

My Back Yard

by Kathie Richards-Jones

Why does the term ‘my back yard’ conjure up a vision of neglect and urban disorder?

That’s certainly not the case of my back yard which is carefully planned, beautifully laid out and envied by neighbours and passers-by alike.

It stretches around the cottage like a huge quarter circle, bounded for some way by an attractive 6ft high white-paled fence – so that no-one can see what I’m doing or what I’m wearing – or in fact not wearing if I go to the unfenced end where the river lazily curls its way from the mountains to the sea. The water is crystal clear and at the best viewing point a comfortable garden table and some chairs are arranged for me to dry off after my daily wild water swim, sipping champagne and enjoying tasty canapes while I admire the view.

Nearby two huge trees allow for a hammock to be swung out just over the river’s surface, where one can day-dream while dipping toes or fingers in the cooling water.

In one far corner of my back yard a lower fence encloses a small area covered in bark chippings – this has been specially created to allow our dogs somewhere to spend a penny – or indeed a sixpence if necessary. Naturally they have been trained never to squat or lift a reluctant paw anywhere else in my back yard.

In front of the kitchen window is sited a beautifully slate-roofed bird table. Some six foot high it has a square main feeding table to take the nuts and crumbs, some hooks allow for the hanging of seed containers and a number of smaller platforms are used for fat balls, or other birdy treats. Certainly the local aerial population rate my back yard very highly as the table is visited by chaffinches, robins, dozens of sparrows, collar-doves, nuthatches, jackdaws, and blue tits. It has even seen some rare visitors like a sole magpie, a descending red kite and an off-course kestrel.

Around the perimeter fence lies a three foot wide flower bed featuring banks of snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils in the spring and hydrangeas, azaleas, lupins, red hot pokers, sweet peas and roses in the summer.

A carefully controlled air system ensures that in the autumn no dying leaf from the surrounding trees would dare to spoil the pristine perfectness of my back yard.

It’s centre is basically a huge area of immaculate green lawn which luckily never seems to need cutting. This is big enough for the family cricket team to enjoy a game and by use of a clever switching device a marked tennis court with net will rise from an unseen position if that is the preferable game. Also tucked out of view of the main house is a long netted area specially designed for golf or cricket practising.

By the French windows is a York stone patio bigger enough to hold a garden dining table and six chairs and with an ancillary brick-built but gas-fired barbecue that is always read to be fired up (luckily we never run out of gas). There are also two patio heaters (in case of chilly evenings) and a

large awning which can provide a splendid area of shade should we ever experience summer weather in Wales.

On the wall there is an adjacent convenient bell push to summon the butler and lamps we can suitably angle if we decided to work or read outside. If something more mind-stimulating is required we can summon up a 54" high definition television perfectly positioned for relaxed viewing. There is also a mobile telephone box, also linked up to the front door bell so that we can accept or reject any approaches to our privacy.

We value our privacy very highly so in case of any visits by "drones" or paparazzi a small shotgun emplacement is strategically positioned to see off intruders. And there is also a special radar system which prevents all unwanted insects from permeating the clear air. Naturally all spiders can also be identified and exiled from my back yard.

I never actually refer to my back yard as such. I call it my paradise, my nirvana, my bolthole. And I am always delighted when I choose to look out and see – oh no!

I must have been day-dreaming again... as my back yard really contains a broken-down shed, casually discarded gardening tools, piles of cardboard boxes from the increase in online shopping, a bird table broken and leaning due to the local cat continually leaping onto it from the neighbours fence, large pieces of moss that regularly descend from the cottage roof, a drooping washing line, a falling-down dog kennel and an army of rubbish bins – 2 large black ones, 2 blue paper ones, 2 red glass ones, 2 green plastic ones, two small green plastic food bins and a number of old defunct dustbin.

Perhaps it is time to take my tongue out of my cheek ...