

Notes from a Fading Garden, 31 August

On last year's August Bank Holiday the temperature was 33°, this year 15°. A foretaste of what Covid without sunshine will be like? No more glasses of chilled rosé in friends' gardens under sunshades or gazebos. Interestingly meeting in small groups with friends has proved more popular than going to the pub for a social gathering as we did before. So we will sit and shiver in front of open windows and doors as long as we can – and then what? Do we hibernate until it's all over? It does seem daft that we can meet friends in a pub but not in a house.

School term starts this week, and for many it will be their first time back in the classroom since March. Excitement and some nervous anticipation over how the new arrangements for social distancing, and mask wearing/no mask wearing will pan out. Sadly, I feel a bit more fearful of meeting up with my grandchildren who won't fall ill with the virus themselves but might easily pass it on to us vulnerable oldies.

In the UK as elsewhere in Europe, the number of daily cases is rising but hospital admissions and deaths are low. Am I the only person to work out the reason might be that it's because the oldies are just being more careful and not mixing with the younger ones who think they are immortal?

Meanwhile the garden fades gently into its subdued autumn colours – a bit back-endish, as they say up north. The huge hollyhock spires and mad nicotiana heads are gone and frothy, web-like seed heads take over. With a garden you can never be bored, so time to take stock and plan for next year.

I love Deddington dearly – but though I'm desperate for a change of scenery it's not going to happen for a while. I'm writing off the rest of this year and hoping for a vaccine or something that gives me confidence to go back to living 'normally' – whatever form that takes. By next month I will have had a Covid test, more imposed self-isolation and elective surgery in times of Covid. Might be interesting ...

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