

It seems to me . . .

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Yes, I'm sure I can get this in here . . .

A room of your own. Do you think of a study, a den, a place for your computer? Or maybe a tree house or a garden room – now that's more like it! A special place where you can sit and enjoy the view, watch the birds, plan a new flower bed, all whilst sitting in an easy chair under a canopy; or just relax, cup of tea or glass of wine at hand, in a golden glow of peace and contentment.

Straightaway I visualise the duck-egg blue (or maybe green) garden house of a friend in Essex. It was tastefully furnished, with a bookcase, writing desk, kettle and possibly a rug. I don't recall a biscuit tin, but I do remember the envy I felt.

Thoughts of garden rooms, where one can escape and even dream a little, bring to mind other garden retreats. One is in a much-photographed, picture-postcard garden often featured in magazines. It has a small wooden cabin, though I don't suppose they call it that, and some years ago the owners' granddaughter took me by the hand and proudly led me there and we sat side by side, admiring the view down the winding path. A very desirable room.

But such rooms need not be picturesque – they can be practical. Another friend has a spacious shed, much used over many years, with sufficient light to grow cuttings and overwinter plants. Her husband's 'space' adjoins it – a 'his and hers' sort of place to work. Another had what I shall call, for decency's sake, a convenience in her brand new, fully-lined, pine-scented place of work. Oh, how I coveted



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that! (I put in a request for a similar facility but it's not yet arrived.)

Some spouses are wonderful builders of garden rooms. We once visited a semi-detached, husband-built, divided working-room, and peeped through the windows to admire both sides, murmuring our appreciation. It was all so neat and tidy, and there was such pride in his accomplishment.

Some gardeners favour glass constructions, greenhouses and conservatories. One I visit regularly displays orchids in full flower, with not a dead leaf on the floor. It's warm and floral, even in January.

For a place of one's own, preferably outside, where you are king or queen, is an essential part of gardening. We have, dare I confess, seven. Yes, seven sheds! It sounds excessive, but they are all filled; in fact some are so full I can only just open the door to squeeze in more must-keep usefulnesses. They are not all mine, of course: some are his,



and some are shared, but two or three, or possibly four, belong to me, more or less, exclusively. I can't claim that they're attractive, rather they are necessary.

You may have read before that I share one with lodgers, i.e. a dormouse, a toad, some spiders, and an unidentifiable night-time intruder who specialises in chewing – old envelopes (for seed collecting), plastic bags, netting and polystyrene trays. But this is my favourite workplace. The other sheds hold tools, brooms, mulchers, ladders, hoses – the list is endless. Of course, many gardeners have no choice but to use their garages for all this paraphernalia. Our garage will not be mentioned – but needless to say our cars are on the drive,

It's worth mentioning that once such rooms become aged, maintenance is demanding: they tend to leakiness, window glass cracks, hinges move, and bolts won't bolt. Indeed, the stable doors on my special room swing open, won't close, once fell off – in a very fierce gale.

It doesn't sound like the place of one's dreams, but most of us have to mend and make do. Yet it is still a place of solace and contentment – my old, creaky, wooden dream-house. No designer exterior, no mod cons, no creature comforts – not even a wooden stool, and the only tin holds ancient seeds. But I have a clock to remind me when refreshments are due, two lights, a work bench, pots at hand (though frequently not the size required) and plenty of cobwebs should I cut myself. It is me-friendly – a room of my own, and I love it. 🕸

Joan Cooper