

The  
**DILETTANTE GARDENER.**

Issue No 11..... March 2011

and incorporating  
**The Dilettante Cook**



## NEEDS MUST

How many times have you and I said, 'I wish I had not put that there?'

On hindsight I wish I had taken a lot more time planning just where I should plant gifted trees, or even ones that self seeded, but I suppose that is being wise 'after the event.'

Not only trees, but so too are many shrubs at Seacrest away out of where they should be, but neither Morag or I have the heart or the energy to tackle removals, or relocations, so we side stepped the issue and compromised.

Over the winter we sheltered five plastic tubs in the main hot-house containing some Polyanthus and Pansies for our spring display. And as in days of yore, 'Thereby hangs a tale.'

Like thousands of other folk we have a semi tame Robin that is quite a cheeky character and during one of my infrequent visits

to the hot house to check up on the tubs, it must have slipped in behind me and got shut in.

Well as the frost on the glass obscured the interior of the hot house and it was not until several days later that I took another look, that Robin escaped and left me with one tub of pansies demolished. Not that I blamed the bird but it was surprising, to me at least, to realise that the bird survived on green leaves for several days. Needs must I suppose. It did not dine on the Polyanthus however!

Due to the ever encroaching trees we will not try to grow any more tomatoes in the said H. H. Instead we have built a new staging and will use it for growing on our bedding plants. The north facing gable end has a rough coating of green paint to 'hide me', as I like to photograph the birds feeding close-up, it helps hide my camera.



# NEEDS MUST..TWO

After quite some time in use, our old canvas gazebo finally began to rot away so with some reluctance we scrapped it, but saved the metal uprights.

As I have already said, Morag and I enjoy 'eating out', not, may I hasten to add in restaurants or such of that ilk, but rather using our own BBQ.

Last year we suffered a lot of windy and wet weather, not idealistic for cooking chicken thighs or even venison burgers out of doors, so taking all into

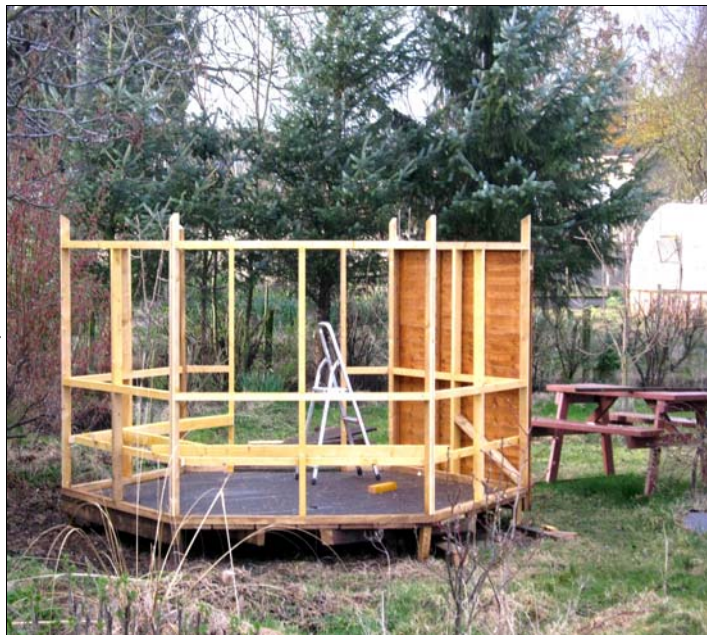
context we decided to build a multi-purpose building. This will be a gazebo cum smoke house, cum BBQ and eating establishment.

It will be a six sided construction, each section being approximately 1.8 Mts or as I prefer call it, a six foot width. The internal height we hope will end up about seven foot three inches.

All my friends ask how I intend to complete the roof. In return I ask them if they ever considered how the Egyptian Pyramids were built? I do not intend to use exactly the same methods but the principle will be similar. Although I will be building from the inside, and without the extensive sand ramps.

On second thoughts I won't have the benefit of slave labour either.

The second photo shows the hexagonal roof apex very much enlarged.



The idea is to prop up that piece of the roof on a platform and then attach all eighteen roof members to it securely, providing a dome shaped construction that will be particularly strong. Just in case qualified builders will wonder why there are 18 rafters, well the reason is that between each angled roof section I will

have to install a lead lined guttering, that will require support on both sides.



The roof will be clad with overlap half inch sarking, screwed down and heavily coated with preservative, so it should last decades.

One side will have a borrowed light panel included and two small window panes will grace the door entrance side.

Hopefully the structure will include a fire pit with a retractable/adjustable chimney along with a metal hood and cowl.

But that will have to be made elsewhere as I have given up metal working years ago.

# The Dilettante Cook

(With a vision towards self-sufficiency)

## NO FOOL LIKE AN OLD FOOL

Whilst here at Seacrest, Morag and I enjoy Raspberries, Strawberries, Blackcurrants, Rowan and Wooster berries plus plums, apples and pears in abundance, we sadly lack one of our favourites, namely Gooseberries.

One of the main reasons being, that decades ago when I grew several heavily fruiting bushes, invariably the near ripe fruit, suffered from what appeared to be a fungal disease and although it was possible to wash the fruit clean, they did not have the same appeal.

However last spring we decided to 'have another go', so we purchased six relatively cheap bushes and grew them on in pots, and earlier this month we transferred them to one of the RBG plots.

Morag has included two recipes that she favoured before homing at Seacrest and so I am including them here. Unfortunately we do not have any photos but perhaps if the sun shines and we have a harvest, photos will be available next fall if we are blessed.

### Gooseberry Crumble

1lb Gooseberries, 2 ozs butter,  
8 ozs breadcrumbs, 3 ozs brown sugar,  
1/2 tablespoons white sugar,  
Water to cover the berries.

### Method

Wash berries, cook gently until soft, remove from heat and add white sugar (to taste) Mix together bread crumbs and brown sugar. Heat the butter and fry the mix gently then cool. Place the cooked berries in a deep dish



Gooseberry bushes in their new situation

cover with the processed crumbs and cook in a hot oven until nicely browned.

### Gooseberry Fool

1lb of gooseberries, 2 lbs sugar,  
1/4 pint double cream.

### Method

Cook berries in water until soft, then sieve off the water and add sugar, mix and sieve again.

Whip cream lightly and when the puree is cold fold in the cream and serve. Delicious.

# The Dilettante Cook

(With a vision towards self-sufficiency)

## WILD MUSHROOM HARVESTING AND SOUP MAKING

Late summer or early autumn was as I recall a great time to go gathering wild mushrooms close to the village. Particularly on Jessa's Hill where legend had it the fairies danced every night during the mushroom harvest time. Proof of that belief was found in the mornings when perfectly formed rings of mushrooms could be found hiding in the grass.

Collecting the fungi was always undertaken as early in the morning as possible so that the myriads of tiny worms which were prone to ruin the mushrooms did not get the warmth from the early morning sun needed to develop them.

I can recollect when as a boy I was nearly always one of the first on the scene I would lift up the hem of my gansey and fill the resulting pocket with as many mushrooms I could find before running home and presenting them to my mother.

Maggie Ann would chop them into small pieces and then do the same with an onion. Next the frying pan would be placed on the grate with a knob of butter. When the butter melted the mushrooms and the onion would

be tossed in and stirred often to prevent browning. When tender the two main ingredients would be removed from the heat to be replaced with a pan holding a quantity of milk mixed in with some plain white flour and seasoning. This was brought to the boil while being stirred continuously to prevent sticking or lumps and then the contents of the frying pan would be tipped in and stirred well. The soup would be left to simmer very gently at the side of the grate for over an hour.



That evening after reheating the soup it would be dished up for supper. A cheap, tasty and nourishing meal.

To turn the cottar's wild mushroom soup into Cream of Wild Mushroom Soup do as follows. Take the pan off the heat and after a couple of minutes or so tip a carton of cream into the pan. Give it a good steer and then serve immediately with a sprinkling of chopped parsley on the top, do not return the pan to the heat. Buttered brown farmhouse bread complements this dish wonderfully.

Forgive this old man for reminiscing. Jessa's story available on <http://www.independent-highlander.co.uk> Ed.

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