

# A greener Shabbat

When it comes to Shabbat we are all aware that there is little that we can do in the garden without breaking at least one of the 39 principal categories of prohibited activity, explained in the Torah, relating to the building of the Mishkan. All those who try to find any excuse not to mow the lawn or cut the hedge can breathe a sigh of relief, Shabbat for you will truly be a day of rest. However, for those who take pleasure in looking at a nicely tended border, enjoy the smell of freshly cut grass or take pride in new seedlings pushing through the earth, a day of rest which prohibits some of these stimulating leisure activities can seem a little unfair. So what more can I write about after coming to the conclusion that no gardening or even planning of the garden can take place on Shabbat.



I suggest that we sit back, hopefully enjoy some good weather and even have a lovely Shabbat meal with our friends and family in the garden. After lots of fresh air, food and good company, even the most disinterested can enjoy your green haven. Then, the day after Shabbat, as soon as the sun rises, you can put into action a few of the gardening tips that I am going to share with you and, hopefully, by the end of the summer, not only will you be able to enjoy the sight of your sanctuary but you, your friends and family could even consume a small part of it on Shabbat.

I love fresh courgettes and I can think of nothing better for a starter than roasted or griddled courgettes served with a freshly dressed green salad, roasted cherry tomatoes and a dollop of home made hummus, all to be mopped up by yummy Challa (you can even have a go at making this too). Courgettes, I hear you say, don't they grow in the Mediterranean? Well yes, Italian cooking is heavily influenced by the zucchini but, given just a bit of summer sunshine, these plants can grow quite happily in our climate and, given the weather we have had to date, it is not too late to get started (although for you more experienced gardeners out there I would suggest sowing seeds in the end of May rather than the beginning of June).

It is quite simple and the seeds are large so this is a great project to do with little ones too. Just take a three-inch pot and fill with earth and pop a seed in on its side and cover with an inch of soil, water and wait for it to grow (it will take about a week). Your little plants will be ready to plant out into your garden or into large pots for the patio when the true leaves (the first two do not count) appear. Space the plants about 24 inches apart and just wait for the sunshine and water well. Each plant will yield about 10 courgettes so you may like to plant out a few to ensure a true feast. Soon you will be overwhelmed by the elegant yellow flowers (you can eat these too, stuffed with all sorts of delicious things) which are good enough for any herbaceous border. Please to remember to water your plants well (not on Shabbat of course) especially when the fruit begin to swell and by August you and your family will be enjoying a wonderful Shabbat garden feast!

Your green correspondent

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## First Person

Shalom Haffner finds a warm welcome in The Big Apple

A couple of months ago, during one of my infrequent bouts of security, I spent a cold Shabbat morning standing by the Shul gates realising how many of my fellow congregants I did not recognise. I write this, not in the hope that this revelation will have my name crossed off any future security rota, but in response to the First Person article featured in the last edition of The Norrice Leader. For those who may not have read the article, it discussed some important steps in making sure that everyone is made to feel welcome in the community.

My wife and I have been members for some five years and, in a shul the size of ours, I still consider myself a relative newcomer and, as my stint on security proved, I am fairly inept at discerning who's who. This has given me the ideal excuse not to overcome my 'British reserve', as the article so succinctly put it, and stick my head firmly into my Siddur. However, a chance conversation with an indigenous Welcoming Rota regular has led me to believe that I am far from alone in my predicament. I have been assured that the potential embarrassment of asking to do a security check on the Rabbi's tallit bag could be matched by greeting a diehard member of 60 years with an enthusiastic "Welcome to our Shul – have you been here before?"

As the recipient of some of the most incredible Shabbat hospitality over the years, I know how a friendly welcome can transform a potentially very lonely day away from family into a home from home for a weary traveller longing for his cholent and kneidlach. One especially noteworthy event took place in New York a few years back. In true tourist fashion, one hour before Rosh Hashanah, I realised that I had misread the map and had booked my wife and myself into a hotel approximately six

miles away from where we should have been staying. With no food and no kosher shops in the vicinity, it was looking like Yom Kippur was about to start early.

A pretty grim situation was made a lot worse when I discovered that the neighbourhood we would need to walk through, should we have decided to trek for our meals, was considered a 'no go' area, especially at night. Apple and honey in the Big Apple was looking very unlikely.

In desperation, as we saw our intricate Rosh Hashana plans imploding before us, we took to the street to get some fresh air. The look of sheer panic must have been apparent on my face as a complete stranger approached to ask if we were OK. On hearing our dilemma, without hesitation, he contacted his mother who, with just minutes to go before Rosh Hashana, rearranged her whole house to accommodate us for the whole of Yom Tov. Potentially, I owe my life to my new New York friend – even if we had made that perilous walk each day without mishap, after schlepping my wife around 24 miles over the two days, I dread to think what would have become of me.

Our Rabbis teach us *Kol Yisrael arevim zeh bazeh* – All Jews are responsible for one another. As far as I am aware this does not include a clause exempting those claiming British reserve. I think I've learned my lesson and will, hopefully, take the advice of the First Person article more personally in future.

For those wishing to offer their services on a more regular basis or for those congregants who may need help of any sort, the Shul operates a confidential helpline which can be contacted on 8455 0040. Anyone (members or visitors) who would like a Shabbat or Yom tov invitation should ring 8457 7043.