



Kate's Chat

CONNECTING THROUGH THE COCOON



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Nature survives by weathering it out and
so will we!

I am one of those people who likes to finish a project then wipe my hands and walk away. Write a book, publish it and then on with the next one, that's me. Which is why I find gardening such a struggle. Darn thing just keeps growing and changing – it's infuriating! No matter how much weeding and setting and digging and clearing work I do one year – guess what? It all has to be done the next year – and the year after that. The answer is to get a gardener, of course, and last year, I secured the marvelous Kasper from my mother who really got it going. However, with all this cocooning business, it's back down to yours truly and I've been putting off tackling it.

However, if there is one thing I am learning at the moment, it is patience. Yesterday, I got stuck in and spent an hour in the tunnel crumbling dry stones, rooting out scutch grass on my hands and knees - burrowing through the ground loosening the earth either side of the roots to try and get as far into them as I could.

Scutch is the virus of the vegetable garden. If you leave it at all it takes over and the roots run so far and so deep you can never reach them. But I was surprised to find, with a bit of effort, just how many deep roots I was able to get at. In my beds, I was amazed to find there were the parts of my garden still thriving; mint, rhubarb, rocket, and borage – parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme. Beautiful and tough plants that cannot be overrun. Survivors. Like us.

All the answers we need are in nature and today - I'm listening.

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We can all grow edible food – indoors and out. I have been sending seeds off to my city-dweller friends and they have been amazed at how

quickly a few leaves of rocket will come up on a sunny windowsill - in just a few days they have leaves to put in a pot on their patio. Just the feeling of eating something you have grown is so special – and now is the time!

Getting some lovely feedback from you – keep the comments rolling in! A big hullo to Bernie O'Reilly, the residents at Riverview Sonas, and their lovely hostess Karen Egan – we are plotting a live event on the internet as we speak! You can write to me the old-fashioned way at Kate Kerrigan, Quay, Killala, Co. Mayo, Ireland or email me at katekerriganauthor@gmail.com

The Garden Lump

'I wonder would a hydrangea grow on it?'

My husband looked up from his iPhone, then thought better of whatever he was going to say looked back

down again and continued rolling his cigarette, his back to the patio doors.

I am facing him, looking out on the garden. We are sitting at our fancy new kitchen table, in our gorgeous new kitchen, in our wonderful new house - except I can't see any of those things. All I can see is 'The Lump'.

'The Lump' is a corner of our garden that juts out from the side of our neighbours shed/outbuilding that sits into our patio. It is the lower corner of what was supposed to be my pride and joy flowerbed. A sloped path leads up from the patio to the garden proper and my husband was in charge of the lawn to the right, and I was in charge of the hunk of land opposite it. It was attacked with a digger in May and then I was supposed to prepare the ground, spend a week or so poking about at it with bags of compost and leftover builders sand. Except I didn't. I got excited and bought a load of expensive shrubs and flowers and just sort of dog holes wherever I could and shoved things in. What I have now is half a flower bed which is waist height in weeds interspersed with terribly expensive plants that

are slugging it out to survive. It is chaotic and worrying and a little bit ugly but at least it exists. There are plants in the ground. There is hope. The other half of this flower-bed in waiting is just a lump of sopping muck and stones. It is a soggy desert of clay nothingness. In the corner is a piece of black weed-fabric that has come unstuck from it's plastic peg moorings. It flaps in the wind, waving my failure at me as I eat my porridge gazing out at my failure. It is so wet that nothing will grow there – even weeds. There would be things growing there if I had prepared the ground. If....

'You tried hydrangea already,' he said simply, then open the door to step outside and like his fag,' it died.' Actually, it didn't die. I rescued it just in time. Holding out of the ground with its roots directly and throwing it into a pot where it now sits mournfully, along with the other bought roses and shrubs, waiting to be planted out. It's that garden centre optimism when you think blowing 100 quid on plants is going to make your garden look wonderful forgetting that you actually have to somewhere to plant them. Rather like buying a

wedding dress before you have found a husband.

I don't know what it is about this corner of my garden that gets to me in the way that it does.

There are plenty of other places in the garden that need just as much work. There are plans for a treehouse, but first we have to clear away a veritable mountain of twigs and rubble from beneath the trees. The sides of my tunnel need to be cleared and stones added for drainage. The inside of the tunnel is a mess, littered with empty compost bags and scutch grass invading my tomato patch, but somehow I don't mind that. My garden is somewhere I dream of spending more time in. Although I rarely 'work it' every day I go out for a wander around and a look. I fantasise about all the things I'm going to do then pick a couple of weeds, throw a bit of water in the tunnel and feel happy. Then, on the way back down, I see the disastrous 'Lump' reminding me of what a useless gardener I am. As with all things that bother me, eventually they become my husband's fault.

I followed him out to the patio and nodded over.

Next dry day babe will you....?

He looked at me murderously and I stopped myself short. We have only been in the house for three months and I want everything to be perfect. Inside is completely finished and we have lawns, back and front going into the winter. 'The Lump' can wait - but I can't let it go.

'Why don't you just stop looking at it?' he said, 'swap seats.'

Furious, I went back inside. I made coffee but, took his advice and sat at the head of the table. Looking out on the lovely new back lawn, I had a pang of satisfaction. Happiness is how you choose to look at things.

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