How Grateful I am to Michael Gove

I have a demanding job and a big allotment that most of the time I manage to stay on top of, although only just! I love spending time at my plot, and I’d go to it with a full schedule of jobs to do in the specified time I had available. With lockdown, came the ability to work from home, but without the commuting – a good 90 minutes morning and evening. I decided that the time spent on the train, would now be mine, to use wisely. As the rules came out on the lockdown, I along with many others wondered if allotments would count as an essential journey, exercise or food “shopping”. Was it ok to spend time on the plot? How grateful I was to hear Michael Gove say categorically that going to the allotment was fine. Since then I’ve never looked back. I decided to turn the early morning commuting time of 7.00am – 8.00am into allotment time and since then I’ve been to my plot every single weekday to get my morning off to a good start before a hard day’s work commences. How fabulous its been!

Since those early days in March, I’ve tackled many jobs – creosoting my sheds, attending to my guttering and the water butts, tidying up all the accumulated “useful things” on the plot as well as sorting out my sheds – including potting shed. I’ve organised my beds, straightened my paths, neatened my edges, repaired my compost heap, mowed my plot, put up the bee hotel, repaired my herb beds, reorganised the greenhouse, sown seedlings galore, weeded, watered regularly and efficiently and pricked on seedlings when ready, not when desperate for attention!

I’ve moved my plot from “working women status” to “retired pensioner status” – a visual delight and I love going to see it. I’ve tantalised the team at work with photos of freshly picked fruits and veg and herbs - new season purple sprouting, fresh broad beans, rhubarb, spring cabbage, gooseberries and asparagus, mint and tarragon and I’ve taken the time to scour my recipe books for some new ways to cook this delightful bounty. Furthermore, with social distancing a must, I’ve chatted to early morning passers-by, my allotment neighbours (early birds as well) and many others from the safety of my plot. With silence and quiet having been a key feature of lockdown, the early morning stillness has been super to enjoy. I’ve also mixed this with tuning into the real world and listening to the unfolding events for the day on the radio – keeping in check with the harsh reality of Covid 19.

I’m very fortunate in not knowing any one with Covid 19, having any worries about it close to home, and enjoying my own good health. I feel very lucky that I’ve been able to take my extra time and use it in a good way. I already loved my allotment but during the course of lockdown I’ve appreciated it even more so and felt truly grateful that I had a place to go to, a purpose to achieve and the ability to talk to others from a safe distance. The power of the allotment has really come into its own.

I’m not the only one that thinks this way - never have all of our allotments looked so good! Our site is simply sparkling with well-tended plots and they are a joy to look at. Additionally, we’ve let out plots to several newcomers, all of whom I hope will stick with their new found hobby, when the demands of real life come calling. For me I’ve found a very peaceful enjoyment in my own space, available to me every day of the week and I’ve been quick to count my blessings accordingly! Only one question remains – how am I going to do such a good job if the old routine resurrects itself!

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