

Cottage garden seating *Sandra Wilson*

It is the end of January, and it has been a long month. There is new life out there, but I am longing for warmer days and the joy of sitting in my cottage garden again, as well as the gardening of course. I thought I would write about the furniture I have in my Gatehouse garden of just a quarter of an acre.

Ideally when you become the owner of a garden you should take time to note where the sun falls at different times each day and plan different seating areas. This is especially important in a new property, but also in an inherited one, where the previous owners may not have considered all their options. As hard as we keen gardeners work in our gardens, it is good to take the time to enjoy them - pick a spot for a lazy breakfast before the rest of the family is up, and find some time to commune with nature. I have a lovely wooden bench which gets the early morning sunshine in summer, and I love to sit there in my pyjamas and take a little time to meditate and watch the birds at the bird feeder. Later in the day this spot is shaded, but the bench can then double up as a barbecue preparation area.

My main dining table is on a terrace beside the water feature and gets the majority of the daytime sunshine. It is wooden, with a revolving turntable and a hole for an umbrella, and seats four. It can get very hot here, even in this northerly climate, but I need as much sunshine as I can get! I am always amazed how in more southern climates that you need a shaded pergola to keep the sun off - for us the occasional use of an umbrella suffices. I have cushions to make the seats more comfortable.

A new summerhouse nearby is painted in shades of green and lets in plenty of light. I use it for additional summer furniture storage, but in spring and autumn it is a lovely sheltered spot to sit in and admire the garden, or to read a book. I keep two cushion-padded collapsible metal seats permanently set up here, but I think two Lloyd Loom chairs would look better. I inherited the first of the metal ones from my mother and it

is not a style I would have purchased, but I found it to be extremely comfortable and you can adjust it so that you can recline and have a snooze. On warm sunny days I bring out both chairs, along with a small wooden table, and move these round the garden following the sun. Other furniture stored away includes two red and white striped traditional deckchairs which I cannot bear to part with, although they might really need to be re-covered soon. We bought them for our first London garden and keep them now as extras for when we have a lot of visitors.

In the front garden, by my greenhouse, is an old metal framed wooden bench. The front garden is near a busy main road but gets the best sunshine. I often sit here for a quick cup of coffee when I am busy in the greenhouse, but it is too noisy to linger here. On showery days I take a cup of tea inside the greenhouse and listen to the radio. I used to have an



old kitchen stool in here, but it eventually collapsed and I am currently using a rather grand old piano stool with an upholstered seat. I should really get a collapsible kitchen stool, but it needs to be able to take my weight for hanging up sticky insect traps, and I am loathe to buy anything new!

I long for a garden with lots of evening sunshine, but I have to make the best of what we have. There is a high bank leading up to the house which I have planted with various shrubs and the top is relatively flat, so in high summer we take two collapsible picnic chairs up the bank and somewhat precariously have a gin and tonic in the evening sunshine while looking over the back garden.

I am very lucky to have pedestrian access across the neighbouring 'big house' formal garden. A path leads down to the lochside where there are old sleepers used as a bench and here I can sit and gaze across the loch to the castle and the backdrop of the hills and the Campsies in the distance. Such a glorious spot! You would never believe my village is only a few miles north of Glasgow. One neighbour has built a beautiful treehouse which is very harmonious in its surroundings on the loch edge. It has a balcony with seats and inside a gypsy stove. I always feel honoured to be invited for a coffee there. The view is spectacular - when the loch froze over it was magical to be warm and cosy inside and watch the people skating below.

The type of cottage garden seat I covet would be a wooden one which wraps round a grand old tree, but my garden is not big enough. An old photograph recently found of the big house portrays an Edwardian lady sewing in just such a seat but both the tree and seat are long gone! I fancy a Lutyens style wooden bench, but think it would be too grand for my small cottage garden. A hammock would be lovely if I had two suitable trees. *Sandra Wilson gardens in Bardowie, East Dunbartonshire.*

Sandra wins this issue's Garden Gift Voucher for her lovely and unusual article. What kind of seating do you enjoy in your cottage garden?