

## Notes from a Quietening Garden

We've gone from the fiery reds, oranges and yellows of October to the sort of dull grey that settles over the garden in November – reflecting many people's moods.

I'd been agonising over whether to spend Christmas Day with one son and his family (my support bubble) and host the other son's family on Boxing Day. Our PM was quite cunning in allowing us to decide for ourselves, knowing that to say 'Christmas is off' would make him hugely unpopular (and he sure don't like being unpopular ...), and people would ignore it anyway. So he left it to his scientific advisers to plead, 'don't kill your grannie!'

So, decision made: I'm staying home this Christmas. A good bottle of wine, something really special to eat, maybe 'The Nutcracker' on the telly seeing that there's no 'Strictly' Christmas Special, and 'Mrs Brown's Boys' has me reaching for the off button. Let's hope for good weather on Boxing Day so I can meet up with my family for a walk, as long it's my sort of walk and not their 10-mile moorland yomp.

My Christmas tree will go up in the window as usual, so it's visible from the village centre. But otherwise Christmas is just different this year – get over it!

People have said, let's have a Christmas truce like in WWI, but the Covid virus doesn't know it's Christmas any more than Eid, Yom Kippur or Diwali. We've come so far and with vaccinations over the horizon I'm not risking anything just now. I've heard prisoners cope much better when they know the length of their sentence and I know how they feel. My head said months ago that we were in this until at least March – and I'm not going to be far wrong. We're so close, let's hang on in there, wait till we can meet up and hug each other. It can't come soon enough.

I've been wondering whether my generation is more resilient than the baby boomers? We got through the shortages of World War II, and dreary 1950s rationing so we know what life is like outside the good times. Maybe I'm getting too introspective ...

Meanwhile, we've had a mild wet autumn so, in my sleeping garden, crocus, species daffs, grape hyacinth bulbs are already coming up. Signs of better things to come!

*Mary Robinson*