

# *The Japanese Tea House*

The days of 'lockdown' were well under way by the middle of April, and like so many other gardens, ours was getting a lot more attention than usual.

My eyes kept being drawn to our pergola at the end of the gravel garden; or is it a Zen Garden? Yes, lovely when the wisteria cascades over the sides, but at other times not a pretty site! To the rear of the pergola was an ugly mix of dark heavy-leafed ivy, an old pipe, barbed wire, a wire fence, weeds and a concrete post; all too well embedded to remove easily. The sides were no better to look at either.

With garden centres still closed, my mind turned to the '*make do and mend*' principle. Yes, let's create a 'Japanese Tea House', something whimsical and fun and certainly tie in with the Zen Garden theme.

The old garden side gate, laid idle was gathering moss behind the conifer tress. It would make an ideal backcloth and I can't pretend it wasn't a struggle up the garden, even for two of us. Yes, success! It fitted beautifully and would clean up with a pressure wash. But how to box in the sides? Bamboo canes came to mind, and secured with some old kitchen fittings to make criss-cross frame, it worked perfectly. A succession of white sheets, net curtains and table cloths were draped over the canes, and all rejected. Go on line! What came up was a travelling gazebo with mosquito netted sides! Perfect, and Amazon could deliver in 2 days; the excitement was growing!

£24 - worth of double bed size mosquito net (*justified no petrol costs these days*) was spread over the kitchen table, cut up, and stapled to the sides of the pergola sandwiching the bamboo canes.

*Genuine Japanese items:* red lantern, glass hanger, black lacquered tray, red sushi plate, table cloth, bottle of Saki, pottery saki bowls (*from the famous 'Shoji Hamada Pottery' in the pottery town of Mashiko, Japan*), black wooden swallow and teapot.

*Make do and Mend items:* Low table made from wooden work top and feet from old TV stand. Mirror cost £1 from Poundland, edged with rim cut off the top of a plastic garden pot, Crown Derby Japanese style patterned cups/saucers.

With some framed postcards of Mount Fuji and some Japanese ladies, my Chinese silk dressing gown, red sandals and some other bits and pieces, the Tea House was complete!

***Was it inspired by 'Lockdown madness' or 'Lockdown creativity'? Whatever it was, we had a lot of fun setting it up, so we hope it amuses you too!***

Joyce and Peter Batey, Hightown 2020





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July 2002