



# Private garden provides peaceful escape in lockdown

By Ruth Anders

Readers may remember our May 2018 edition featuring Muswell Hill resident Nicky Grace's garden and the magical Green Shed she uses for craft workshops and children's parties.

The lovely informal space in Tetherdown, N10, came into its own anew during lockdown, when Nicky became aware of the difficult situation facing those without gardens, especially mums with young children. Knowing that many were having to roam around the streets with toddlers, Nicky, a textile artist, had the idea of offering her tranquil garden for others to use free of charge.

### Outdoor freedom

She told *The Archer*: "I put a post on Facebook in April as I knew that so many were suffering without outside space. People started booking time slots and entering via the side gate.

"They'd tell me how otherwise they would go to local parks for the allotted one hour. The benches were blocked off with tape and police would bellow through megaphones for everyone to keep walking so they couldn't sit anywhere.

"Doing this, I met such lovely people, some heavily pregnant with toddlers, some who brought laptops and worked, some who celebrated birthdays with picnics or just wanted to lie outside. One family played games for three hours and others enjoyed their first Easter egg hunts."

### Reasons to be cheerful

Nicky's small dog Maisie loved having new families to play with every day. Nicky added: "It was uplifting for me too as my business had suddenly come to a standstill but keeping busy arranging garden appointments meant that I still saw people every day, at a safe distance. I had so many nice comments and it motivated me to keep the garden up to scratch rather than succumbing to lockdown gloom".

Nicky's Green Shed is now available again to hire for children's parties, craft workshops and courses. For more information visit: [thegreenshedn10.com](http://thegreenshedn10.com)



Retreat: Nicky Grace's garden in Tetherdown. Photo Mike Coles



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# Sunflower spread

By John Lawrence

Pedestrians and passengers passing by on the 263 bus have enjoyed seeing a cheery guard of sunflowers standing sentry on a patch of public land at the top end of the High Road in East Finchley.

Twenty sunflowers have grown up against a long fence in a sheltered spot between Sylvester Road and Brownswell Road, all planted and cared for by nearby resident Declan Scott. Declan, who has lived in East Finchley for 30 years, grew them from seed gathered from a single sunflower that grew in his front garden last year. Lining them up where everyone can see them has been a double pleasure, he says. "They were growing all through lockdown



Standing tall: Declan Scott with the sunflowers he planted alongside the High Road. Photo John Lawrence

and it's been a way of cheering people up. For me, I find it therapeutic and relaxing. I just water them morning and evening but I've made an army of

friends out there when people stop to ask me how to grow them."

And he adds that there's no secret to successful sunflower

growing: "Start them under glass, then once they're a few inches tall, plant them out, water them well and they grow themselves."

# A garden too good to keep to yourself

By Ruth Anders

While most gardens, however modest, give pleasure, some beg to be shared. The magnificent garden belonging to drama teacher Jeremy Pratt and Rachel Lindsay in Twyford Avenue, N2, is one of the first private gardens in North London to open this summer under the National Garden Scheme, and what a joy it proved.

### Transformation

When Jeremy and Rachel arrived 15 years ago, they found only a bit of grass, three apple trees and a jungle. Since then, the garden has been transformed into a horticultural wonderland. Nearest the house, the sun drenched lawn ("Good for the grandchildren," admits Jeremy, who hankers after larger flower beds) contrasts with borders, pots, small trees, and a pretty fountain. Beyond, a winding path leads to a seemingly endless leafy woodland area, filled with birds and seating under the huge ancient trees.

Sedums, hostas and daisies all jostle for space alongside a variety of more unusual plants. Geraniums and nasturtiums burst from pots of all sizes and Rachel's figurative sculptures add a delightful note of serendipity.

### Helping charities

Said Rachel, "We usually make hundreds of pounds for charity from our teas, but we



Idyllic: Jeremy and Rachel's garden. Photo Ruth Anders

couldn't offer those this year. Sales of honey and cuttings from friends and our greenhouse also help."

NGS Ambassador Joe Swift told *The Archer*: "The NGS is a wonderful charity where garden owners share their garden with visitors, raising money mainly for nursing charities like Macmillan and Marie Curie.

"This year the NGS has endured extremely challenging times. During lockdown the only way to visit gardens

was virtually, but now some are opening with clear guidance so treat yourself and visit them wherever possible."

While the NGS demands '45 minutes of interest' for a garden to qualify for inclusion, I could happily have stayed for the whole lazy afternoon.

If you've missed Jeremy's and Rachel's garden this year, do make a note for 2021. For more information see [ngs.org.uk](http://ngs.org.uk)

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