

Chit chat from the shop

As summer-time fast approaches in Biggar, there's still no sign of any heat coming our way or the kind of weather that might encourage people to plant up their summer tubs, baskets or pots. Even the bedding plants on our suppliers' endless trolleys are looking tired and battered and, if they were being honest, should be put straight into the bucket.

As we mentioned in our latest news section, we love herbs. They last well, flourish well and are easy to care for. The more you pick the more they grow and, yes, they are good for your health. Not that we in the shop can demonstrate much in the way of cooking skills – except for [Malky and Party Girl](#). These two are always preparing some delicacy or other at home. No, no – not in shop. Floral scents only are allowed there. And when was the last time anyone even spotted a spoon or knife in the shop?

TOP TIPS AND RANTS

We can advise though that roughly chopped herbs can brighten up even the dullest salad or stew. Apologies at this stage to those of you who like to know what goes with what. For goodness sake, just grab some and shove them in – you'll soon figure out what suits! And remember not to add too much salt – use the herbs as seasoning. In today's healthy eating climate, it sounds like a good buy.

It's also good to read up on what herbs can be used for. A customer advises that when he was growing up Southernwood (*Artemisia arbotanum*) was grown at the back and front doors to help keep the flies out of the house. It has a strong antiseptic smell but grows well, with nice soft green foliage.

As we don't have much of a summer feel yet in the shop, more like spring, we thought you might like a bit of chat about what's happening in and around Biggar (but please note that these are our thoughts only, based on our customers' chit-chat). For example, the new museum continues to take shape both inside and out. It will be interesting to see what it looks like when it opens in the summer. You can check up on what's planned through their website <http://www.biggarmuseumtrust.co.uk/stephens-garage-appeal>. New houses too are springing up at the top end of town, as you head towards Edinburgh. Change happens... Let's hope that those who buy them hoping for country life with access to all services find what they're looking for.

But, I hear you say, she's sounding cheery, not ranting this time. Hold your horses or, should I say, cars, vans, lorries, motor-bikes and motor-homes! It's the parking in Biggar – it's getting worse by the day! Here's why... Not enough spaces, yes! No one wants to park their car in the wee car parks and walk, so they double park, park on the newly laid Caithness stone pavements, abandon their vehicle at junctions and even leave outside shops for a week at a time (except for the hour when it disappeared for a wash to remove the dust it had accumulated just sitting there). Yes, you've guessed it! It was my shop. Actually, I'd got so used to it that I didn't notice it had gone...

They abandon their motor-homes outside, park it up, have dinner, sleep, and then whip out the croissants for a continental brekkie the next day! What? Yes! And they sit inside gawping at the rest of the world going by. Breakdowns... are you okay? Need to use the phone... No toilets down the road – oh sorry, Biggar toilets are under threat of closure. Clean your teeth in

the van, eat your lunch, dinner, ice cream, fish and chips... aye, whatever!

Did I ever tell you about one Saturday afternoon when a fish eating car with two people inside was parked outside my shop? My old blue Golf was pretty nippy in its hey-day (mind you, the driver was pretty slow!). If you started it up, and just touched the accelerator ever so slightly, it took off – honestly. So, my car was parked side on to the happy munchers about three feet away and, yes, I hit the accelerator by mistake and was just about straight into them. They dropped their suppers almost choking on what they'd just popped into their mouths and the look of horror (mine too!) was memorable. I, of course, apologised profusely but at that point they bundled what was left of their suppers into a ball, smiled wanly and headed off fast...

There's talk of parking when they demolish the old primary school (don't hang your washing out that day – what a stour that will create!) so let's hope folk take to the car parks and free up some space on the High Street for weary travellers, be they in cars, lorries or bikes, but who just want to grab a few minutes in Biggar to buy a fishy treat – or a bunch of flowers!

I accept that I was as guilty as anyone before I had a business, and, guilty as charged, our cheery delivery driver does screech to a halt in his huge 'artic' off-loading flowers and holding up traffic on the main road, to which they say 'Oh they'll ***? ***!!!' But I personally am so much more aware now that we need to watch where we park or at least pop into a shop to check that it's okay – yes, we do get a few nice people who have the courtesy to do that.

With that, we'll head off to check the forecast and with plans to be back with you when it heats up a bit. As yet, summer flowers and plants for 2015 are somewhere on the distant horizon...