

In My Garden, September.

*Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the Stooks arise
Around; up above, what wind-walks! What lovely behavior
Of silk-sack clouds! Has wilder, willful- wavier
Meal-drift molded ever and melted across skies?*

GERALD MANLY HOPKINS

I am often asked how come the flowers planted in half-barrels at the front of my cottage always look so lush and hearty. Well, there is no secret or expensive formula nor complicated scientific mixture; its simply my own urine. A most perfect natural fertilizer benefiting the environment and completely free.

It's astonishing when so many people throughout the world desperately struggle to have enough water for basic needs, even then, it is often very poor quality and contaminated. In wealthy countries we go through huge effort and cost of collection, purification and distribution only to flush vast quantities of expensive drinkable water away with our bodily wastes incurring yet *another* costly removal and sanitising process. It is criminal squandering these resources. Why not change something highly undesirable into something precious?

I merely pee into a watering can then half fill with water from the rain butt, give it to whatever is to hand that is in need, hey presto! instant feeding and irrigation. And not just bedding plants I give it to everything. Water from the butt is preferable whenever possible; it is tepid and much less shocking to the plants than icy cold straight off the main. A periodic rinse round of the watering can with some malt vinegar keeps it odourless, hygienic for us humans, and safe for the plants. By September, bedding in containers often becomes tired and jaded looking so profits from this final nourishing boost to strength and potential. As a caveat however; only water into the soil never directly over anything destined for consumption.

At times of the year when the garden or pots do not require watering, I just pee directly into dustbins full of collected household food scraps, fire ash, weeds, leaves and contents from the vacuum cleaner. Guests are encouraged to urinate likewise. Adjacent to the kitchen door there is not the remotest whiff of piss, lift the lid put your face inches from the compost and inhale deeply; healthful and wholesome. I only flush the toilet once or twice a day and have a free, sustainable, high quality mulch for the garden. The extra nitrogen from all the urine accelerates decomposition so that organic matter collected in autumn has broken down sufficiently to be used in spring.

Spending a penny in this manner saves me a fortune.

Every year there seems to be fewer and fewer bees and in the last two years, even wasps are becoming a rarity. I hardly saw a single wasp last year; they eat a great many greenfly and caterpillars in the early summer as well as pollinating, its only later when feeding on fruit that they become more aggressive and bothersome. It is worrying when such a common creature becomes much less frequent. When there is an awful summer, 2012 for example, you can understand why the population of a specie can decline; I hardly saw a single butterfly that year. The last two summers weren't brilliant but they were not bad either. My neighbours' bees have access to a very broad spectrum of flowers from snowdrops in February to ivy in November yet still they do not thrive, now why is this?

The evenings suddenly seem to draw-in sharply, we've already lost a good five hours of daylight. The 1st of September is unmistakable from the 31st of August even if only psychologically so. Our minds turn toward winter as another summer ends and autumn begins.