” she says. “Flora and fauna will always be close to my heart.”

As will the lido, always tantalisingly glimpsed through the window.
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PETS WELCOME

CAN PETS AND GARDENS HAPPILY CO-EXIST? OF COURSE! WITH SOME CARE, IMAGINATION AND CUNNINGLY CONSIDERED PLANTS, PETS AND PLOTS CAN BE BEST OF (FURRY) FRIENDS

Words: RUTH CHANDLER
Who can fail to share a large dog’s delight as it bounds up and down a tiny garden with glee? Well, erm, anyone who values the health of their plants and doesn’t want their outdoor space redesigned in the wag of a tail – or the cock of a leg. We have expectations about how we share our home with our animals, so it’s only natural that we apply the same approach outside. “It’s great for owners to want to create a garden that their pets can enjoy,” says Dr Jane Tyson, a scientific officer at the RSPCA. “Whether your dog uses it for a sniff around and a wee, a cat for sunbathing in a favourite spot, or a rabbit to get some exercise and munch grass, there are many ways to make a garden animal-friendly.”

With a little planning, you can protect your plot, add interest for you and your pets and create shady areas to cool off in. The result is a sanctuary for all creatures, great and small.

**Dogs**

Exercise and stimulation are the most important requirements of our canine companions. As well as sectioning off an area for ball games (where possible), you can create entertainment in the form of a sensory treasure trail where treats are hidden in materials such as wood chippings and non-toxic sand.

**What to plant:** Dogs can self-medicate if provided with peppermint (relieves indigestion and sickness), camomile and violets (ease anxiety). Species that are harmful to canines include cherry laurels, rhododendrons, azaleas, lilies, horse chestnuts and oaks (ie conkers and acorns; search ‘poisonous’ for a full list at thekennelclub.org.uk). Plant tough-as-old-boots lavender where your hound is likely to brush past boisterously and not only will it withstand the tireless to-and-fro, but it may scent the fur. Choose other mature and sturdy specimens including shrub roses for well-pawed areas.

**How to landscape:** The height of fencing depends on your dog’s breed and temperament. A low picket style is charming but won’t be popular with your neighbours when your bouncy springer spaniel arrives on the other side. Consider willow or hazel (if chewing is a problem, protect it with a length of chicken wire above teeth height) or featherboard, which is solid and can be built high enough to foil any escapee’s efforts. A simple wire stock fence is soon hidden within a hedge, which then offers a prettier enclosure.

Distinguish between the areas of the garden where your pet is and isn’t allowed by putting down large stones to demarcate your plantings. Elevate less robust specimens out of harm’s way in pots or raised beds. For a path, consider light-coloured slabs that won’t become too hot, and avoid gravel or pea-shingle, which can...
easily become stuck in a dog’s paws.

**Doggy business:** If it’s possible to persuade your dog to relieve itself in one area of the garden, so much the better – not only will this prevent your lawn being covered in scorch marks, but you won’t have to keep your eyes peeled for lurking stools. Failing that, consider Dog Rocks (podiumpetproducts.com), which naturally filter out nitrates (responsible for yellowing grass) from their drinking water.

**Cats**

Places to warm themselves in the sun and take a nap, climb, scratch and sharpen their claws: the alfresco needs of cats are fairly simple. An old tree stump or branch can accommodate most of those behaviours, while also being an attractive addition to your garden.

It’s also worth considering the threat cats pose to visiting birds. “Place feeders high off the ground, and away from any surfaces or places a cat could jump from,” says Charlotte Ambrose, RSPB wildlife expert. Avoid letting your cat out an hour before sunset and an hour after sunrise, when birds are most active.

**What to plant:** Put catnip and valerian in accessible spots in a border and watch for the effects on your kitty (it will stimulate or relax, depending on the individual). Your pet will enjoy cat grass (a good source of fibre that aids the removal of fur balls), which can be grown in a pot. Plants to avoid include lilies, which are toxic to felines, chrysanthemums, irises and poppies (see the full list at cats.org.uk/help-and-advice/dangerous-plants).

**Marking their territory:** If you can keep neighbouring cats off your plot, it’s beneficial for you and your pet (it’s generally the neighbours who do the soiling; your own often, obligingly, heads next door). Planting shrubs closely, growing prickly plants or using small pebbles will deter them from digging. Depending on your dedication to the cause, you could ‘midden’ on behalf of tiddles, which means leaving his or her poo around the garden to convey the message that it is their territory.

**Rabbits**

Being a prey species, rabbits need secure, private places where they can hide from anything that scares them. Their diet is another key factor in their wellbeing.

A healthy lawn is essential, as rabbits love to graze and should ideally have a permanently fixed run with a skirt attached to their hutch (to deter digging predators). To give constant...
access to fresh grass, move the hutch and run to new areas of lawn as required. The Blue Cross says the house itself should be large enough to allow the residents to stand on their hind legs, stretch and hop around (a minimum of 183cm x 90cm floor space, and 90cm tall). They should be able to exercise as and when they wish. “You could also pick and wash non-toxic plants such as dandelion leaves and occasionally feed them as a treat,” advises the RSPCA’s Jane Tyson.

**HENS**

Chickens are not only pets, of course; they also earn their keep by offering up beautiful orange-yolked eggs. Free-rangers will influence the design and contents of your garden, but if your girls live in a house with a run, they’ll have less of an impact on your choices outdoors.

Fancy types (pure breeds) have a reputation for laziness and forage less, so could be a better choice for the green-fingered. As they’re prey to foxes, be vigilant when they roam the garden. Plants to avoid include rhubarb, daffodils, foxgloves, honeysuckle and hydrangeas. Hens love sunflower seeds, spinach, sweetcorn and lettuce, so consider adding those crops to your beds. It might be prudent to run a two-foot high chicken wire fence in front of your edible and ornamental patches – this will ensure seedlings, salad crops, strawberries and raspberries aren’t destroyed and that you don’t have to go on a daily egg hunt around your plot. The flipside is that these birds are great at hunting pests, including gardeners’ nemeses slugs and leatherjackets.

If contained, your feathered friends should have the largest house and run you have room for (manufacturer’s guidelines are generally stingy, spatially speaking). It’s wise to allow enough chicken wire to overlap as a skirt around the run, and ensure that catches and bolts can outwit the predators’ renowned cunning. With their wings clipped, they shouldn’t escape. An undercover area, in addition to their house, will offer them shelter from both sun and rain.

Fancy splashing out on a few ducks in your garden? You’ll need a small body of water (a standard paddling pool will do), a simple duck house and a secure run (see waterfowl.org.uk for more information). And then it’s just a case of pekin* the right breed.

* For those who haven’t yet fallen in love with hens and don’t speak chicken, a pekin is a particularly friendly fluffy little hen that comes in a variety of colours.

“Hens are great at hunting gardeners’ nemeses slugs and leatherjackets”
The things I treasure are worthless. Worthless in both financial and practical terms, unless you're in need of paperweights or door stops. For the things I treasure are stones.

Not any old stones, mind you – most have been with me for while, although it's a rare trip to a beach that doesn't find me trying to whittle down impulse picks in the car park before heading home. I try to limit myself to interesting shapes (eggs or triangles) and designs (colour blocks, white lines or circles). Stones with holes, 'hagstones', are a particular delight – if it's hanging on a string, it's not clutter!

If I was going to blame anyone, I suppose it would have to be Nain. My artistic Welsh grandmother once charged me, aged five or six, to bring back a large symmetrical stone that she could use as a model for a pottery vessel. Among a stretch of smooth dove grey beach stones I spent an age lifting, hefting, selecting, and so a habit formed.

I used to be furtive about my harvest but a trip to Kettle’s Yard, where spirals of gently graduated round pebbles adorn table tops, reassured me. My instinct was right, pebbles are art. In fact, they are so much a part of my décor that a boyfriend of only two months realised the best thing he could bring back from a US road trip was an angular red stone from deep within the Grand Canyon. (I still treasure the man and the gift.)

Should Marie Kondo ever drop by, I would happily share the joy my pebbles bring. They are tactile and weighty, infinitely varied, solid manifestations of memory – the round marble like pebbles from Etretat in Normandy gathered after a funeral, a lump of pock-marked lava from the Mojave desert where ‘heat’ was an entity. There are mini cairns not 10cm high where different areas of my life balance one on top of the other. Whitby, Tipperary, Lindesfarne and Gower.

But the treasuriest treasures, the ones I never leave behind, hold me rooted to home. A black droplet with a thin white slash, unearthed in my parents’ garden – as far from the sea as you can get – made into a ring. The other an unnaturally small, almost spherical pebble from Barry with a hole just large enough for a thread. It’s grown darker through wear. Not smart enough for work, it comes out at weekends and on holiday, There's no better way to stay grounded.

What means a lot to you? Tell us in 500 words; thesimplethings@icebergpress.co.uk.
THE SIMPLE THINGS
PLANT LIBRARY
FORGET-ME-NOTS
COTTAGE GARDEN PRETTIES
Dainty blooms that self-seed everywhere
FORGET-ME-NOTS

Once you’ve sown a packet of forget-me-not seeds, you never know where they may turn up next. Clusters of tiny sky-blue, white or pale pink flowers scatter their seeds freely and may suddenly appear in a pot or at the front of a border, completely uninvited. But then who wouldn’t welcome forget-me-nots into their garden? Pretty as can be, loved by bees, and with the most sentimental name in horticulture, these tiny clusters of loveliness make the most agreeable guests.

**Need to know**

They are biennials (sow this year for blooms next), grow well in most soils, in full sun or partial shade, and flower from April to June. Let them get a bit tatty towards the end of flowering, as this is when they set their seeds.

**How to grow**

Sow seeds from May to July. Find a suitable spot in your garden, preferably in semi-shade. Clear a patch of soil, scatter seed thinly into drills about 25cm apart, then sprinkle with soil to cover. Water them in, but don’t drench. When seedlings have grown a few leaves, thin them out. Forget-me-nots prefer moist, well drained soil (they are woodland plants originally) so keep lightly watered. They also grow well in pots and look especially fine frothing around pink tulips or lime-green euphorbias.

**Try these**

- *Myosotis alpestris ‘Rose’* Pale pink flowers: chilternseeds.co.uk
- *Victoria Mix* A blend of pink, white and blue flowers: kingsseeds.com
- *Myosotis sylvatica ‘Ultramarine’* Pale blue flowers. Winner of RHS Award for Garden Merit: crocus.co.uk

As if forget-me-nots couldn’t get any sweeter, their horticultural name is *Myosotis*, which derives from the Greek words ‘mus’ and ‘ous’ meaning ‘mouse ear’: the shape of the plant’s tiny petals.
Who doesn't like getting a card in the post? We've turned our favourite back covers into postcards – you can buy a pack of eight* online at ICEBERGPRESS.CO.UK/SHOP

* A pack contains two of each design, £5 inc UK p&p (while stocks last). For international postage details, see website.
That holiday feeling

SIMPLE FOOD SHARED OUTDOORS WITH FRIENDS IS A RECIPE FOR A GREAT BANK HOLIDAY

Recipes & photography: STEPHANIE BJELKSTAM/LIVING INSIDE

The food you enjoy when you're away can make a holiday – every dish seasoned with a sprinkle of relaxation and a pinch of something new. With a couple of long weekends on the horizon, now is a good time to recreate this laid-back vibe at home. Invite a few friends over, kick off with beer punch and fancy crisps, then light the barbecue for grilled fish and salad, and hope the weather stays fine. Welcome back to the season of eating outdoors! »
Simple food and good friends (plus a dog gazing wistfully into the middle distance) are all you need to create a relaxed atmosphere.
Beer punch bowl

WITH GINGER AND CITRUS, BEER PACKS A REFRESHING PUNCH

Serves 4–6
2 bottles of blond beer or pale ale
3 bottles of ginger kombucha (or another sweet and tangy drink, such as ginger beer)

TO SERVE
Lime slices
Lemon slices
Ice cubes
Lemon balm

In a punch bowl or glass jug, stir together the chilled drinks. Add lime and lemon slices, ice and sprigs of lemon balm. Sit back and sip.
Caviar crisps

CRISPS SO DECADENT THAT THE ‘DIPPING’ IS DONE FOR YOU

Serves 4–6
1 big bag of sturdy salted crisps (such as Tyrrells or Kettle Chips)
200ml crème fraîche
Juice of ½ lemon or a little more
100g caviar or herring roe
½ red onion, very finely chopped

Mix the crème fraîche and lemon juice. Choose the largest crisps and spoon a dollop of the mix onto each. Top with a small spoonful of caviar and red onion. Arrange crisps on a platter and serve immediately. »
Golden gazpacho with corn

A COLOURFUL AND FRESH CHILLED CHOWDER-STYLE SOUP

Serves 4–6

4 sweetcorn cobs, kernels removed from the cob
1kg yellow tomatoes, roughly chopped
2 yellow peppers, deseeded and roughly chopped
2 small white onions, chopped
75ml extra virgin olive oil
2–3 tbsp cider vinegar

FOR THE TOPPING

Fresh corn kernels
1 yellow pepper, finely chopped
Parmesan cheese, grated
Juice of 1 lemon
Extra virgin olive oil

1 Put the corn kernels in a large mixing bowl, reserving some for decoration. Add the remaining ingredients. Combine well and allow the mixture to sit for about 30 mins or longer.

2 Blitz in a food processor until smooth. Chill for 3–4 hours.

3 Divide the gazpacho into bowls and serve with the remaining corn kernels, the chopped pepper, grated parmesan and lemon juice. Drizzle with a little olive oil and grind over some black pepper.

Cook’s note: For a smokier-tasting gazpacho, grill the cobs before stripping away the corn and following the recipe above.
Grilled fish with herbs & lemon

Serves 4–6
4–6 whole perch*, gutted and cleaned
2–3 lemons, sliced
Fresh thyme
Fresh tarragon
Butter
Sea salt and white pepper, to season

Cook’s note: If perch doesn’t appeal, this recipe would work just as well using whole rainbow trout or other freshwater fish, although you may need to adjust the grilling time to suit the size of the fish.

1 Let the fish rest at room temperature for 20–30 mins.
2 Stuff the cavities with lemon slices, herbs and butter. Season inside and out with sea salt and white pepper.
3 Oil a barbecue fish basket or the grill of your barbecue and cook the fish for 8–10 mins on each side. Serve immediately.

Flowery potato salad

A GREAT USE OF THE NEW CROP THAT LOOKS PRETTY, TOO

Serves 4–6
15-18 cooked new potatoes (Jersey Royals come to mind)
250g baby leaf greens
150g sugar snaps, cut lengthways
Handful of pea shoots
Red clover flowers (or chive flowers)
100g whole roasted hazelnuts

FOR THE HERB DRESSING
10g fresh basil leaves
10g fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
Juice of 1 lemon & zest of ½
100ml extra virgin olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 tsp honey

1 For the dressing, pulse all the ingredients in a processor for 1 min.
2 Put all the salad ingredients in a serving bowl and drizzle with the herb dressing just before serving. »
Pound cake trifle pots

A TRIUMPH OF TANGY BERRIES, GRIDDLED CAKE AND YOGURT

Serves 4–6

2 large eggs
200ml caster sugar
100g butter, plus extra for brushing
100ml whole milk
1 tsp vanilla bean paste
300ml plain flour
1 1/2 tsp baking powder
Flaked almonds
Red berries such as strawberries, raspberries and redcurrants

FOR THE YOGURT
200g white chocolate
500ml Greek yogurt

1. To make the yogurt, melt the white chocolate in a bowl set over a pan of barely simmering water (make sure the bowl doesn’t touch the water), stirring until smooth. Set aside to cool a little, then stir in the yogurt, and chill for 1 hour.

2. To make the cake, preheat the oven to 175°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4. Grease and flour a 450g/1lb loaf tin or grease and line the tin with baking parchment.

3. Whisk the eggs and sugar until white and fluffy. Melt the butter in a pan over a medium heat, add the milk and vanilla paste, and set aside.

4. In a separate bowl, combine the flour and baking powder. Add the dried ingredients and cooled butter mixture to the egg mixture and stir until just combined.

5. Transfer to the prepared loaf tin, scatter with flaked almonds and bake for about 35 mins or until golden brown. Cool in the tin on a wire rack.

6. Slice the cooled cake thickly – one slice per person. Using a pastry brush, lightly brush melted butter onto both sides and grill for 2–3 mins on each side.

7. To assemble, cut the grilled cake into squares and layer in jars or bowls with the white chocolate yogurt and berries. Serve immediately.
The sun may be shining but is a light coat enough to keep a potential drop in temperature at bay? No. What you need is a sleeveless jumper. This can be pulled on over a blouse or long-sleeved T-shirt, displaying contrasting coloured sleeves or interesting cuffs, say, while it keeps your top half toasty. It is also a key element when achieving a ‘layered look’, as so often advocated by fashion magazines.

You may well know this garment as a ‘tank top’, especially if you are of a certain vintage. Worn extensively in the 1970s with bell-bottom trousers and shirts with extravagant sleeves and wide collars, it came patterned with stars, stripes and, weirdly, cartoon characters.

This silhouette of tight upper half, loose lower was also favoured by Northern soul fans, who appreciated the freedom of movement when gliding and swivelling across the dancefloor.

In a more rustic setting, Paul McCartney made the classic Fair Isle version famous during his Scottish crofting years, when he was all about beards and sheep farming. Many a natty, multi-coloured tank top was subsequently created, stitched up from the knitting patterns of the day, and worn by offspring and spouses, some more reluctantly than others.

The term ‘tank top’ was actually coined by the Americans, prompted by the arrival of one-piece bathing suits in the 1920s. Worn in swimming pools, or ‘tanks’, these ‘tank suits’ resembled today’s swimsuits in that they had straps (exposing arms for the first time), but with the addition of a skirt to cover the top half of the thighs. Unsurprisingly, the lack of sleeves gave the swimmer greater movement, leading to tank suits being worn at the Stockholm Olympics for the first time in 1912. Americans still, confusingly, refer to what we think of as ‘vests’ or ‘camisoles’ as ‘tank tops’, a direct reference to the original tank suits. (How we came to apply the term to a knitted sleeveless pullover, however, is a mystery.)

The option to reveal your arms when wearing a tank top is yet another point in its favour. As the weather warms up, the blouse layer can be discarded, exposing lovely arms and shoulders to the sun’s rays. You can put the blouse back on should the weather forecast prove unreliable.

“This silhouette was also favoured by Northern soul fans”

THE UPDATE

**THE CLASSIC**

**Lambswool Fair Isle tank top | £98**
Channels the spirit of a Scottish croft. Sheep and beard optional.
brora.co.uk

**Knitted jumper | £17.99**
A little bit waistcoat, a little bit cardi, 100% tank.
hm.com

**TWO GREAT TWISTS**

**Funnel neck tank top | £15**
Arms on show, neck nicely covered. Thoroughly modern.
marksandspencer.com
We’ve all heard tell of the good old days, when no one locked their doors and the neighbours would just pop by for tea and a chat. According to the Office of National Statistics, in 2017 5% of adults reported feeling lonely often or always. This makes us look back with longing more than fond nostalgia.

It doesn’t have to be this way – and, indeed, there’s lots of evidence that times may be changing as we reopen our homes to one another. Research by PWC found that the ‘sharing economy’ – where communities help and support each other with goods and services – is growing and growing.

**LODGINGS PLUS PLUS**
The internet often gets blamed for our increasing isolation, but entrepreneurs such as Judy Niner, founder of mondaytofriday.com, have found the opposite to be true. She started the website when, exhausted from commuting between Oxford and London, she wondered if someone might rent her their spare room just for weekdays.

For some, it’s a purely transactional experience, but for many, sharing their home has lots of happy side benefits. “It is a big thing to open your home,” Judy says. “But for someone who lives alone or who has stopped working, it’s nice to have that feeling of someone coming and going. And for the person staying, it’s somewhere comfortable, welcoming, and the same every week, without having to move in lock, stock and barrel.”

Shared Lives Plus takes this one step further. A network of local charities, it encourages older people to share homes with younger people who need inexpensive places to stay, in exchange for some support. They report a 42% rise in people sharing their homes this way between 2017 and 2018. “It allows people who need some low-level support to keep their independence and stay in their own homes for longer,” says homeshare sector development officer Alice Williams. “It enriches the lives of both the householder and the homesharer and is a great way for both to widen their horizons, learn new skills and meet new people.”

**HOSTING REFUGEES**
Similarly, in 2015, Sara Nathan, together with her brother Timothy and his wife Nina, realised they could use their homes to meet a different kind of need. Refugees at Home began life as a Facebook shout-out for people willing to host a refugee or asylum seeker for a couple of nights. Now they’re co-ordinating places to stay across the UK, as part of the No Accommodation Network, which supports hosting schemes to recruit volunteer households to open their homes to people in need. The network

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Words: JOHANNA DERRY
Alex Antonioni worked in Michelin-starred restaurants but decided to open up her own home to cook for friends. Now she regularly hosts a supper club through Eatwith, feeding up to 24 people in one sitting. “I’m most happy when I’m feeding strangers,” says Alex. “And they don’t stay strangers. By the end of the night they’re swapping numbers with one another. It doesn’t matter how good the food is, it’s the people who make it.”

Others turn their homes into mini concert venues with help from platforms like Sofar Sounds and Little Concerts. Tushar Joshi has hosted more than 40 concerts in his East London home. “It’s so fulfilling welcoming artists into my space and getting to know them. It’s also great to know you’re helping them play to an attentive crowd. That’s something that doesn’t really exist anywhere else.”

In Brighton, Artists Open House sees hundreds of houses become pop-up galleries for local artists and artisans during twice-yearly events. The concept has since spread all over the UK, with artists coming together to create trails from home to home to share their work with local people. “The fact the art is in a domestic setting is lovely,” says Kate Scott, a Brighton artist. “It’s more approachable, more democratic. Plus you can have a cup of tea and talk to people about what you do. It’s very special.”

Angela Evans is another open houser, along with her sisters. “My parents died quite close together and my five sisters and I discussed opening the house to the community to give it another story, not just a sad one,” she explains. “It was great, like a housewarming. It’s incredibly joyful to do.”

So, perhaps instead of thinking of our homes as castles, it’s time to let down the drawbridge and explore how we could creatively share our space. Who knows, we might learn something new, eat something delicious, or even make new friends.
THINGS TO WANT AND WISH FOR

Spring is the time to relish new things. Fill your boots. Chosen by LOUISE GORROD

Sketch Pad dress | £69.95
At its best layered with a simple long-sleeved tee. seasaltcornwall.co.uk

Soft Dot cushion by HAY | £69
A pop of sunshine from our Shop of the Month (see page 106). hoosgglasgow.co.uk

Puck pot | from £9.99
Plant with something jungly and brighten a bare corner. dobbies.com

100 Soft Dot cushion by HAY | £69
A pop of sunshine from our Shop of the Month (see page 106). hoosgglasgow.co.uk

Jug by Kate Garwood | £80
Stoneware, elegantly handled. ceramicsbykategarwood.co.uk

Arlo ceramic storage jars | £6–£12
Bringing pattern to kitchen counters. next.co.uk

Bay & Rosemary diffuser | £27
Herbily fresh home fragrance. joinstorelondon.co.uk
Keats pendant | £94; Suffolk
glazed dresser | £2,930; Suffolk
rectangular dining table | £845;
Wardley chairs | £270 each
A new piece of furniture, in white
or pastel shades, is all it takes to
brighten a kitchen or dining room.
neptune.com
Meghan Petite sofa in Harriet Smoke | £1,199
This sofa for two has touches of Art Deco glamour with its fluted back and brass-capped legs. johnlewis.com

Framed Amsterdam City print | from £34.90
An alternative Dutch master... wijck.com

Pre-washed linen napkins | £26 for four
100% linen, 100% zingy. alsohome.com

Oiva/Eläkköön Elämä platter by Marimekko
A serving dish with plenty of flourish. ariashop.co.uk

Elskling suede flat mules | £139
Blue suede shoes, Scandinavian style. aandreassen.com

Meghan Petite sofa in Harriet Smoke | £1,199
This sofa for two has touches of Art Deco glamour with its fluted back and brass-capped legs. johnlewis.com
There’s a secret world underneath our feet, of hidden rivers, caves, mining tunnels, tree roots, catacombs and nuclear waste sites. It’s a dark world, marked by the geological shadows of the past and the ecological uncertainties of the future, lyrically described by the brilliant Robert Macfarlane. He heads into Epping Forest, tapping into the “wood wide web”, abseils into a hole made by meltwater in a Greenland glacier, and squirms in a hideously claustrophobic cave system, as he poses the haunting question: “Are we being good ancestors to the future Earth?”

(Hamish Hamilton)
We’ve added a fifth sew-on badge to celebrate everyday actions that enrich our lives. All the profits from our ‘Share with others’ patch will go to The Trussell Trust, which works to end hunger and poverty in the UK. You can buy any combination* from our online shop at

ICEBERGPRESS.CO.UK/SHOP

£3 for one up to £12 for all five, inc UK p&p (subject to availability). For international postage details, see website.
Rosie Birkett’s *The Joyful Home Cook* is a mouthwatering celebration of seasonal food.

Relishing recipes that use seasonal ingredients, Rosie Birkett puts emphasis on the kind of stuff that can be satisfyingly popped into all kinds of dishes. There’s a recipe for an easy, rustic sourdough starter that ends up with a starring role in pizza and as the toasted base for a wonderful mushroom breakfast. Each of the 140 dishes, like the Waste Not, Want Not Allotment Green Pasties – made from the veg lurking at the back of the fridge, plus window-box herbs – are designed to boost taste and reduce waste. (*HarperCollins*)
The Victorians knew a thing or two about turning edible plants into all kinds of everything. Take the scraggly, but “heavenly-scented” clove pink, which was transformed into syrups, added to wine, decorated cakes and flavoured soups. Inspired by this, TST contributor Cinead McTernan began to grow blooms, plants and produce that could be made into tisanes, booze and beauty products. Small spaces are no barrier – you can grow currants in containers, scented herbs on the windowsill and shade loving shrubs in pots. Cinead provides a lovely list of plants to cultivate, explains how to prepare your plot or pot, and harvest the fruits of your labour. (Kyle Books)
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Thank you for the music: Jukebox hero
Chris and one of his carefully crafted machines

As technology advances apace, spare a thought for the once-loved objects that are left behind. We meet the people passionate about encouraging us to look again and be inspired by the beauty and inventiveness of life pre-digital. This month: JUKEBOXES

Photography: JONATHAN CHERRY Words: JULIAN OWEN
An anonymous hand puts a quarter in the jukebox. Click, whir, needle drop. The Righteous Brothers’ ‘You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feelin’ prompts Tom Cruise to rise from the bar, sling his bomber jacket over his shoulder, and make for the sound source. Whereupon Kelly McGillis quietly sidles in and Top Gun reaches its denouement. Had the scene played out with McGillis tinnily blaring “You never close your eyes anymore...” from her phone, it might just have lacked a certain something.

What is it about jukeboxes? “It’s an event,” says Chris Black. “The lights, the theatre of seeing a record being lifted, put on the turntable, the needle coming across; it frames the music.” As MD of jukebox purveyors Sound Leisure, he knows a thing or two about such matters. “It’s like owning an Aga: not essential but pretty cool. When you do get one, and friends come round, they tend to bypass you and go straight to the jukebox. Customers say that, even if they’re not playing them, they’re always switched on because of the mood it puts into the house. Everybody smiles when they see one.”

Chris has been around them all his life. Father, Alan, co-founded the business in Yorkshire in 1978. “From four years old I’d be dragged round as he serviced machines in pubs and clubs, and I’d stay in the car with my crisps. When I was 16 I came to work just for the summer holiday and, 33 years later, I’m still here.”

Pubs were the predominant customers back then, with side orders from Harrods. The rise of the CD meant the company made its last jukebox in 1991. Or so everyone thought. In 2016, as a new generation fell in love with watching music going round and round, Sound Leisure launched its Vinyl Rocket jukebox. Despite concessions to modernity – remote control, Bluetooth compatibility – the essentials are unchanged. “When we redesigned the machines,” says Chris, “they initially sounded just like a hi-fi system, because we had new engineers in, younger lads doing it for the first time. We said ‘We don’t want that, we need bass, warmth – it’s not hi-fi, it’s a jukebox’. It took eight months to tune the cabinet, speakers, amplifier, but now it just sounds fantastic.”

Another part of jukeboxes’ appeal, he says, is that “a lot of people are sick of throwaway technology. This is something you’ll pass down through your family.” Just as the company and its traditional craft skills have been handed down, with experienced employees wont to stay for years and Sound Leisure actively trying to promote manufacturing to the younger generation. “We work closely with the local schools and technical college. We’ve got our own metalwork division, our own cabinet makers – don’t call them joiners, or you’ll get a chisel in your neck – and we do apprenticeships.”

The week we talk, a revolution is taking place: 33 revolutions per minute, to be precise, as the company’s first album-playing machines leave the Yorkshire factory. Previous orders have come from everywhere from Japan to Dubai, Jägermeister to Elvis Presley’s estate; 75% of output is exported.

The private customer base, meanwhile, is aged 18 to 80. Everyone from people who’d saved for years to those new to jukebox delight. “We had a pop-up shop in an arcade in Leeds last year,” says Chris. “You’d see people literally stop in their tracks – you could lipread ‘Wow!’ As people left, they’d shake your hand and say ‘That’s been fantastic!’ When people come out of a shoe or handbag shop, they don’t do that. As we say, music never looked so good.”

soundleisure.com/classic-jukeboxes

“It’s an event. The lights, the theatre... It’s like owning an Aga: not essential but pretty cool.”
Let there be light. Preferably flooding in through floaty voiles as you lie in bed on a spring morning. Plain white cotton and polyester duvet and pillowcase set, £15-£23, sainsburys.co.uk
as summer approaches, rooms once dark and curtained are filled again with light. No more shutting out the world and switching on table lamps; now is the time to let natural light pour in. As cats know, stretching out in a patch of warm sunlight is one of life’s most rewarding pleasures. And now is the time to do it.

As most of us spend close to 90% of our time indoors, it’s important to maximise light in our homes and work places. (Apparently, most home buyers put ‘light rooms’ top of their list of requirements when looking at property.) The most effective way to do this is to introduce more or bigger windows. French windows or bi-folding doors that open up an entire wall can transform dark rooms at the back of the house. Light tubes can ‘pipe’ daylight into dark corners, and windows in roofs can transform dingy attic spaces into habitable rooms. At the other end of the scale, simply digging out the squeegee and washing the windows can boost light levels considerably, especially if you have neglected cleaning them over the winter months.

How you dress your windows is also key. Unless you run a stately home or have delusions of grandeur, it’s best to avoid light-absorbing swagged curtains, valances and tie-backs layered with grubby nets. Blinds that snap tidily out of sight revealing the entire window are the smartest way to let the most light in. Wooden shutters offer privacy while throwing attractive striped shadows across the floor, and cobweb-light voile offers a breezy, modern alternative to net curtains.

Prune back any light-obstructing greenery outside, introduce a mirror or two to bounce the sun’s rays around, and you’re all set to embrace the expansive feelgood vibe that a light-filled house will bring.

"Simply washing the windows can boost light significantly"

Vinegar versus soap and water
While white vinegar has been much touted as a good cleaner, it is best used for mould removal or as a disinfectant, as it isn’t that great at shifting dirt. Better to fill a bucket with water and a generous splash of eco washing-up liquid, slop it on with an old cloth or sponge, then remove the water with a squeegee. OXO Good Grips stainless steel squeegee, £11.99, lakeland.co.uk

Microfibre cloth versus newspaper
Scrunched-up balls of newspaper are the traditional way of buffing glass and a good way of removing streaks. Reusable microfibre cloths are absorbent and washable so can be used for swishing the water on to remove dirt and grease, as well as polishing it at the end. They are often sold in packs of two for this purpose. Ecloth, £4.50, waitrose.com. Clean & Gleam Glass Window Cleaning and Polishing Cloth, £5.99 for two, lakeland.co.uk.

Window vacuum versus squeegee
Buying a handheld window vacuum may seem extravagant (they start at around £40), but it will repay itself in the joy it will bring. It works like a squeegee in that you slop water on the windows, then use it to scoop it off, but excess water is hoovered up so it doesn’t pool on the floor/feet. Karcher window vac, from £39.99. johnlewis.com
THREE TO MAKE, BUY OR CUSTOMISE

The new generation of net curtains have shaken off their fusty image and nets can now be appreciated for what they are: pretty ways to filter the light and ensure privacy.

1. Make
Dig around in charity shops, at jumble sales or in the back of your granny’s cupboards for old lace tablecloths or pieces of antique lace. These can be cleverly repurposed as net curtains, especially on smaller windows in a kitchen or in a downstairs loo, where privacy is something of a must. Stitch several together for greater coverage. Loop on to a curtain pole with ribbons attached at regular intervals along the top edge of the fabric.

2. Buy
Voile is the modern version of the heavier, dust-gathering net curtains. The word is taken from the French for veil and, like a veil, its gauzy, semi-transparent nature lets light in while protecting your privacy. Made from sheer cotton or man-made fibre, it also blows around attractively in a breeze. Make your own or buy ready-made versions like the Basic Plain Slot Top Voile Panel, £4-£8, johnlewis.com, above, which can be slid on to a curtain pole.

3. Customise
Window film is a neat alternative to curtains and comes in a variety of patterns and designs to suit your taste and interior. Cut to your specifications, it is easy to install and, once in place, will suffuse the window with soft haziness, while allowing 90% of light in. Purlfrost.com, above, has frosted and decorative window film, from £17 per sq metre, which allows 90% of light in. Also try windowfilm.co.uk, which sells a range of designs by Mini Moderns.

HOME QUANDARIES

The bathroom window in our flat is lovely, in that it lets in plenty of light, but visitors (particularly my mother-in-law) have complained that they feel ‘on view’ when they use it. It has never bothered me, but I feel I should respect others’ requests for privacy. Is there an unobtrusive and elegant way to protect my mother-in-law’s modesty?

Answer in brief: a bottom-up blind will shield and illuminate.
A bathroom with a window is indeed a thing to treasure. So many urban flat conversions sacrifice a window in the name of space management. Fortunately, there is a compromise that will enable you to allow light in and respect your guests’ privacy. Bottom-up blinds, as their name suggests, roll up from the bottom, allowing you to shield occupants from peeping neighbours while allowing daylight to flood in at a safe height above. A neat way to dress a bathroom window and to address your mother-in-law’s concerns.
Over 37 years of British design and engineering have gone into creating the UK’s most comprehensive range of high quality woodburning, solid-fuel, gas and electric stoves and fireplaces.
MY PLOT

Spices for life

GETTING A HALF-ALLOTMENT PLOT GAVE REKHA MISTRY THE CHANCE TO GROW FOOD FOR HER FAMILY, INCLUDING THE SEASONING SHE ADDS TO HER COOKING

Words & photography: REKHA MISTRY

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Rekha Mistry’s interest in food has always been about where it comes from. A passion for growing and cooking her own produce led her to share her findings and seasonal recipes on her website: rekhagardenkitchen.com, and on Facebook and Instagram @rekha.garden.kitchen.

My inspiration

My love of gardening started by helping my mother in her back garden in Zambia, where I was born and brought up, before I moved to UK in my 20s. It was mainly veg beds, with a few mango trees and a beautiful mulberry bush. She grew Indian vegetables she was familiar with, like bitter gourd and pigeon peas, but also native African crops such as cassava and maize. She taught us to be adventurous in the kitchen, and although I cook British dishes, I like to give them a twist. I’ll sprinkle turmeric, garlic and cumin powder on fish in a pie to add warm, smoked flavours, and add home-made celery salt to the mash. Above all, my mother allowed us to have fun in the kitchen, under her watchful eye! And now, as a mother myself, I enjoy making wholesome dishes for my family.

The story so far

I got my half-allotment in the summer of 2011, pretty much within a month of applying for one.

I jumped at the chance to have a plot close to my home in Harrow, north west London. The plot had been unused and there was a fair amount of work needed to clear it, but I wasn’t fazed by that. And I knew it would be worth it in the end: everyday cooking has always been a pleasure for me, and now I had the chance to grow my own food and then cook it. It was these exciting thoughts that kept me going while clearing the plot. I knew it was a dream that only a few people actually achieve and I wanted to be one of them. Eight years later, the dream of cooking and eating my own seasonal produce has finally come true. »
What I grow

I love to cook seasonally, so I grow beans, peas, carrots, leeks, potatoes, cabbages and courgettes, but I also challenged myself to grow spices, particularly that essential Indian ingredient, turmeric. I was amazed that this root grew into a beautiful plant and even gave me a small crop to harvest. I also grow many chilli varieties, and make my own chilli flakes and powder, which I use in my curry powder mixes. Another essential is coriander seeds. It’s widely used fresh, but I also save the seeds, not only for sowing again, but to add to my curry powders.

Growing in open soil, not pots, has given me the most pleasure. At first I only managed small crops, but as time’s gone on, I’ve worked the land and brought it up to a standard to grow more crops. The soil here is clay, which has its pros and cons but I’ve learnt to understand nature and after eight years produce straight(ish) parsnips.

My greatest success

Growing my own food is fun, despite pests, which can sometimes make things more challenging, but growing fruit and vegetables year after year from my own saved seeds has been my biggest success. I never thought I would manage this, but by reading helpful gardening books and sharing notes with fellow gardeners and plot holders, I’ve been able to keep on doing it. I’m also proud that I can cook for my family. When my husband and I started our family, I realised that if I cooked even more interesting dishes, our three children (now young adults) wouldn’t grow bored with their ‘greens’. They also had fun in the garden and learned where their food came from.

Simple pleasures

Growing in open soil, not pots, has given me the most pleasure. At first I only managed small crops, but as time’s gone on, I’ve worked the land and brought it up to a standard to grow more crops. The soil here is clay, which has its pros and cons but I’ve learnt to understand nature and after eight years produce straight(ish) parsnips.
What I've learnt

The most important thing for me is to be patient and actually listen to the plants. The plants really do speak to me. I know I'm not alone in this: many gardeners say they talk to their plants, and I know why. We may wish to grow things a certain way, but Mother Nature is always right and corrects us. I'm always learning from her.

My advice...

Start small. Just a few small containers and pots are all you need to test the 'grow your own' waters, before tackling a big patch. I'd say if you've never grown before then grow just three things: a vegetable, a herb and a flower. And most importantly grow what you like to eat! This is how you know what that vegetable or herb looks like when it's ready to harvest. Trust me, after that you'll be growing even more adventurous things.

Curry powder

I grow coriander, and the harvested seeds go into this curry powder. I also add cayenne chillies, which I grow on the plot, then dry. Curry powder is not so much a flavour but a combination of at least seven warming spices. I like to make it into a paste with salt, a pinch of dried coriander leaves and olive oil and spread on both sides of sliced halloumi, then lightly fry and serve with salad.

Makes 1 Jar

3 tbsp coriander seeds
1 tbsp cumin seeds
1 tbsp black peppercorns
1 tbsp turmeric powder
1 tbsp white mustard seeds
5 cloves
Small stick of cinnamon
½ tsp cardamom seeds
1 tsp chilli flakes
(from homegrown chillies, if possible)

1. Heat a dry, heavy-bottomed pan on the hob. Add all the ingredients except the chilli flakes, tossing all the time to stop the ingredients from sticking.
2. When you hear a few ingredients starting to pop, turn off the heat.
3. Add the chilli flakes and keep stirring until the pan feels cool to touch.
4. Tip the spices into a coffee grinder and pulse to a fine powder.
5. Empty into a bowl and set aside for about 15–20 mins to cool.
6. Transfer the spice mix to an airtight jar and store in a cool, dark cupboard. Use as and when required.
Meat-free burgers

Makes 6 small patties or 4 large

125g couscous soaked in 250ml boiling vegetable stock
1 small onion, diced
3 garlic cloves, crushed
¼ tsp chilli flakes
1 medium raw beetroot, peeled and grated
1 parsnip, peeled and grated
1 small carrot, peeled and grated
1 tsp cumin
½ tsp turmeric
1 egg yolk
Bunch of fresh parsley, leaves picked
Zest of 1 small orange
Sesame seeds (optional)
Vegetable oil, for frying

1 While the couscous is soaking, sauté the diced onion in a little oil. Do not brown. Add the crushed garlic and chilli flakes, and mix well. Add the grated root vegetables with the cumin and turmeric powder. Cook over a medium heat for 5-8 mins, until any excess liquid from the root veg has evaporated. Remove from heat and set aside to cool.

2 Tip the couscous into the bowl of a food processor and pulse a couple of times. It will become gloopy – but don’t be alarmed. Tip into a large mixing bowl, add the egg yolk, the cooled root veg mix, chopped parsley and orange zest, and season with salt and pepper. Mix together gently with your hands.

3 Shape into patties and place on a tray lined with greaseproof paper and dusted with flour. Sprinkle with sesame seeds, if using. Place the tray in the fridge to chill (24 hours at most). The patties can be frozen too, for later use.

4 Preheat oven to 200C/Fan 180C/Gas 6. Heat a nonstick pan on the hob, add a little oil and gently fry the patties for 3-4 mins on each side (or until a crust forms). Transfer to the oven and cook for a further 10 mins.

5 Allow the patties to cool a little before sandwiching in rolls with your favourite garnishes. Serve with chips.
THE OPPOSITE OF CERTAINTY ISN'T UNCERTAINTY. IT'S OPENNESS AND CURiosity...
Tony Schwartz, The Energy Project

Allow yourself time to get absorbed in something you really love over the long weekend, be it a long bike ride or a sewing project, and you'll boost your mood and productivity for the week ahead.

HEAR BIRDS
International Dawn Chorus Day has us thinking... Can you imagine spring mornings without birdsong? To highlight the decline in our wild songbirds, the RSPB has released ‘Let Nature Sing’, a meditative single of pure birdsong to download. rspb.org.uk

NURSERY SCHOOL
It's half term at the end of this month and garden centres around the UK are holding special events and offers as part of National Children's Gardening Week. We find giving them their own patch or pots is a good motivator to help (OK, and maybe a promise of ice-cream). childrensgardeningweek.co.uk

"The opposite of certainty isn't uncertainty. It's openness and curiosity..."

DARK MATTERS
Fancy touring a museum by candlelight, learning about anaesthetic killers or doing a late-night city culture crawl? Check out what's happening near you, 15–18 May, museumsatnight.org.uk

BUY A CARD
We love Just A Card, a scheme encouraging people to buy from independent shops and galleries. Check out justacard.org and @justacard1 (Twitter and Instagram).
Where we stayed

Say a treehouse and I’m picturing the makeshift kind of place I played in as a kid. Tinkers Treehouse was an infinitely more impressive structure. I still got the sense of adventure and freedom that comes with sleeping amid the trees, but with all the luxury of a boutique apartment stay: a well equipped kitchen, a kingsize bed and rainfall shower that childhood me (and present me, to be quite honest) can only dream of. It’s one of two treehouses on the farm, set in five acres of woodland, and feels deliciously tucked away from the world. The kind of place where it’s a pleasure to spend a wet evening, with the sound of rain on the roof and the wood-burning stove keeping things cosy.

A weekend away

FOR EASY ESCAPISM, HEAD UP TO THE TREES AND THE SORT OF BREAK THAT CAN BRING A WHOLE NEW POINT OF VIEW

Words: FRANCES AMBLER

It had only taken a bit over an hour to get there but, by the time I arrived at Tinkers Treehouse, it felt like I'd left London far behind. On went the wellies, out came the torch and my mood felt instantly lighter. Proving that you don't need to undertake a mammoth journey to feel like you're far away from it all, the treehouse is in farmland near Ticehurst village in the East Sussex-Kent borders: proper countryside but close enough to London and Brighton to make it a sweet spot for city dwellers (like me) to be able to enjoy a full weekend there without having precious time taken up travelling. Plus, there's something instantly transformative about getting to stay up among the trees. Compared to my daily life, looking out and being able to survey the beautiful surrounding landscape (High Weald is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, after all) gave me a much-needed, refreshing perspective.
What we ate
We came laden with food to make the most of a kitchen that far outclasses the one in my flat and – had the weather permitted – the treehouse’s firepit. A welcome pack took care of the basics, with an emphasis on local goods, from the juice to the coffee roasters and the delicious cookies that may have disappeared almost immediately despite our plentiful supplies. There’s also the option to order in hampers from a local farm shop. On Sunday, we made the mere 15-minute walk to The Bell Inn in Ticehurst, the South-East’s pub of the year, for pub classics with an unexpected Latin American twist (think salmon ceviche and steak with chimichurri), before retiring to the bar area with the papers, enjoying eavesdropping on the locals dissecting the news over leisurely pints.

The best thing
There was a magical moment on Saturday when we opened our door to see a young deer dart through the meadow. It really felt like you were surrounded by nature the moment you stepped outside (with the home comforts that you don’t get from camping, and a bus stop a five-minute walk away). In terms of mornings, it’s hard to beat sitting out on the veranda, freshly made (locally roasted) coffee in hand, looking out over the landscape, or the pleasure of rounding off your day with a beer by the firepit, secure in the knowledge that a comfy bed is only metres away.

What we did
We devoted Saturday to exploring Bedgebury Pinetum – home to the biggest collection of conifers in the world, no less – enjoying the peace as we wandered among the huge redwoods and other exotic varieties. Picking up the pace, we hired bikes and tried out the forest’s trails. It was my first time on a bike after almost ten years, but the family trail through the woodlands was spot on for my skill level; the more cycling proficient could have tried the mountain bike trail. Pink-cheeked, we returned to the treehouse for more wholesome fun – Scrabble, and working our way through the stack of board games provided.

We also liked
That there was so much choice about how we could spend our time. We could have gone on long walks or even braved the bikes again, at nearby Bewl Water Reservoir. The area is a history lover’s dream with castles (try Bodium Castle) and stately homes (Winston Churchill’s Chartwell). And in warmer weather, you could get out to the sea at Hastings or Rye. Tinkers Treehouse’s neighbour, The Oakey Koakey, sleeps four and would make a great base for a family holiday.

Tinkers Treehouse sleeps two and starts at £150 per night; canopyandstars.co.uk.
May
Taking time to live well
Hidden islands • Elderflower custard toasts • Homemade spices
Campervan adventures • Forget-me-nots & dandelion clocks
Clean windows for a sunny day • A treehouse for the weekend

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GETTING IN TOUCH

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MAKE A...

BOW & ARROW

Making this basic version of Robin Hood’s fave adds another string to your crafting bow

1. Find about one metre of knot-free wood: try ash, elm, hazel or yew.
2. With your wood laid on the floor, taper both ends with a penknife.
3. Carve two notches about 2cm from each end.
4. Cut some string (nylon rope, hemp cord or twine) ¾ the length of the bow, and attach, taut, at the notches.
5. Shape and sand dry sticks to make arrows as straight as possible (or use a length of dowel). Sharpen ends to points — or attach sharpened, flat pieces of flint, rock or glass. Make notches in the points they will be placed on the string.
6. Attach feathers or triangles of thick paper to other ends to ‘fletch’ arrows and help them fly.
7. To shoot, place an arrow into the string. Your index finger should be above the arrow, your middle and fourth finger below. Draw back with your other hand, release and let fly!
My clothing’s fine as velvet rare
Though under earth my dwellings are
And when above it I appear
My enemies put me oft in fear
The gard’ner does at me repine
I spoil his works as he does mine.

TASMANIAN DEVILS GIVE BIRTH TO LITTERS OF UP TO 50 JOEYS, WHO FIGHT IN THEIR MOTHER’S POUCH UNTIL ONLY A FEW LIVING ONES EMERGE.

You cut that out or I’m having this thing around!

TASTY TREND

SOCCATTA
You may know the ‘socca’ – a chickpea-flour pancake associated with Nice (equivalent to an Italian farinata). Gwyneth Paltrow’s latest book The Clean Plate includes three recipes for ‘soccata’, AKA socca frittata. It doesn’t contain eggs, so is vegan as well as gluten free.

TRY IT: surely it’s Gwynnie’s courgette and lemon soccata, as included in The Clean Plate?

BUY IT: enjoy chickpea frittata at Vinnie’s Eatery in Cheltenham.

SEE IT: on our ‘Tasty Trends’ Pinterest board.

UNTRANSLATABLE WORDS

(SPANISH) eating for the enjoyment of the taste (or borderline gluttony)

SAD BABY ANIMAL FACTS

Tasmanian devils have litters of up to 50 joeys, who fight in their mother’s pouch. Only a few living ones emerge. Once born, joeys crawl into the female’s pouch and find there are just four nipples. Only the most ferocious four babies survive.

Taken from Sad Animal Facts: Baby Talk by Brooke Barker (Boxtree).
STORIES BEHIND SUPERSTITIONS
Why ‘Marry in May and Rue the Day’? Our ancestors had many reasons to wed another month

As the Roman poet Ovid wrote: “It is bad luck to marry in May”. May marked the Roman festival of Lemuria, when spirits were said to haunt weddings. So surely you’d go for June, named after Juno, Goddess of marriage.

Christians, meanwhile, dedicated the month to the Virgin Ma(r)y, so it wasn’t the month you should kiss – or do anything else to – your bride. At one time, the church banned marriages in a set period beginning soon after Easter, therefore often ruling out May dates.

Another theory is that not marrying in May was rising above animal instincts. The Greeks said that May was “a month for donkeys to get married”. Some superstitions were more specific about how you would “rue the day”: that your first born would be an idiot, or it would make for a wife who wasn’t thrifty. To this we simply say: “Marry in May, and enjoy your day” (and all the years that follow).

TIPPLE OF THE MONTH

The joys of the German spring - in quaffable form

MAIBOWLE

Germany’s traditional drink for Maifest (their May Day), is a punch of wine and champagne, with sweet woodruff, which is flowering about now. Prep in advance, or do as a busy German might and buy waldmeister syrup instead.

SERVING NOTES: let your woodruff wilt to release its fragrance. Submerge leaves (not stems!) into a jug of dry white wine. Take out after a couple of hours and top up with more wine and champagne. Add lemon juice, strawberries and mint.

HOUSEHOLD HINTS

Want to charge your phone swiftly? Switching it to airplane mode helps it charge that little bit quicker.

DOGS IN BLANKETS

The secret thoughts of readers’ pets:
Skye, 21 months, cocker spaniel

Provisions? Check. Protective gear? Check. Can’t chat, I’m afraid; I’m finishing off some preparations. I’m hoping to take part in the first unmanned mission to... well, I haven’t decided yet. I’m taking Bertie next door though – just so I get to say “the beagle has landed”, really. And the countdown has begun... 3, 2, 1, we’re off! One small step for dog, one giant leap for dogged enthusiasm.

Tweet us a pic of your #dogsinblankets or #catsonmats @simplethingsmag
GARDEN HACKS

NETTLE PLANT FERTILISER
No sting in this tale, if you use the plant to make a nitrogen-rich liquid feed

1. Don suitable clothing and gloves to collect your nettles. Look out for younger, more nutrient-filled plants. Cut at the base.
2. Crush or tear up the leaves and the stems (with your gloves on!), or chop up with clippers, putting the bits into a bucket.
3. Press down the plant material using bricks and/or stones.
4. Add water until bucket is about three-quarters full (collected rainwater works better than tap water), then cover.
5. Store away from humans, if possible – it’s a pongy process.
6. Stir every few days for a couple of weeks until it stops bubbling.
7. Sieve into another bucket to remove any plant material.
8. Dilute with water at a ratio of 1:10, nettle water to water, then apply directly to your plants. Be warned: it’s too potent for your indoor plants or the likes of roses.
9. Keep topping up with more nettles and water. When done, you can put any left on your compost.

ECO FIXES

GLASS JARS
How many jars of chutney, relish, honey or jam do you buy? We’re drizzling and slathering 20.3 million kg of honey every year, which means we’re buying lots of packaging, too.
Fortunately, most such items come in glass jars, which are simple to rinse and recycle. Yet despite glass being one of the best materials to recycle, we only recycle 50% of it.
Whatever you do, don’t chuck it in the bin: glass takes 1 million years to decompose in the environment. But there are many ways to reuse glass jars. We all know how handy they can be for storing bits and bobs – you could try screwing them by the lids to the undersides of shelves in the kitchen or sewing room.
There’s potential for remaking in other ways too, from turning one into a pin cushion, or a twine dispenser. Search ‘empty jars’ on experthometips.com for inspiration. Another idea is a word jar – filling it with words as a prompt for creativity (see Issue 68). If you have so many jars you can’t use them, it’s easy to find someone who will love them on Freecycle.

Rachelle Strauss helps people to reduce waste, save money and preserve resources with talks, workshops and other resources; zerowasteweek.co.uk.

INDIE

31

WITH 31 DAYS IN MAY, note the French use of the number. Rather than getting dressed to the nines, they use ‘trente et un’ for someone who’s well dressed – likely because getting dressed up that one day each month makes it extra special. The 31% of women in Glasgow who say donning a new outfit makes them feel better will surely agree.
Forget your telescope – all you need is this handy guide to spot some scientific superstars

**Michael Faraday**
Invented the Bunsen burner, discovered elements and electromagnetism and transformed chlorine gas into liquid.

**Marie Curie**
During WWI, double Nobel winner Curie brought mobile X-ray ambulances to the Front, knowing they’d be needed.

**Albert Einstein**
One of the world’s most recognisable scientists, his equation E=mc² is almost as famous as he is – relatively speaking.

**Rosalind Franklin**
Franklin’s X-rays were used by others to confirm their theories about DNA’s shape – and to win the Nobel Prize without her.

**Stephen Hawking**
In brief: one of the world’s most well known scientists… and guest star on Star Trek and The Simpsons.

**Ada Lovelace**
Encouraged to study science to differ from her poet dad, Lord Byron, she sketched out early computer programs.

**Vera Rubin**
It took years for this astrophysicist trailblazer’s work to be taken seriously. A very dark matter indeed.

**Isaac Newton**
Would Restoration scientist Newton be so famous without the apple? If we ever met him, we’d consider that with great gravity.

**Tim Berners-Lee**
This computer scientist has cast his net over us all, thanks to the invention of the World Wide Web 30 years ago.

Taken from 40 Inspiring Icons: Super Scientists illustrated by Tino (Quarto Kids)
WHERE WAS THAT?
All the lovely things in this issue – organised with page numbers to help you find them

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* = On the cover
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1. Late or incomplete entries will be disqualified. 2. Proof of posting (if relevant) shall not be deemed proof of delivery. 3. Entries must be submitted by an individual (not via any agency or similar) and, unless otherwise stated, are limited to one per household. 4. Iceberg Press reserves the right in its sole discretion to substitute any prize with cash or a prize of comparable value. 5. Unless otherwise stated, the Competition is open to all GB residents of 18 years and over, except employees of Iceberg Press and any party involved in the competition or their households. 6. Winners will be selected at random from all correct entries received by the closing date. If for any reason there are more winners than prizes, a simple draw will take place. 7. By entering a Competition you give permission to use your name, likeness and personal information in connection with the Competition and for promotional purposes. All entries will become the property of the company upon receipt and will not be returned. You warrant that the Competition entry is entirely your own work and not copied or adapted from any other source. If you are a winner, you may have to provide additional information. 8. Details of winners will be available on request within three months of the closing date. If you are a winner, your receipt of any prize is conditional upon you complying with (among other things) the Competition Rules. You acknowledge and agree that neither Iceberg Press nor any associated third parties shall have any liability to you in connection with your use or possession of your prize.

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“Everything has its season,” says Grandpots. “Everything has its time.”

He has his glasses up over his forehead and sad eyes so I know that he’s talking about something Important. Most of the time he smiles. The rest of the time he picks his ears and appears baffled. I nod wisely and look at the seed packets in his hands, some packets new with pictures bright, others dog-eared and faded.

Seeds and stalks and tubers and seedlings go into the soil and out come wormy twisty earthy bird-pecked slug-gnawed fruits and vegetables.

Brought home by us in a carrier bag. Frowned at by Mum.

Everything we grow has a proper name, a variety, F1 Brigitte, Golden Globe, Maestro. But when Grandpots collects seeds he likes to rename them after his allotment friends, Greenhouse Dave’s Offerings, Barbara’s Relish.

Barbara’s Relish are the seeds that will turn into the tomatoes that the plump lady two plots down will squash into jam jars and re-label. We have cupboards full of the stuff because Barbara is sweet on Grandpots.

The young couple in the next plot only grow kale and heritage varieties. Their seeds are twelve times more expensive and they do not believe in pesticides.

Grandpots does believe in pesticides, as did Percy Thrower, who is the God of Grandpots. Percy Thrower would fling beneficial chemical around with his pipe on.

There’s a picture of him in the book on the shelf. Eyes narrowed, smoke rising, hand on the pump.

Grandpots puts the seed packets away and has a cough. Then it’s time for a cup of tea and a biscuit. He has a digestive and I have a pink wafer. It’s always the same. These biscuits live side by side in the tin.

After the tea we set about it. In May things grow like the clappers and the Allotment Police is never far away.

The Allotment Police is a woman called Mrs Marchmont who has a clipboard and a shivery dog in a coat.

I go at things with shears and Grandpots potters, then he sits down on a camping chair. I glance over at him from time to time. His eyes watering, a hankie balled in his fist. I bring him things to look at, a dug-up shoe sole, a ladybird and a bean from last year.

Barbara Relish comes and sits by him. We all have a cup of tea and turn our faces up to the sun. Barbara looks away when Grandpots coughs. When it’s time for us to go she pats his knee.

After the funeral there is a party called a wake. We have triangle sandwiches and biscuits. I put the digestives back in the tin and the pink ones, because my heart hurts to see them. We have Barbara’s relish, and Kale and Heritage bring an organic flan.

The offer is too kind, says Mum. It’s above and beyond. But she can see from my face that she has to say yes, if the Allotment Police agree.

Jess Kidd’s short story ‘Dirty Little Fish’ won the Costa Short Story award. Her third novel, the gorgeously gothic Things in Jars (Canongate) features intrepid Victorian detective Bridie Devine, her sidekick Cora Butter and a missing child with mysterious gifts. Her simple thing is the first sip of an exceptionally good coffee.
Green

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