

Neighbours- Less is more?



Françoise has made a great effort to transform this hitherto rather scruffy aspect of the garden. Our Buddha, instead of being hidden behind weeds, is now centre stage surrounded by nature.

Today, my sister and brother in law are coming to stay for a few days. I have taken the unusual step of arranging for the brother-in-law to see Tim, my genius magical body worker, as a type of birthday present because Tim has the sensitivity to help his body, hitherto tense and out of order, to restore itself so he can walk better. If anyone can solve the problem it is Tim and I have great faith in him.



We do not enjoy very good relationships with the neighbour next door. He does not like the fact that I have trees in my front garden. Every time we meet, he goes on about the trees, what bad neighbours. We are, how his light is being excluded, and any thing else he can think of to grumble about. He has been widowed twice, and it is in his 80s, so I have to make some allowances for him. But even so it is irritating.

Although I know I can tell him to mind his own business, the fact is that my nearest tree, a Common Lime, sheds leaves on his front lawn with gay abandon during the autumn season. The best time to prune such trees is in the winter so I'm going to write a diplomatic letter to say that we intend to prune but until that time I will make sure that his lawn is regularly cleared of leaves.

Today's topic is about reading and retaining. My long-time friend, Richard, tells me that he is a slow reader and me thinks this is a very good idea. I listened to a program from Trans World Radio about a pastor who remarked on the way that people read things without absorbing them. He said that if he had asked his congregation what he had preached on, very few

of them would have been able to recall in any detail, apart from a few headlines (I paraphrase here).

There is a definite technique to reading, both newspapers and volumes, which I think I have yet to master. With newspapers. I tried to decide whether the subject matter is of interest to me before even starting it. The writing is for all age groups and interests so I don't expect to find that all topics are relevant. I normally read or should I say finish off my newspaper, the Independent, in bed at night.

Books are another matter, there are some lightweight volumes that you can pick up and put down without any loss but others of a more serious nature cannot be treated this way. I am currently reading a book about the persecution of Christians throughout the ages. I thoroughly recommend it for anyone with the slightest interest in religion. It is called "Hatred without a reason." . It is a real page turner. It's not just that all the disciples of Jesus met grisly ends up those who promulgated the gospel did as well. John Wycliffe, the brave soul who translated the Bible into English and had it printed, was eventually imprisoned and strangled to death. We do indeed take the availability of this wonderful book for granted.

My problem is that I get excited when I read about a new idea and I can't take any more, my brain goes into overload. I think that only with the aid of valium would I be able to sit down for say an hour and read a book of this nature. I'm not quite sure, even at my stage of life, how to attend to this matter. I'm convinced that just reading isolated facts without integrating them with the knowledge that I already have is for the most part a waste of time. The ideal book should change, modify, or refine the mindset and increase the amount of wisdom at least if the book is any good at all.

I could even claim mitigating circumstances from the fact that I'm a Gemini. We love to know a little bit about a lot of topics. I'm not sure whether a lack of concentration is an

intrinsic trait of my star sign, but maybe it is just an excuse and with the correct motivation I could impact correct this. There are some books that I can concentrate on, biographies being one, and novels by John Grisham being in another category. On reflection I think the best thing is to get a sense of priority and to lay aside certain periods of the day, during which reading will take place. I can sense that an enormous amount of self-discipline will be required but it will be a great triumph if I could achieve this.