

## Live Longer Better Priscilla Waugh, Dean Court

### Keen gardener and composter

Priscilla lives in a cul de sac in Dean Court with her cat George, and has a large garden that stretches back behind her house and ends in a small wild woodland area. To one side there are a series of large wooden compost containers that are carefully cared for, and on the other side is an idyllic wooden log cabin complete with compost loo.

Priscilla is originally from New Zealand and came to England in 1964. She enjoys reading as well as gardening and used to write pieces for newspapers and magazines. She gets so much pleasure from her garden, yet she does not describe her garden as a managed or manicured garden – more of a wildlife garden. What she really loves about the garden is that there is always something to do.

Her first forays into gardening were through compost as it represents a full circle of life to her “something is born and it grows and it dies. In decomposing it becomes food for the next generation which I think is wonderful. Our lifetimes are so short, and that’s why I like nature I think. It’s the feeling of connection.”

During the first lockdown in March 2020 Priscilla kept active by gardening mainly. She was actually very cross as she loved walking into Oxford, going to the cinema – all things that were no longer possible to do.

Priscilla likes to be active daily. “I’ve always done something every day. During lockdown it was different because you socialise less, you don’t see as many people” But Priscilla still appreciated the animals such as the birds in her garden and her cat George (who decided to come and live with her – he was a stray). But after a good days gardening she says she feels “absolutely terrific!” She loves cutting grass, wandering up and down with the lawn mower (making sure to not run over any frogs). And after a long day gardening she allows herself a G&T.

On days when she does no gardening she does other activities such as housework, although she said she finds it “just a bit boring”. Compared to gardening where you are “in touch with nature, there is always something new and different, a bird you haven’t seen or heard before. Nature is wonderful.”

At times when she is not so motivated to get out in the garden she says it’s important to keep reminding yourself, ‘yes, I’ve felt like this before. I got out and I felt much better afterwards. You always feel better for doing something’. “To me it is essential to be active every day. I don’t feel right going to bed at night if I’ve had an inactive day.”

Gardening is as physical as you want it to be. “It’s as much as you want to do. If you decide to do nothing, eventually it will still become compost. I like to do it [turn the compost] because it’s a good way of keeping active. Quite often I’d go out and turn over the compost even if it doesn’t need turning over”.

Of course, we all know the benefits for our mental wellbeing in getting out into nature. Priscila says: "there's something about being in touch with nature, it's very healing. Especially when you're not feeling right, if you've had a bereavement or an illness or you just want to think about something. There is nothing quite as good as getting your hands in the soil".



