

Monday 18th May 2015

Dear Customer,

Well the weather hasn't been too great has it – cold and windy. I hope it isn't another summerless summer. Ernest still walks with me sometimes on the moors. Whenever I remark that it's a beautiful day, there is a pause "well.....except for the cold wind" he says. I told him I would etch that on his gravestone. IT WAS SPOILT BY THE COLD WIND'.

Lovely French beans in the bags this week. Delicious the French way - steamed and then sautéed in garlic butter. That's how we'll do them in the café ! The first watermelons of the season are in lots of the fruit bags and cherries, peaches and apricots are imminent.

It's been another week of electricians, floorers and painters, another set of mammoth bills but the work is now surely diminishing. Since my last mention of it there have been two Swaphopper launch meetings, both times we have failed to launch. It now seems as current as bringing a Betamax to the market. The overriding state though is that I am worried sick about the Garden Centre - nerve racked and frazzled. It started off so exciting but the cost is getting serious, my brother was right, and it is going to have to perform, and from day '1'. I am hoping that will be Friday. The Parma Violets are going to have to fly off the vintage sweet barrow.

I am also worried sick about the Kofud Larsen chairs stacked up in the poly-tunnel. As soon as the last drip of paint has been dripped they will be taking their place in the café. The problem is, I think they might be tiny. I am so worried I daren't even look at them. When I told the furniture restorer which chairs I'd bought, to get a restoration price for a few shabby ones, he said they weren't suitable for commercial use - they were too flimsy. I'd already bought them so it was too late. One large labourer sat in one, he looked as if he was sitting on the floor. I tried to ignore this too. My brother bought me two miniature 17th century chairs one Christmas. I am filled with horror that the Kofud Larsen chairs are no bigger than this.

The office hasn't been moved. When the computer man arrived he said there no phone lines. BT came to put them in. We left them there doing it two weeks ago and told them where to leave the key when they left. BT didn't bother telling us they never installed them as the men were called off to an emergency. So in theory, this is the week we move.

I have rounded up plant catalogues from all the wholesalers. I've now decided on the supplier, now how do I choose from over 2,000 plants. Same with the sweets – thousands of them. Everything has thousands. Why can't they have a farmaround-type, 'just bring me anything' arrangement. I asked the plant sales woman what sort of care the plants needed and badly undermined my credibility asking her if they would need to be watered. So I've started delegating. Apart from their normal Farmaround roles I gave Lorraine 'Sweets' (she has children) and the café, staffing it, the ingredients, the cook and the Izzy Lane boutique as well as being responsible for the office move. Diane has 'Groceries' and the shop and its staffing and the warehouse move. I thought it was just me but they both told me they thought they were having nervous breakdowns. I think only Eve is standing firm. After some reflection I thought maybe it was for the best to not try and do both the moves and open both the shop and café and the Garden Centre in the space of three days. I told them this. But no, they want to do the lot, 'we can do it' said Diane, slumped over her desk. We shall see what this week brings.

Myfa is poorly. On Sunday I went to visit the Hidden Garden near Masham – a hidden valley of woodland walks with over 200 varieties of rhododendrons, open for just one month a year when they are in bloom. I needed the respite and Myfa loved it, but I'm worried she may have sniffed the poisonous pollen.

What other news ! A lamb ran past my window when I was having dinner with a friend. We rushed out and managed eventually to herd it into the kissing gate where I grabbed hold of it but went head-first into the gate. I hate banging my head as I never know how hard I've hit it and if I will drop dead. I sat in panic for a few hours with a bag of peas on my head, desperate to fall asleep but knowing it's the last thing you should do. By late evening I thought I was probably going to be ok but when I went to bed it started to throb. I wasn't convinced I'd still be here in the morning. Anyway – still here – just as well as have so much to do.

We received a phone call from one of our drivers in London saying that our van had been taken away and was in the Police compound – they told him he didn't have a valid driving licence. He insisted he did, and indeed we have a copy of his licence. The driver has since gone to ground and we spent all week trying to locate and get our van back. It did affect some of the deliveries, which went out late and I'm sorry if you were affected.

Hope all is well with you,

Kind wishes,

Isobel

PS All missing newsletters now on the website