



Nicky Grace at the Green Shed Photo Ruth Anders

## Green Shed is a heavenly haven for vintage fabrics

By Ruth Anders

Walking through the door of Nicky Grace's house in Tetherdown, Muswell Hill, is like walking into summer. Pastel colours, flowers, fruit and brightly coloured swatches of vintage fabric overwhelm the visitor, and any grey skies are left firmly outside.

With a varied career history from floristry to registered childcare, and a proud part-Dutch heritage, Nicky has developed a passion for vintage fabric, gathered from countries like France, Belgium, Australia and India. Walls, shelves, windowsills and tabletops explode with colourful samples from the 1930s and 1940s.

And now that two of her children have left home, their rooms too are rainbow repositories for Aladdin's caves of dazzling cloth cuts. Orchids, hyacinths and narcissi vie for space on the kitchen windowsills, demonstrating Nicky's horticultural skills, her keen eye for design and her stitching

expertise. Nicky has sold to Cath Kidston and once had a shop in Crouch End. She is also a member of the East Finchley business network N2United.

### Workshops in a fairytale setting

The Green Shed is the jewel in Nicky's crown. The Shed, with its roof of sedums and ferns, is an enchanting apple green chalet a few yards from the back door, filled with paintings, flowers, lights and colour. Running the length of the cabin is a table seating up to 14, from which Nicky facilitates craft workshop parties for children. She also hires the shed out for meetings and adult creative writing workshops. Cosy in winter and cool in summer, it

provides the perfect setting for entertainment and imaginative thinking.

Nicky's bunting, pictures, cushions and collages, all made with her vibrant classic fabrics, adorn every area of the Green Shed and the house. There's a playful circus-like atmosphere throughout and Nicky's bubbly West Highland terrier Maisie, alongside her two tortoises (one emerging from hibernation next to the Aga in the kitchen while I was there), add to the fun.

The photos on Nicky's website demonstrate how much children love the Green Shed's fairy-tale environment, and she plans to expand her activities to include fabric and craft workshops for adults. Visit [www.thegreenshed.format.com](http://www.thegreenshed.format.com) to discover more.

## Take a walk on the wild side

By Thalia Pellegrini

Spring has finally arrived and now is the time to get outside and enjoy nature in all its glory! One local resident keen to celebrate the season is Brian Bennett, a medical herbalist who has lived in East Finchley for about 18 months.

His move to East Finchley was motivated in part by his desire to be closer to nature. He enjoys the proximity N2 offers to green spaces as diverse as the Heath and Long Lane Pasture, both of which he says are, "lovely local places to be with nature".

### In Culpeper's footsteps

Trained in Western herbal medicine, Brian works in both the UK and in Ireland, using plants and plant

material to create medicines to help prevent or treat various illnesses. Brian believes: "We have a traditional heritage of Western herbal medicine which is for everyone to use." He offers one-to-one consultations in his clinic in Islington.

The beginnings of Western herbal medicine can be traced back to ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman civilisations. In the UK, botanist and herbalist Nicholas Culpeper was key in bringing herbal medicine to the masses by translating the definitive text at the time from Latin into English. His *Pharmacopeia* was published in 1649.

### Learn about local herbs

Fast forward through the centuries and some herbal remedies are now familiar and



Herbalist Brian Bennett Photo Mike Coles

long-established – peppermint, fennel or cardamom for digestive upsets for example – but there are many more. Nettles for example, considered a weed by many, offer nutritive qualities when made into a tea or a soup, though Brian is keen to stress that you need to be able to correctly identify plants before consuming them and, of course, "get permission from land owners before picking!"

For those interested in finding out more about the wild herbs in our local area, Brian is offering hour-long guided walks between now and the end of August. A nominal fee of £5 can be redeemed against a Western herbal medicine consultation with Brian. If you'd like to know more, call Brian on 07403 037341 or visit: [bwholistic.weebly.com](http://bwholistic.weebly.com).

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