

# GARDEN BLOGGING

*Julianne Porter*

What is garden blogging? In its simple form, it is people writing articles about gardening and publishing them on the internet, usually accompanied by lots of pictures. It's more immediate than articles you read in magazines such as *The Garden*, which are often written up to a year before publication. Blogging on the internet has opened up a whole new way of 'meeting' fellow gardeners, sharing ideas and learning.

A blogpost might be short, with lots of photographs, to quickly capture something that's just happened that day or during the previous week. Or it might be a longer post, going into detail about a specific topic. Either way, the great thing about blogging is that it's interactive, unlike magazines where you may or may not ever get your letter printed, let alone receive a reply. A blog reader can converse with the author, leave comments reflecting on their experience on the same topic, and ask the author questions which they later answer.

I've been blogging since 2009, not long after taking on an allotment in Oxford. Gwenfar is my nickname (my middle name being Gwenhwyfar), hence the original name *Gwenfar's Lottie*. The earlier blogposts were written about my garden and allotment (lottie) in Oxford. This changed to *Gwenfar's Garden and Other Musings* when I moved to Sheffield in 2013. Subjects I blog about these days include developing my Sheffield garden using permaculture principles; growing vegetables (*Spoonie Veg*), hardy perennials and alpines in a small urban garden; garden visits, and even talks given at Hardy Plant Society meetings. Recently I've also been blogging about gardening with ME; gardening within the context of living with a chronic illness. Like many garden bloggers, I cover a number of gardening related topics, as do gardeners in general. We develop an interest in one area of gardening and it quickly expands to other related themes.

A blog may be discovered in a variety of ways. If I leave a comment on another gardener's blog, they may look me up and then subscribe to receive my blog posts by email. Using Twitter, in particular, has brought my blog to the attention of a larger audience, as it's an easy way to reach people the world over.

Blogs may be updated as often or as little as the author wishes. Some bloggers are quite prolific, producing daily articles. Most are probably in the middle category, blogging two to three times a month, as I do, and some publish only occasionally. There are no set rules.

Now, whose blogs to follow? There are more gardening blogs out there than there are weed seeds on a compost heap. Probably the most prolific garden blogger I know, and fairly well known in such circles, is Helen Johnstone of *The Patient Gardener*. Helen (also a Hardy Planter) is a gifted garden writer. Her posts cover everything from what's growing in her garden in Worcestershire, and her ideas for developing it, to discussing her garden visits, both in the UK and abroad (always with lots of great photographs), and reviewing new gardening books. Helen's website is also a good place to 'meet' other garden bloggers. She is the author of the 'meme' (a piece of digital content that spreads online) entitled *End of Month View*, which reflects on how her garden has grown, including the challenges and rewards, over the previous month. A lot of garden bloggers engage with the meme, leaving comments with links to their posts on the same topic, and here you can discover a floriferous bunch of garden bloggers from across the world.

Another prolific blogger with quite different garden interests is Oxfordshire-based Emma Cooper, with her blog *The Unconventional Gardener*. Emma is an ethnobotanist and author of several books, with a keen interest in growing food, particularly unusual edibles. Her blog posts are fascinating, covering such diverse topics as plant chemistry, floral drinks you can make from your garden, edible dahlias, and what vegetables astronauts are eating on the International Space Station. I'm sure to learn something new whenever I visit Emma's blog.

Some garden bloggers will focus predominantly on one gardening topic. Jono at *Real Men Sow*, in Essex, blogs engagingly about growing fruit and vegetables. His blog is a good place to pick up

interesting tips on growing vegetables, from the benefits of raised beds, to choosing the best varieties of beetroot to grow in a small garden. The answer to the latter is 'Cylindra', and I have not looked back.

Harriet Rycroft used to be the Head Gardener in charge of the displays at Whichford Pottery, and is the queen of container growing. Her blog is *A Parrot's Nest*, where she writes not just about container growing in her garden in Gloucestershire, but also about beautiful container-grown plants in other places, from Brightlingsea to Crete. In addition, she strays into other topics including natural history and rural matters.

Based in Surrey, writer and editor Helen Gazeley's blog is *Weeding the Web*, and she offers to tickle your gardening fancy! Helen reviews everything from gardening equipment (such as the latest in battery powered mowers), to botanical art exhibitions, online retailers, gardening books, gardens to visit, and flower shows, amongst other things. She writes in a warm yet practical style, giving you all the information you need to help you decide on a purchase.

Two blogs I also enjoy reading originate from opposite types of gardens at opposite ends of the UK. Angie, of *Angie's Garden Diaries*, lives in Edinburgh. She has a small urban garden and grows a variety of hardy perennials and other ornamentals, often in windy conditions. By contrast, Jessica's *Rusty Duck* blog, in Devon, centres around the renovation of a rural 3.5 acre garden, perched on the side of a 45-degree hill and surrounded by woodland. Their posts are engaging and witty, and usually contain excellent photographs of individual plants.

I hope this has piqued your interest in gardening blogging; perhaps it may even encourage you to start one of your own.

#### **Featured blog web addresses:**

The author's blog, *Gwenfar's Garden and Other Musings* - [www.gwenfarsgarden.info/](http://www.gwenfarsgarden.info/)

*The Patient Gardener* - [www.patientgardener.wordpress.com/](http://www.patientgardener.wordpress.com/)

*The Unconventional Gardener* - [www.theunconventionalgardener.com](http://www.theunconventionalgardener.com)

*Real Men Sow* - [www.realmensow.co.uk/](http://www.realmensow.co.uk/)

*A Parrot's Nest* - [www.harrietrycroft.com/](http://www.harrietrycroft.com/)

*Weeding The Web* - [www.helengazeley.typepad.co.uk/](http://www.helengazeley.typepad.co.uk/)

*Angie's Garden Diaries* - [www.mygardenblogs.blogspot.co.uk/](http://www.mygardenblogs.blogspot.co.uk/)

*Rusty Duck* - [www.rustyduck.net/](http://www.rustyduck.net/)