



Fig. 1

Four years ago my sister bought a ground floor flat with its own garden, after years of living in middle flats with none. Looking at pictures of this hard-won

paradise – a small, north-facing square on London Clay, with high walls on three sides, and brambles and ground elder trying to invade on the fourth – I

realised with a spasm of shock and shame that it was not much bigger than my own neglected, north-facing front garden, which has light soil, big privet hedges on three sides and the house on the fourth.

She sends me pictures of the transformation she has wrought: boundary fences and walls painted white, trellises, big plants carefully nurtured, big flowers; poor doers ruthlessly culled – no passengers in her garden!

I could do better, I realised. I already had a double row of big white shasta daisies (*Leucanthemum x superbum*, fig. 2) and two big clumps of *Celmisia semicordata*, a New Zealand daisy that does well here in Aberdeen (fig. 3). I planted small daffodils under the hedge, so we could see them from the front window. This year I added some cyclamen there. I placed pots outside the front door – though only the postman sees them (fig. 4).

Fig. 2 *Leucanthemum x superbum*Fig. 3 *Celmisia semicordata*



©Barry Murton

Fig. 4

A small variegated vinca was already here – I have started training it as ground cover, and as a trailer in pots and troughs. I have planted a heuchera too, which does not mind shade. A white double-flowered feverfew has moved in – always a pleasant contrast (figs 5 & 6).

Winter pansies and violas make a little splash of colour before the bulbs come through in spring (fig. 7).



©HPS image library

Fig. 5 *Heuchera* 'Burgundy Frost'

I have a rose in a big pot – it always needs more feeding than I remember to give it – and a potted azalea, whose flowers last much longer in the cool shade than they would in full sun.

This garden never gets as much sun as my sister's, so it will never look as good; the cold east wind blows constantly through the gaps, drying out the plants relentlessly. I do have a big,

sunny back garden where we grow soft fruit; so I can rotate pots, bringing out something cheery from the back into the front, for a week or a month. It does look better than it used to. Perhaps it cheers up the postman!

Now I have started suggesting to neighbours that they could add something too – a pot of daffs? Or geraniums? Poacher turned gamekeeper! 🐇



©HPS image library

Fig. 6 *Tanacetum parthenium* double white-flowered



©HPS image library

Fig. 7 *Viola riviniana* Purpurea Group

Gay Murton, now 81, is a former science teacher, and long-time haphazard gardener. Born in Liverpool, she has lived in Aberdeen for the last 40 years, and is a member (and until recently a volunteer helper) of the Friends of the Cruickshank Botanic Garden, and the Royal Horticultural Society of Aberdeen.