

And then my heart with pleasure fills, and dances with the daffodils

ANOTHER NEW Year and scarcely any cold weather. For a long time we had very few birds in the garden, I suppose that they must have been finding natural food for much longer than usual. When they did come back there were plenty on the feeding stations, including coal tits and long tailed tits. I don't think I have seen a coal tit here for a good many years, we used to get quite a lot. I think there are fewer green-finches this year. It's strange how it seems to go in cycles, we had a lot of spotted flycatchers at one time, but again I cannot remember how long it's been since I saw one locally.

Sparrowhawks have been spotted by a lot of people in the area—and been stared out by them. One neighbour attempted to drive one away so that the small birds could eat and it simply moved a bit farther along the fence, no fear at all. As I got out of bed one morning and glanced out of the window as usual a sparrowhawk was sitting on the fence under a conifer about 15 feet from the window. A perfect spot, as the light was not good, and any birds on the bird table would have been easy prey. I stood and watched it for a minute or two and then knocked on the window. It simply turned its head and watched me in return.

I HOPE I am not boring you too much with my 'winter garden' which I planned and planted three years ago so that I would not have to look out on a muddy lawn and muddy border during the winter days. Now from the bedroom window I can see a large viburnum which is covered with scented deep pink flowers. A little further down there's a shrub that has blue berries all winter that the birds seem to leave alone. The main feature of the planned border is a winter flowering cherry with pale pink flowers that's about 12 feet high and set against a neighbour's evergreen hedge. Below are various green and gold shrubs: bergenias whose foliage goes almost black in the winter, helibores, some of which are in flower already this year, and one of the loveliest shrubs, I think, a beautiful choisia sundance which is pure gold and has scented flowers in the early summer. On the left is a winter jasmine - a deeper yellow. All under-planted with bulbs.

WE HAD a crocus showing colour in the front garden on the 28 December and on the last Sunday in January I went into a



My VIEW

By JOAN GOWER



friend's house in New House Close and she had daffodils in flower. On the Sunday before that we were driving to Herne Bay and there were daffs in bloom outside the Punch Tavern and a few celandines in a sunny spot. It all looks very cheerful and promising.

THE RAIN finally overtook the drought and although they are apparently watching the bore holes carefully, most water companies, with the exception of Mid Kent, have called off the hosepipe ban. I only hope we can get through the summer without another. One resident in the Close has blackbirds nesting already, using chunks of moss which they have taken from the roof and soaked in the bird bath.

I COULD hardly believe my eyes when I saw that BT had once again repaired the phone box. I seem to remember that when I worked for them so many years ago they were legally obliged to keep

isolated boxes in working order so that they could be used for 999 calls and operator access at least. This proved necessary on the night Petham exchange caught fire and the engineer called to several faults in Petham was obliged to drive to this very call box, which was the nearest, to ring the fire brigade.

WHAT A brilliant idea it was to organise a local delivery service for the Christmas cards in the neighbourhood. Unfortunately for me by the time the fliers had come through the door we had delivered most of ours. I hope we can do this again this year. It will be a boon to those of us that are no longer as mobile as we once were and there are a good many of us locally.

That's all for now. Next time the weather will be better. A lot to look forward to. (01227 451 492).

Joan

And then my heart with pleasure fills, and dances with the daffodils, from 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', William Wordsworth.