Food Matters -
Escaping to the Garden during Covid-19 Lockdowns and (Re-)Connecting with Food

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Abstract

This research is an ethnographic study of gardeners growing food in their home-gardens during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns in England, UK during 2020-2021. With people confined to their homes under law in attempts to stem the spread of the virus, the UK government recommended that people undertook daily exercise outdoors for the benefit of their physical and mental health. Over 3 million people took up gardening (HTA, 2021).

From multi-sited fieldwork data, the themes of escape, memory, relations, and temporality emerged. The study explores how gardeners forge a relationship with their food when they grow it themselves in the garden taskscape (Ingold, 1993). Participants rejoiced in the unsurpassed tastes of freshly harvested produce and described how memories of relations and events as well as the phenomenological experiences of nurturing plants become embodied as meaning in the food they grow (Sutton, 2001; Crowther, 2013; Pollan, 2013). Gardeners felt a connection with nature, described as an immersion in the world, and attend to non-human seasonalities. This also highlighted gardeners' sustainability ethic, which adds another lens through which to view and understand motivations and outcomes for those who choose to grow their own food in their home-garden.

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My mum has always taken an interest in food and health, and I thank her for being such a role model for eating well and for the experiences of daily home-cooking as I grew up. She has encouraged me to be a discerning shopper with sustainable ethics that I have passed on to my own family.

I thank my dad and grandad, even though they are no longer with us, for childhood memories of gardening: digging potatoes, picking tomatoes, sowing runner beans. I thank my grandad especially because as a blind man who tended a large garden by himself well into his 80's, I learnt from him that anyone can do it!

I would like to thank Luci Attala, my tutor at the University, for her empathy, encouragement, and guidance. Plus, I thank all the staff at the University library in Lampeter, who have efficiently posted books and sourced articles for me to use as a distance learner. They must have been incredibly busy throughout the pandemic with so many students studying off-site, so their work is all the more appreciated because of that.

Finally, I thank my volunteers, the participants, without whom this study would not have been possible: for giving up their time to talk; for their willingness to share their stories, thoughts, and memories of gardening; for posting photos; for commenting on others posts on Facebook; and most of all for sharing the joy of growing your own in your home-garden.

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Introduction

During the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns and movement restrictions enforced in England (April 2020 – June 2021), the government encouraged people to spend time outdoors, recommending daily walks or exercise to achieve positive health benefits. Gardening in the UK is a major sector for the leisure industry and Ghazi and Jones maintain it is an activity for everyone whatever their age, transforming lives (1997, pp. 210–217). With England being a "nation of gardeners" (Way, 2010; Willes, 2014, p. 5), over 3 million more people took up gardening during the pandemic, including those with limited budgets, taking the total number of gardeners to nearly 47% of the UK population (HTA, 2021).

There is now a plethora of research on the health benefits of gardening (Soga, Gaston and Yamaura, 2017; AJPH, 2018; Thompson, 2018), plus benefits for community and social engagement (Harper and Afonso, 2016; Wesselow and Mashele, 2019). Whether for health benefits, or as a leisure pursuit, gardening is imbued with meaning, and is of interest to anthropologists as such.

Whilst very few gardeners are self-sufficient in fruit and vegetables, growing your own (from hereon in, abbreviated to GYO) is nonetheless a means of food provisioning and feeds into the discourse on Alternative Food Networks (AFNs). The scale of influence of such a local pastime however, on national and global foodways is dismissed through an economic lens (Verhaeghe, 2014). Yet, this paper brings other reasons to the fore that will raise the profile and the contribution that GYO makes to food security and ecological sustainability.

The Government's Food Strategy document indicates that education about food is important, (HM Government, 2010), and highlights how GYO is good for mental and physical health. Yet, the number of households with access to a garden is declining (HTA, 2021) and there are no policies that require providing a garden or any outdoor space in new house building guidelines in the UK (NHBC, 2021). As part of UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, in 2019, a Year of Green Action was promoted, which suggested ways to use your garden to make 'greener choices'. GYO was not listed as one of the ideas.

Scant anthropological research exists on GYO in UK home-gardens, as opposed to growing food on allotments, or in community or urban green spaces. This research is an ethnographic study of gardeners, and it contributes to the discourse of how complex and personal meanings become embodied in food grown in a home-garden that consequently affects gardeners' health. It explores the themes of escape, memory, relations, and temporality. It also highlights gardeners' sustainability ethic, which adds another lens through which to view and understand motivations and outcomes for those who choose to grow their own food.

This research project was carried out during the Covid-19 lockdowns and movement restrictions in England in 2020-2021. As a keen gardener myself, I was enthused by having the time at home to re-establish my own vegetable plot and explore my passion for fruit and vegetables that I grew myself. The objectives of the study were:

- to produce an ethnography of gardeners using digital methodologies to obtain field notes,
- To consider the phenomenological aspects of gardening,
- To explore the gardening experience in relation to food sourcing, preparation, cooking and eating.

1. Literature Review

There are two distinct foci explored in this Literature Review: the home-grown food itself, which invites research on its materiality, its supply, its consumption, and how meaning is attached to it; and the home-garden, the place where the food is grown, which calls on literature about connections with nature and non-human relations. The concept of identity relates to both the food and the garden and is the first topic for review.

1.1 Identity

<u>The garden is an extension of home</u>

Growing fruit and vegetables in the home-garden has practical benefits over an allotment. Conveniently adjoined to the house, any spare moment can be seized upon to pop outside and tend to a plant or a task. For the anthropologist, the home-garden is a multifaceted field site, one where the concept of identity is associated with the home which underpins meaning-making. Bhatti & Church (2001, pp. 368–9), have studied how the home-garden shares the same meanings associated with the concept of 'home' and note that most discussions about home often refer to the garden as well because the garden is an extension of home (Gross and Lane, 2007, p. 227).

<u>Home</u>

Home is defined as a safe haven for retreat and relaxation (Moore, 1984); a private, uncensored space and a place where relationships are nurtured and interdependency and independence underpin behaviours and beliefs (Mallett, 2004, pp. 71, 78); a location distinct from the workplace (Stuart-Smith, 2020, p. 7). It is a complex concept. Home is where identity (Wardhaugh, 1999, p. 96) and creativity can be expressed (Burchardt, 2002). Home is also the body for the self (Mallett, 2004, p. 84). As an expression of self, homes (including bodies) are clad, tended and used for living. 'Things' are brought into the home to represent social and cultural belonging: furniture, décor, tools, people, and in the home-body, food (Mallett, 2004; Brooks *et al.*, 2016, p. 151).

Behaviours and actions can be different at home as opposed to elsewhere. Ingold (1995, p. 31) affirms that how we behave is influenced by our home. The phenomenological experience of being 'at-home' is understood as conveying feelings of comfort and safety, a sense of belonging that is not necessarily situated by physical boundaries (Tucker, 1994), and in essence, it is where the self is content in its environment.

The home-garden, with all the associations of home, therefore, enables people to engage with nature in a comfortable 'home' environment as opposed to public outdoor space. This is the most important distinction to make between GYO in allotments or other shared locations, compared to the private, personal and unregulated GYO in home space (Bhatti and Church, 2004, p. 38). Further, Raisborough and Bhatti (2007, p. 474) declare that the home-garden is "where anyone can position themselves as agents, empowered to forge and nurture relations". Whilst the home can manifest as a site of domestic tension and conflict on the use of space (Sibley, 1995 cited in Mallett, 2004 p73), the home-*garden* can by contrast become an escape or refuge (Gross and Lane, 2007; Freud cited in Stuart-Smith, 2020, p. 146).

So, because home is the dynamic interplay of self-expression, creative production, and symbolic of social and cultural constructs (Wardhaugh, 1999, p. 95; Gasset cited in Lane, 2001, p. v), so the home-garden, being an extension of home, is all these things too (Bhatti and Church, 2004, p. 37).

Home is not just about a building or a place. Havel's view (cited in Tucker, 1994, p. 182) of the home imagines multi-faceted elements inseparable to our human identity adding that without all these aspects, "man would be deprived of himself, of his humanity". The corollary to this for me is if the home-*garden* shares the same notions as the home itself, then being deprived of a garden also deprives man of part of his identity. This adds weight to the debate about why people are becoming sick from a lack of connection with nature (Louv, 2009)[1], and possibly more so in the UK at this time where the number of homes with access to an outdoor space is in decline (HTA, 2021).

[1] A lack of connection with nature is explored later in the Literature Review and under the theme of Relations in the Findings and Discussion section.

Gurney (1997) comments that home is defined *in relation* to important events in peoples' lives. He further highlights the "significance of emotions in the construction of meaning". Whilst Sutton's work (2001, 2016) focusses on memories that invoke many different emotions and many relating to the home, he does not attend to the *emotions* per se that are experienced at the time of the memories' inceptions, nor as they are recalled. Sutton does nonetheless adhere to Gurney's theory that memories of *events* affect meaning. To clarify, meanings and the emotions associated with home, change. This idea is explored later under Temporality.

Gender

Another topic to introduce when discussing identity is gender. Gurney (1997) suggests a gender divide exists between how home is understood, and explores the many ways in which memories and previous experiences affect behaviour in the present. Also, he believes that women and men apply meaning in different ways. Academic literature on gender differences often involve discourse on food: its sourcing, its preparation, its social and cultural significance; its effects on health and relationships. There is also significant discourse regarding gender roles across the world, relating to food in the home. Throughout history, women have undertaken the role of nurturer, child-carer, home-maker. Abbots (2016, p. 121) highlights that Arabic and South Asian women's identities depend on this and refer to women as gatekeepers inculcating cultural values for the family (Vallianatos and Raine cited in Abbots, 2016, p. 121). Women in Rwanda are "responsible for biodiversity and keeping their households food secure" (Pottier, 2016, p. 158). Counihan (2008, p. 356) introduces the term, a 'differential consciousness' where Mexican women in Colorado attempt to redefine their importance in the household by commodifying food.

Consumer

Food choices, (Fischler, 1988, p. 275; Crowther, 2013, p. 41) contribute to identity in many ways and not just through a gendered lens. This may be in regard to nationality with Malaysians and rice (Bray, 2016, p. 174), community (Crowther, 2013, p. 60), culture for Iñupiaq relations with their garden [of the sea] (Bodenhorn, 1993, pp. 182–3), or identity as a consumer (Clark, 2004, p. 418).

Food becomes us, i.e. food is an assimilation with the body (Beeton, 1890, p. 1530; Kass in Bennett p.47-48). As Coveney elucidates "our material bodies are made up of components that were once food" (2014, p. 2). But food is not merely a material requirement. Food necessitates choice in its selection (Brooks *et al.*, 2016, chap. 7). Brillat-Savarin's claim, "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are" (1826) suggests that identity is wholly created by food choices. Food, with every encounter, is both a natural and a cultural signifier, as Crowther asserts, "Food is our everyday creative and meaningful engagement with nature through culture." (2013, p. xviii).

In today's foodways, however, aside from AFNs, trust, provenance and quality are being questioned as the globalisation of cultures, including food tastes and choices, becomes more homogeneous (Clark, 2004, p. 413; Pilcher, 2008, p. 400). This globalisation and homogeneity problematises identity, blurring definitions of cultural and social networks and reducing opportunities for self-expression.

1.2 Current foodways - a separation between humans and food origins

Anthropologists and academics in many disciplines document an increasing separation between people and their food origins (Mason, 2004, p. 112; Counihan, 2008, p. 356; Crowther, 2013, pp. xxiii, 58, 272). Clark notes that butchers' windows no longer display nor sell recognisable body parts such as animals' heads, feet, tongues (Clark, 2004, p. 417). Coveney (Coveney, 2014, p. 2) also explains that the grower, producer or manufacturer is hidden, unknown or forgotten in global agri-business. Crowther declares a significant shift from self-sufficiency to relying on others to produce and provide food in the Global North, the commodification of food (Sutton, 2001, p. 57; Mason, 2004, p. 41; Crowther, 2013, p. xxiii;58;272). Fran Edgerley asserts, "Commodification detaches us from their [food's] visceral origins" (Edgerley, 1939, p. 7) and Clark declares people are "increasingly alienated from that which keeps them alive" (2004, p. 418).

The natural way of accessing food is to search for it growing, naturally… somewhere, although this is hard in today's industrial world (Crowther, 2013, p. 213). A homogeneity of food is now evidenced in supermarkets exerting power over growers. Unlike any other European country,

five supermarkets dominate the UK food supply (Mason, 2004, p. 107; Crowther, 2013, pp. 90–92). They dictate to producers the cosmetic appearance of vegetables and fruit, insisting on uniform sizes, shapes, and weights to aid their automated packaging and labelling systems, all to maximise efficiency and profit. To meet these demands, farmers have restricted the variety of crops grown to those that ensure yield and resist disease, flooding the market with limited choices, bland produce (Luetchford, 2014, p. 17) and mediocrity (de Certeau and Giard, 1998, p. 70). We can rarely experience the subtle differences between varieties of fruit and vegetables in texture, taste, appearance, smell – all sensorial stimuli. The pleasure that we may have gleaned from engaging our senses to select what to buy (Barthes, 2008, pp. 29–30; Pollan, 2013, p. 9), is being denied us (Freer, 2017). For supermarkets, the humanness of the consumer is ignored. As Kelly (2002, p. 434) states, "Human beings are reduced to economic entities". Sutton (2001, p. 156) laments how the capitalist economy "erodes the ties that bind". The increasing distance between us and our food is also evidenced with the statistic that over 80% of Britain's food is imported (Edwards, 2019).

An explanation for the runaway success of convenience food and someone else growing food instead of GYO, points mainly to the changes in work attitudes following the second world war, with women working and 'needing' the time-saving devices and quick-cook meals to enable them to be successful home-makers as well as gainfully employed (Coveney, 2000, p. 133; Albala, 2004, p. xi; Mason, 2004, p. 119; Crowther, 2013, p. 144). With this in mind, supermarkets have hoodwinked people into believing that peoples' busyness is a measure of success (Freer, 2017), and plants afterall, grow slowly and do not fit our fast-paced lifestyles (Burchardt, 2002, p. 166). Pollan, however, disputes this theory, and believes the reason is simply because food is profitable (2013, p. 185). I add that people do not have less time to prepare food: people choose to spend their time doing other things. The problems of our normative food system "inform(s) the debate on how we might question and transform a society defined by constant busyness" (Schoneboom, 2018, p. 374) and one driven by economics, not the health and well-being of the planet and its inhabitants (Verhaeghe, 2014).

Before bringing Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) into this review, whose rationale is to reduce the distance between food growers and consumers, I divert to nutritional science, which contributes to the debate on the quality of food on our supermarket shelves.

1.3 Nutrition

Brooks et al (2016) cite from the report *Healthy Lives, Healthy People 2010,* a 'public apathy' towards food the extent of which appears to correlate with the increasing distances between food origins and its consumption. The UK traffic-light labelling system introduced in December 2016 attempted to focus the population's attention on their health to make appropriate food choices. Information or knowledge about food, is now centred on health and nutrition, diverted away from the question of its origin. Nutrient values determine the quality of produce. However, whilst the average consumer may be developing a 'nutritional consciousness' as a result of government guidelines and retailers' marketing (Barthes, 2008), nutrition as a science has a number of flaws. Firstly, Coveney (2000, p. 126) invokes Foucault's technology of power and posits that nutrition science objectifies bodies and applies recommended values for specific outcomes on hugely diverse populations whilst ignoring the uniqueness of individuals' size, shape, internal systems, quantities, qualities, thoughts, feelings et al.

Secondly, the published data (Department of Health, 2013) on nutrient values of fruit and vegetables is to be questioned. The data comprises an *average* figure, calculated from foods harvested at different times of the year and from different locations, with different packaging, storage, transportation, and treatment histories. The figures do not represent the actual values in a particular product. Vitamins are labile (Coveney, 2000, p. 101) and the content of vitamin C in kale for example, reduces by up to 5% for each hour after cutting. Taste may be a signifier here, because kale tastes stronger just after picking (Rice, 1988, p. 13). It would seem therefore, that if the taste is lacking, the nutrients are too. From this, I deduce that taste is an indicator of quality, yet, bizarrely Atwater, who devised nutritional science, said that taste plays no part in healthy food (Shapiro cited in Coveney, 2000, p. 76).

Thirdly, Crowther (2013, p. 22) describes how culture and meanings, both significant aspects of human life, are missing with nutritionism. "There is much more to people's eating practices than sourcing a range of nutrients". The phenomenological and visceral experiences of human life, no more encountered than in the realm of food, is ignored.

Brooks et al (2016, p. 153) have also critiqued the formal nutritional science of food and the Cartesian separation of mind and body, surmising that food requires will and skill and that knowledge acquired about food constitutes a relationship with it. Further, Coveney (2000) questions the efficacy of science on satiation. He has studied not just the nutritional composition of foodstuffs but also the social benefits of eating, upholding with Jenkinson (2020) that nutritional policies and food regulations informed by nutritional values of individual components ignores the human need for a relationship with food. Coveney notes that with today's foodways, personal relationships associated with food acquisition are being destroyed, "…abrogating our relationship with food." (2014, p. 2).

1.4 Alternative Food Networks (AFNs)

Choosing to source food from AFNs, where the distance between producer and consumer is reduced, signifies a desire for a closer connection or relationship with food and contributes to the discourse on identity. Typically, AFNs might be Farmers' Markets, Box Delivery Schemes, or Community Gardens. GYO is the method that achieves the closest connection of all these food-getting strategies but because few gardeners are self-sufficient in fruit and vegetables, they might prefer to buy produce from AFNs rather than the supermarkets (see 1.2 above). Kneafsey et al (2008) concluded that customers of AFNs, were discerning shoppers and were prepared to make choices that fit their own paradigms of living a healthy life, both physically and mentally, as actants in the world, they are "… actively involved in building food production and consumption arrangements which are better suited to meeting their practical needs, sustaining their lifestyles, addressing their anxieties and satisfying their daily ethical dilemmas" (2008, p. 10).

The commodification of food is predicated on *what* people do, rather than *why* they do it (my emphasis) (Pratt and Luetchford, 2014, p. 6) and imagines people to be dependent and ignorant rather than capable of making informed choice (Pollan, 2013, p. 407). Brooks et al (2016, p. 153) explored the notion of choice in relation to food policies, and with this, identified themes of freedom, responsibility and an instrument for change. These are empowering concepts, all of which feature in the discourse of GYO and demonstrate a duty of care toward the self and others, both human and non-human organisms and the planet in its entirety.

GYO as an Alternative Food Network

Food provisioning by GYO is a valid and dynamic food-getting strategy and as such becomes part of the holistic study of food (Crowther, 2013 p.xviii). Notably, GYO can be understood as an alternative lifestyle (Coveney, 2000, p. 119). Gardeners' decisions to grow at least some fresh produce themselves are indeed an attempt to oppose the commercialisation of the food industry (Luetchford, 2014, pp. 15–16) which is a corruption of the natural food supply (Clark, 2004, p. 412).

Food is grown in seasons and offers variety (Jenkinson, 2020, p. 213), but the modern food supply system attempts to negate the seasons and exert power and dominance, not only on the growers, but on the natural cycle of life (Kneafsey *et al.*, 2008; Brooks *et al.*, 2016, p. 156). In GYO then, people can realign food's position in the non-human world, forge a relationship with it, attain confidence in its provenance (Coveney, 2014, p. 43) and focus on its quality (van Holstein, 2017). In addition to the fact that homegrown food is richer in key vitamins and micronutrients (Whitney *et al.*, 2017), gardeners' definition of quality is food acquired without harming the natural environment, food that is fresh, that they have grown themselves and cooked from scratch, and that is special (and of quality) because of the meanings that they ascribe to it.

Whilst quality is determined by a range of factors (Chandra *et al.*, 2021), the Quality Turn introduced by Goodman & Goodman (2009, p. 5) reverts the focus "from 'commercial' and 'industrial' to the domestic world".

1.5 Physical and Mental Health in the Garden

People's lifestyles (Shin *et al.*, 2016; Freer, 2017, pp. 165–66) are often a form of self-expression that significantly impact on physical and mental health. Gardening achieves this. It involves being outdoors, doing physical exercise, an 'other' activity that does not necessitate the use of technological devices (Psychology Today, n.d.). Physical rehabilitation programmes after surgery or injury are increasingly led by physiotherapists in the garden (Stuart-Smith, 2020, pp. 190–2). Restoration therapies held in gardens following trauma are becoming more prevalent for people suffering from PTSD, overcoming drug abuse, for refugees, or people

severely and emotionally affected by events in their lives. Their therapy, whilst complex, features a holistic approach to re-establishing links that will improve their health, "…rebuilding a sense of connection to place and to life in the process" (Stuart-Smith, 2020, p. 206). In horticultural therapy, the opportunity to care for another living thing without censure or judgement provides a different focus for someone whose personal relationships are damaged (Ballon, 2012; Pieters *et al.*, 2019; Jones, 2020, p. 106). When gardening includes growing food to eat, the benefits multiply, not only because of the quality of food that is consumed but also because the food becomes a means of expressing identity, and is embodied with multifarious meanings (Albala, 2004; Crowther, 2013; Pratt and Luetchford, 2014, p. 60) that support mental health. Monty Don (Don and Don, 2004, p. 78), the presenter of Gardeners' World on BBC TV, the first presenter without any horticultural training, who admits to suffering from poor mental health, says spending time in the garden heals. Laws (2004, p. 213) maintains that "if you're growing outside, you're growing inside". Honoré affirms gardening is a therapy (2004, p. 225).

As a way-of-life, knowledge about food and taking responsibility for its provisioning was paramount for the ancient Greeks' and Romans' good health (Coveney, 2000) and whilst lifestyles are vastly different in Modernity, lessons might be learnt from the ancients' relationship with their food and the importance they placed on their health because of it. Gardening is a reflexive hobby (Burchardt, 2002, p. 166), and one where all the senses can be aroused. It is this awareness and responsiveness that Bennett (2010, p. xiv) suggests improves health in the garden.

1.6 Senses, Taste, Phenomenology and Visceral experiences

There is much discourse on how we connect with nature, notwithstanding the work of Ingold (2000) and Descola (2013)for example, who question the dichotomy between culture (humanity) and nature[2]. The discourse on the anthropology of the senses highlights difficulties not only of accommodating the Western bias toward visual stimuli, but how to analyse diverse interpretations and responses across different cultures (Howes cited in Sutton, 2001, p. 13). Documenting a connection with nature is problematic. One of the reasons we may find it

[2] This dichotomy is explored in the next section

difficult to articulate and record what our senses tell us, is because it is too complicated. Stuart-Smith posits that this could be the reason for relatively little research into the beneficial effects of gardening to date (2020, p. 247). Goodey explains multisensory perception:

> "…when perceiving his environment, an individual does not sub-divide his observations by disciplinary categories, he views the totality 'out there'... Perception is therefore an extremely dynamic process and one which is very difficult to monitor" (1973, p. 4).

Arguably, a lexicon for explaining how our sensory glands respond is lacking in English, alluded to by Pollan (2013, p. 241) who talks of rediscovering his sense of touch when making bread. He comments that it is a new feeling and difficult to describe.

Cohen's discourse on not 5, but 54 senses talks of the languageless of nature (n.d.), an anthropocentric statement implying that without language, nature cannot communicate. The fact that we as humans do not share the same language as nature, does not mean it does not exist. Nature does communicate within and among itself (Sheldrake, 2020) and there is growing interest in this field among scholars. Plants' agency on humans, of growing interest in ecological and nutritional anthropology, results in hunter-gatherers facilitating plants (re)growth the following year (Crowther, 2013, p. 32; Attala, 2017). Attala's work suggests that plants, when freshly picked, taste wonderful for a reason. Part of their mode of survival is to be attractive to humans so that they cultivate and grow more. However, human mass-agricultural practices and industrialised processing of foodstuffs indisputably destroys natural flavour. The number of vegetable varieties grown is reduced (see 1.2) and the plants' only way of communicating messages (by tasting good), is ignored. The corollary being that humans are not responding to the natural world to facilitate its survival despite its attempts to prompt us to do so.

There is a shared lexicon. The challenge is for us as humans to respond to the sensory organs that we have evolved with (Foreman, 2002, p. 432), and pay attention to how the natural world communicates with us. Shilling (2017) attests to this and notes that the senses perceive and inform the body before the cognitive mind can acknowledge or respond.

In today's instant, and 'shrinking' world, where relationships are often maintained remotely through social media and digital portals, encounters with real, living things elude us.

Smartphones, at our side constantly, have created a new dependency, where life is lived vicariously in a virtual space (Kear, 2000, p. *x*; Clark, 2004, p. 417) and this impacts on how we respond and appreciate the real world. As Stuart-Smith observes, "The digital world makes it hard to fully inhabit the place we are in: it keeps us semi-distracted and partially elsewhere" (2020, p. 239).

Moving away from technology means depending more on our senses. Pollan (2013, p. 287) declares the importance of sensory data for acquiring knowledge, which is empowering, enabling, and boosts confidence. Yet, some of us are unaware of how sentient we are as humans (Cohen, n.d.).

1.7 Connections with Nature

The Allotment Movement and Garden Cities of the late 1800s in England were designed to encourage a contact with nature. The first Garden City in Letchworth, Hertfordshire provided access to the countryside because it was "necessary for the complete physical and social development of humankind" (Willes, 2014, p. 292). This connection with nature has mostly been severed among the urban populations of our industrialised and consumer-oriented nation. Whilst technological advancements have enabled us to be more connected than ever with people worldwide, and the 'new' lifestyle for those in the Global North embraces that technology, it does so at a cost. People are losing their connection with nature (Jung cited in Stuart-Smith, 2020, p. 253). Crowther says that most people allow other distractions to become more important for their way of life (2013, p. 273). People no longer fully perceive their environment in the Global North (Arvay, 2018, p. 77) and with the global pandemic making people wash with antibacterial soaps so frequently, even the body's relationship within itself, the gut microbiome, is becoming even more depleted (Freer, 2017). So, what is to be done about it?

Louv (2009, chap. 13) gave recommendations for 'treatment' for Nature-Deficit Disorder, which included gardening and capturing time together through a semi-structured programme of restoration. Dickinson's (2013) critique of Louv's work however, recommends instead of an

increasing focus on science in school gardening programmes, allowing a deeper immersion in the world, to let the body feel and respond *with* nature rather than *in* it, without judgement or assessment, a view that other academics pursue in a number of guises (Ingold, 1993, 2011; McHugh, 2009; Whitehouse, 2017).

The biophilia hypothesis proposed by Wilson (1990) is centred on the human need for a connection, an immersion or relationship with nature. Ingold's terms of meshwork (2011, p. 71) and later entanglement (2016, p. 81) relate to Wilson's theory, and Attala's (2017) erudite dialogue on intermingling entities fuels the discourse on immersion. To follow these theories means to question the dichotomy of nature and culture (Descola, 2013). There is an inseparable connection between the two. Crowther (2013) and Counihan (2015) talk of an increasing distance between humans and nature. Yet, Descola and Ingold's research presents a different perspective: that humans live not *in* nature as if it were a vessel but *with* nature. Humans are not separate to nature but part of it, it is a meshwork. Nature is not a separate entity to humanity, and it is only the Global North's anthropocentric perspective that drives a wedge through the mesh, attempting to analyse and define components of it. The definition of human is not universal (Descola, 2013, chap. 1), and in many cultures and societies in the Global South, there is no word for nature holding the same meaning in the Western World. This debate is a complex and iterative process of drawing together different ontologies in an attempt to understand meaning in a shared world.

1.8 Relationships

A good relationship brings pleasure and creates memories, and the pleasure of eating stems from a relationship with food (Berry, 1998, p. 63; Coveney, 2000, p. 129), and an eating *experience* that cannot be obtained from food that has been sourced by someone else (Holtzman, 2006, p. 373; Abbots, 2016, p. 116). This view suggests that the distancing of people from their food (origins) in contemporary foodways precludes a relationship with it and inhibits a satisfactory eating experience.

The human need to establish and nurture relationships is expounded by Psychologists (Psychology Today, n.d.) and satisfies our need to make connections. The relationships that we

foster with ourselves, with family and friends and with other living and non-living entities have a dynamic synergy with the concepts of care and responsibility and are an essential part of life (Psychology Today, n.d.). In the garden, humans perceive themselves as caretakers (Ball and Dagger, 2002, p. 406) and this places additional meaning for them on food that they grow and eat (Crowther, 2013, p. 31).

Sutton's work on memories features family, friends, and events associated with the taste and smells of shared food of the past (Sutton, 2001). These relationships, as memories, become embodied in the food that is consumed (Kuchler, 1993, pp. 95–7). Taking this one step backwards, before the food is ready for consumption, the act of growing that food in the home-garden involves a complex relationship with nature. As with any good relationship, a period of getting-to-know you, a willingness to share the space, spend time with, and then enjoy each other's company, all apply to GYO – the human relationship with the non-human world. An equilibrium is achieved when humans respect their relationship or interdependency with nature (Berry, 2002, p. 422). This invokes Attala's Edibility Approach (2017) which homes in on the relationship that plants instigate with humans (rather than, or as well as the other way around) during, before and after digestion.

Langwick (2018, p. 417) studied the therapy of *Dawa lishe* in Tanzania where healing is often focussed on the environment, on relations between humans, plants and the soil in which they grow. There are many anthropological and other disciplines' studies on relationships with and embodiments of food (Counihan, 1984; Abbots, 2013; Coles, 2013; Freer, 2017; West, 2017). Few however, on the relationships that emerge from the phenomenological experiences *when growing* the food in a home-garden and how this relationship is further nurtured at harvest time. Nor, then how this complements and augments the experience of preparation, cooking, consumption and then disposal (composting) of food.

1.9 Temporality, Seasonality, Time, and Memories

The transitory nature of things in the garden invites discourse on temporality. Bodei (2015, p. 105) questions whether we can *read* time anymore (my emphasis), citing the subtle differences of light and shadow on objects and scenes in relation to a piece of artwork, inferring as previously discussed, that we have lost a connection with nature. Gardeners refute this, noticing the subtle changes in the garden on the time of year and the weather, and they respond to those changes when nurturing their plants (Myers, 2017).

Because of the connection with nature and the awareness of the seasons, there is an inherent sense of reality in the garden. Romantic notions of life in nature, particularly regarding flowers blooming, overshadow the reality that the life cycle or seasons are as much about death as rebirth and regrowth. Gardeners understand and submerse themselves in this cycle (Seymour, 2002, p. 20). Koole and Van den Berg (2005) hypothesised that today's modern society fears death. Their research revealed that people are reminded of death when in wilderness or in a natural environment, and the researchers concluded that people are fearful of those places – they are unfamiliar to them. Bhatti & Church (2001) concur that being in nature and sensing a connection with all that lives increases the awareness of what disrupts or destroys nature or life. Koole and Van den Berg posit that people have distanced themselves from nature as a coping strategy, avoiding the thing that causes them fear or upset - death and the cycle of life. Interestingly, Jones (2020, pp. 166–8) suggests that our climate crisis is problematised because of this theory in that humans are refusing to accept the extent to which they contribute to the destruction of a natural ecosystem. They feel they cannot control the natural cycle of things, so they distance themselves from the problem. Considering contributions to ecological anthropology, I notice that Crowther (2013, pp. xvii, xviii, 272) often uses the term 'witness', implying that it (climate crisis) is happening around us and that we are not agential in it at all. This choice of language is telling and supports Jones' claims above.

Modernity, in the Global North, facilitates avoidance or distancing from nature, for example, mass urban development of housing/flats without outdoor spaces, technological advancements that host virtual relationships online and posts on social media indicating vicariously lived lives or even totally fabricated. Our contemporary lifestyle jars with Husserl's phenomenology which

focuses on life as it is experienced (Giorgi 2012, Bullington 2013). The sense organs that respond to digital stimuli are not immersed in the world and cannot make connections or form relationships with nature (Kear, 2000; Clark, 2004; Louv, 2009; Dickinson, 2013; Stuart-Smith, 2020).

However, it is notable from Koole and Van den Berg's research that not only do people think of death in the garden, but they also associate nature with freedom. This links to observations made in section 1.1 that the home-garden is perceived as uncensored and unstructured space.

Embodiments of time in food.

In the deep past, hunter-gatherers had to respond to the seasons in order to find food (Hendry and Underdown, 2012, p. 77; Dartnell, 2018, p. 61). In Namibia, Khwe Khoe (bushmen) nomads still do so, likewise the Himba who are semi-nomadic (Jacobsohn, 1990). Connotations in the West to a nomadic lifestyle, are freedom, uncensored, unstructured life. Foraging in the past and today, exercises a special and profound relationship with the natural environment (Crowther, 2013, p. 33), inextricably linked to the seasons. In the past and today, seasons are celebrated and become opportunities for social events, which in history turned into rituals and religious festivals with the spread of new beliefs. Time was marked and became embodied in food as such (Douglas, 1982; Counihan, 1984; Coveney, 2000; Sutton, 2001).

Sutton's (2001) work on memories cites special events when families gather to mark the birth of a child or remember a recently deceased relative, but also he recounts daily experiences in and because of the seasons, citing the deep meanings of the fig harvest. Sutton also comments that time is place. The *pestellomata* (food) sent from the island of Kalymnos to London, embodies the place it came from, as well as the time period during which it was made.

Schoneboom's (1994, p. 364) study of allotment holders includes reference to Derek Jarman's garden sanctuary, in which he commented, "The gardener digs in another time, without past or future, beginning or end". This intriguing view of time has parallels with Ringel's (2016, p. 391) theory that "neither the past nor the future exist… but … only the many presents we encounter… ". This complex paradigm is a heterogeneous blend of time frames which Ingold (1993) explores in the Temporality of the Landscape. Similar concepts appear in Landscape

Consciousness (Mattern 1966 cited in Goodey, 1973, p. 13); and in Creating the Landscape Through Walking (de Certeau, 1984), all of which conclude with a blurring of time periods and dimensions that interrogate long-held definitions and understandings of time and its meaning.

With regard to the past, Sutton's (2001) work details the ways in which memories are brought to life in the present. The memories are relived and form a type of palimpsest, they create new memories for the future. Similarly, Goodey (1973, p. 5) talks of how past experiences influence present perceptions and Crowther identifies with the fact that our senses are not just responding to physical stimuli in the present, but facilitate time-travel, "The smell and taste of a dish are capable of transporting us back in time and place, reconnecting us to our memories of people and shared meals" (2013, p. 131). Dahl describes how Borscht, embodies place for her, "To me, it's Norway in a bowl." (Dahl, 2010).

Experiences, that is, information received from our stimulated senses and memories of when and where they were triggered, can situate a person in all dimensions at one and the same time, especially in the garden, especially growing food. Meanings transfer as past-present-future and are entirely relational.

1.10 Taskscape

Ingold's (1993, p. 158) work on the Temporality of the Landscape introduces the term Taskscape, which he defines as an "array of related activities". The landscape, he argues, only exists because of the tasks or events that have occurred in that place – human or otherwise. This accumulation of events and is inexorably linked to community and participation (Bodenhorn, 1993, p. 182). The accrual of tasks, each of which impact on the landscape, determines its temporality – it is in a constant state of flux. Ingold however, is resolute that this does not constitute a palimpsest, where layers might be peeled away to reveal a previously hidden landscape. Instead, he advocates finding a new fluidity of perception. Tilley (1994, pp. 29–31) also recognises the landscape more as a process than a place, positing that lives and the landscape are interwoven and that this is a continuous and endless process.

Mallett (2004, pp. 80–101) echoes Tilley and Ingold's theory. She explains that being 'at-home' is signified not by the cultural materials and objects kept there, nor by the place itself, but by the actions and events that occur in that place. Daily activities and seasonal and/or special occasions are all lived experiences where a behaviour is enacted, interactions take place with others, non-humans, and materials. The sociality of home and the comforts accorded exist therefore in *action*. A poignant phrase clarifies the concept – a task or action literally, takes place in that location, and there it constitutes meaning (Ingold, 2011, p. 232).

Graeber (2001, p. 52) writes on a similar tack, stating that objects are not inanimate, but are processes in being. He adds that people (society) *are* (my emphasis) their actions. The corollary is that gardeners' *actions* therefore constitute who they are, linking back to the concepts of identity and meaning. Head et al, identify the complex interactions between gardeners and plants, asserting that plants are just as much agents as the gardener (Atchison, Head and Gates, 2010; Attala, 2011, 2017; Gagliano, 2015). The jobs that gardeners do, their actions - weeding, sowing, watering, pruning, harvesting - all therefore constitute a taskscape (Ingold, 1993), where each and every activity carries meaning.

With an awareness of how their actions and meanings affect the environment and how they are so enmeshed in the cycle of life and in 'nature', gardeners demonstrate an ethic of care and responsibility for now, and the future. They are conscientious about their food-getting strategies; they want to conserve, protect and nurture the environment, because of their relationship with it, and they are *acting* to make a difference (Povinelli, 1992, p. 172). This sense of responsibility is no better exhibited than in the practice of composting. The epitome of the past becoming present for the future. It is an entanglement of species, time and actants that is dynamic, and temporal and a locale of interconnections, interpenetrations and transformations (Langwick, 2018, p. 433).

2. Methodology

Participants in this research project were volunteers who responded to an invite on two Facebook Group pages that I belong to, “I Love my Aga”, and “Grow Your Own Veg. The criteria for volunteering were to be living in England, UK, and growing their own food in their home-garden, not an allotment. Fieldwork was conducted remotely, through the medium of an internet portal as it was the only method possible during the Covid-19 lockdowns and with government restrictions on movement and social distancing in the UK.

Having obtained informed consent from each participant as a signed form emailed to me (Appendix One) and having ensured participants of anonymity if they requested it, we met using the online video conferencing platform, Zoom. Session dates and times were emailed to participants for them to join when they were able. Participants were asked to share their stories about garden use during the Lockdown and as restrictions eased. If participants would prefer, they could share their experiences with me individually by phone or email and not become part of the focus group on Zoom.

Zoom sessions and phone conversations were recorded, with consent from all participants. After each session, I used Zoom’s inbuilt software to download transcripts of each session, and Microsoft’s transcription software for phone conversations, which formed part of the data for my fieldnotes.

Participants were also invited to join a private Facebook group (PFbG), set up solely for this study and managed by me, the researcher. They were invited to post still images or videos of their gardens and the produce they grew. They could create posts to generate a new topic of discussion and comment on others’ photos or posts. By joining the group, they agreed that I could use any comments, images or stories posted in my research project. This data could also be sent direct to me by email if preferred and not shared with the focus group. It was made clear to participants that they could withdraw from the research at any stage during the project, without consequence. I obtained ethical approval from the University of Wales Trinity St David’s, to conduct the research project.

In total, 59 people responded to my initial posts on the Facebook group pages asking for participants, although their responses were a mixture of a 'Like', or a simple comment such as 'I'm interested' and therefore it was not easy to determine the extent of their interest. A large majority of these did not respond to a follow up message from me inviting them to meet on Zoom. Nine people in total took part in the study, all of whom messaged me through Facebook Messenger after the initial posts and provided their email address for me to contact them with the Zoom invitation. 15 Zoom sessions were held during the period from 10th February 2021 to 22nd April 2021: a Tuesday evening, Thursday afternoon and Sunday afternoon, each fortnight (except Easter weekend). Participants could attend on the days and times when they were available. Two participants attended no Zoom sessions at all. One of those however, posted often on the PFbG. The other preferred to speak to me on the phone instead and did not join the PFbG and emailed me pictures of her garden to use in the study. Participants were all female and ranged in age from approximately 40 to 70. They lived in different parts of England: Yorkshire, Cheshire, Cambridgeshire, Cornwall, and the south coast.

During the first Zoom sessions, I showed some pictures of my own garden to introduce myself as a gardener (Appendix Two). I explained that the Zoom sessions were to be informal discussions about participants' growing their own food in their home-garden and an opportunity for us to share thoughts about how or if, this held meaning for us. Each participant then introduced themselves and summarised their gardening experience. Thereafter, each Zoom session began with what participants had been doing in their gardens that week and conversations easily flowed in response. I enjoyed getting to know everyone and hearing their gardening stories. Developing a relationship with my participants fostered a convivial atmosphere for our Zoom sessions and facilitated the dialogue, providing rich data for my study. As McCarthy Brown elicits, "It [qualitative research] involves a particular type of relationship, yet one that is subject to all the complexities and ambiguities of any other kind of human interaction." (1992, p. 352).

Conducting fieldwork remotely using digital media, enabled a multi-sited ethnography to be studied, with contributions from participants capturing both their immediate responses in conversations, as well as their considered comments on topics raised. I undertook a narrative analysis of all the transcripts, revisiting the posts, comments, and photographs on the PFbG,

and studied the emails that participants had sent to me directly, to deduce any themes arising from the data. One participant requested to remain anonymous, and I therefore have used a pseudonym for her when storing data and citing her in this paper.

However, on reflection, one of the drawbacks of conducting fieldwork remotely was that I could not be present in each of my participants' gardens or kitchens, and I was not able to share the same phenomenological experiences with them. I understood this to be a key aspect of participant observation (Firth, 1996, pp. 116–7). I asked my participants if they would film themselves in the garden and record their thoughts and feelings at the same time, hoping to elicit new data as monologues from each participant with accompanying visuals about their thoughts and responses *whilst* gardening – as opposed to drawing on memories to recount their actions and feelings about gardening in conversation on Zoom. Two participants filmed a walk around their garden, but neither showed themselves, and neither talked over the film.

My research included autoethnography. I was therefore, both inside and outside, the researcher and the subject (Lau, 2004). I took part in the Zoom conversations and posted photos and comments on the PFbG equally as one of the participants. I decided therefore to film myself in the greenhouse talking concurrently, to capture a live experience as Husserl's phenomenology might suggest (Giorgi 2012, Bullington 2013). Yet, talking about what I was experiencing in the garden was not easy and the words that I used were clumsy, the phrases grossly inadequate to convey my feelings, the outcome not at all as I expected. My recording did not convey the holistic experience, the multitude of stimuli and responses that all my senses were simultaneously processing. This experience aligned with others' musings on the difficulties of recording phenomenological studies (Cohen, n.d.; Goodey, 1973; Ingold, 1993, 2002; Tilley, 1994; Stuart-Smith, 2020). I did not repeat my request for participants to record themselves, nor did I share my film with others. I did however, draw on this experience when interpreting my fieldwork data and recognised that my perceptions of what my participants were telling/showing me, may not be what they perceived them to be (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) and indeed there may be any number of omissions that just could not be articulated. I assert therefore, that this paper represents my subjectivity and is a reflexive account of both fieldwork and autoethnographic data.

3. Findings and Discussion

Two themes emerged from my fieldwork – Relations and Temporality. Sub-headings address concepts under each of these themes with the key thread throughout the paper focussing on home-grown food and the home-garden as the site of its creation. Under Relations, I begin with a brief glimpse at food-sourcing through a gendered lens, then I explore how meaning-making becomes embodied in food as memories. Next, I discuss mental health and the concept of escape. The phenomenological and visceral experiences of being in the garden are then considered, often cited by my participants and in academic literature as a connection with nature. Finally, I focus on taste, a multifaceted concept that manifests as a relationship between the body and food, and introduces discourse on foodways, varieties, seasonality, and agency. Under the theme of Temporality, I describe the garden as a taskscape based on Ingold's theory (1993) and make links to time, seasonality, memories and embodiments. This section also highlights participants' sustainability ethics, embracing concepts of responsibility and food sovereignty.

It has been quite a challenge for me to structure this essay under the themed headings however, because they are all inextricably linked. For fluency, I have highlighted these links in the footnotes. Synonyms used for the participants in this study are group members, gardeners, or those who GYO.

1.11 RELATIONS

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, participants' only interaction with people other than those they lived with, was through digital media – phone, computer, internet. This was not the same as a physical presence. Not only are humans sentient beings, but they are social animals too, and face-to-face contact with others, physically, not remotely via a screen, is important for their well-being (Psychology Today, n.d.), establishing pleasure from relationships and garnering trust.

The relationships forged by gardening are multifaceted (Jones, 2020, p. 112) and Figure 1 shows the diverse and interrelated connections or relations that my participants talked of during fieldwork.

Relationships identified among participants

- With family who either shared the gardening itself (Jackie & Liz's husband) and/or eating (all the families) and cooking the produce grown (Liz's husband, Sharon's partner)
- With friends and local communities, who shared produce, equipment, or advice through gardening clubs (Jackie, Carol), or at the front gate (Liz), or in WhatsApp groups (Jackie) or other social media (Eileen, Peggy)
- With wildlife in the garden (Carol, Jackie, Helen, Amanda, Sharon)
- With plant-life (Sharon won't give up on any plant even if it is struggling)
- With food itself (everyone)
- With other food suppliers and retailers (Helen - Farmers' Markets; Eileen with local farmers)
- With the self
- Plus, all these relations intertwine with each other

Figure 1 Relationships mentioned in discussion among participants

Proud comments were posted as introductions to each other on the PFbG denoting how participants enjoy their relationships with food grown in their gardens (Figure 2). Peggy, who was not able to make any of the Zoom sessions as she was working full-time throughout the pandemic in a hospital theatre, posted many photos and notes on her planting, harvest and cooking.

> Peggy: "I've put time and effort into this, and it feels amazing harvesting… the feeling when something new grows and produces leaves – the 1st blossom bringing hope and a lovely new season… when I dug my 1st potato and pulled my 1st carrot last year, I was so elated!"

Not only though, did my participants refer to relations with people and food, but with other non-human organisms and entities. I believe that people sought to connect with nature during the pandemic to fulfil their need for relationships as a physical, in person interaction, or in other words, they gardened to satisfy a need for their senses to engage with something natural and agential (Wilson, 1990)[3].

[3] See more about the nature and human dichotomy in 3.1.4

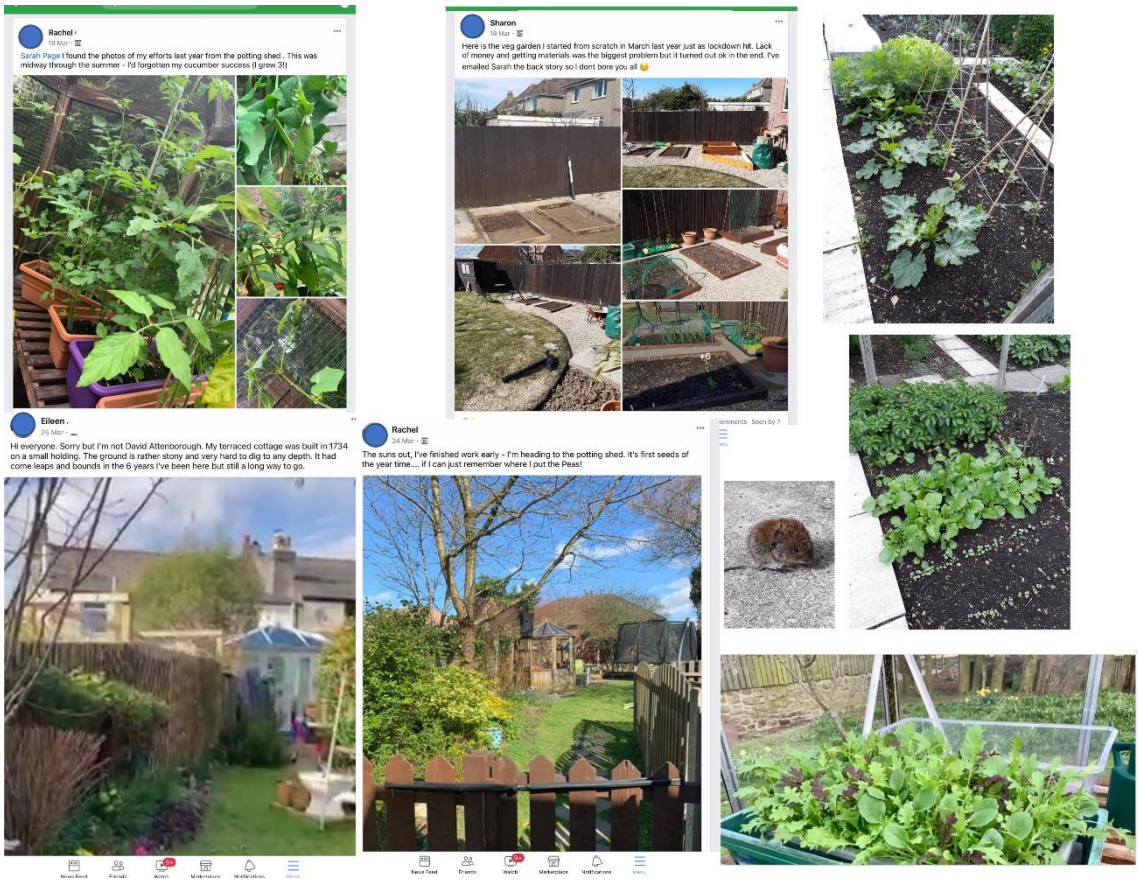

Figure 2 Participants' posts PFbG, introducing themselves and their gardens

There are many synonyms and concepts associated with developing relationships, and those I have extracted from this study are caring and sharing (Mallett, 2004; Raisborough and Bhatti, 2007). So, just as a parent cares for and nurtures their young, so gardeners care for and nurture their plants and develop a relationship with them. Eileen described her routine bringing her seedlings on, “They come out first thing in the morning and then I put them to bed in the evening”.

3.1.1. Identity - Gender

Even though all the participants in my study were women, gender issues did not emerge as a significant theme from the data. However, I do make a few observations at the outset that link to academic literature on the role of women in food-provisioning. After hearing participants’ recalling memories about parents and grandparents in the garden, I asked whether there was a

gender divide with men growing vegetables and women the flowers. This seemed to be the case in the stories they shared with me. All group members agreed this was the case for their grandparents and parents too, but this was not the case for them. Having drawn attention to the fact that we were an all women group, Sharon, Liz and later Amanda, concluded that men would be less likely to want to talk about gardening and cooking, rather than that they were less interested in it. Liz was keen to assert that responsibilities are shared equally in her household.

Most of my participants were the main gardeners and with one exception, they were the main decision-maker regarding food choices in the household. The term gatekeeper has been used to denote this role (Abbots and Lavis, 2016, p. 121) but I consider this to imply there is a power imbalance in the household's food choices. This was not applicable for my participants. It soon became apparent to me from reading academic papers on food and on gender issues (Gurney, 1997; Counihan, 2008; Pilcher, 2008; Crowther, 2013; Abbots, 2016), that I could substitute the word women in many cases, for the word gardener. They uphold the provisioning of food as fundamental to their and others' daily lives, enjoy time spent sourcing food from the garden, most take pleasure in cooking and discovering new recipes or techniques, and want to pass the knowledge and experience on to their offspring (de Certeau and Giard, 1998, p. 67; Holtzman, 2006, p. 370; Coveney, 2014, p. 55; Ambrose *et al.*, 2020). They are not only interested in the quantity of food, but in its quality (Pottier, 2016, p. 156) and so they seek a variety of foodstuffs for taste, for diversity, for their health. Liz wants to cook from scratch just as her mum did and include the 'weird stuff' like kohl rabi and stripey beans, appreciating the variety and different flavours that these produce.

So, for female gardeners in England, the debate is not about a 'differential consciousness' (Counihan, 2008, p. 356) nor about a subordination of their role as food provisioners. It is about gardeners not necessarily women, being facilitators not gatekeepers, in feeding their households. They recognise that <u>not</u> attending to the diversity and origins of food affects their health on many levels, and essentially, they pay attention to how meanings and memories are ascribed to food which in turn impact on their well-being.

3.1.2. Memories

Memories of childhood, food and cooking sparked much enthusiasm and nostalgia for all my participants. Some of their anecdotes are shown in Figure 3 and illustrate the range of different types of memories that impact on how these gardeners remember food experiences.

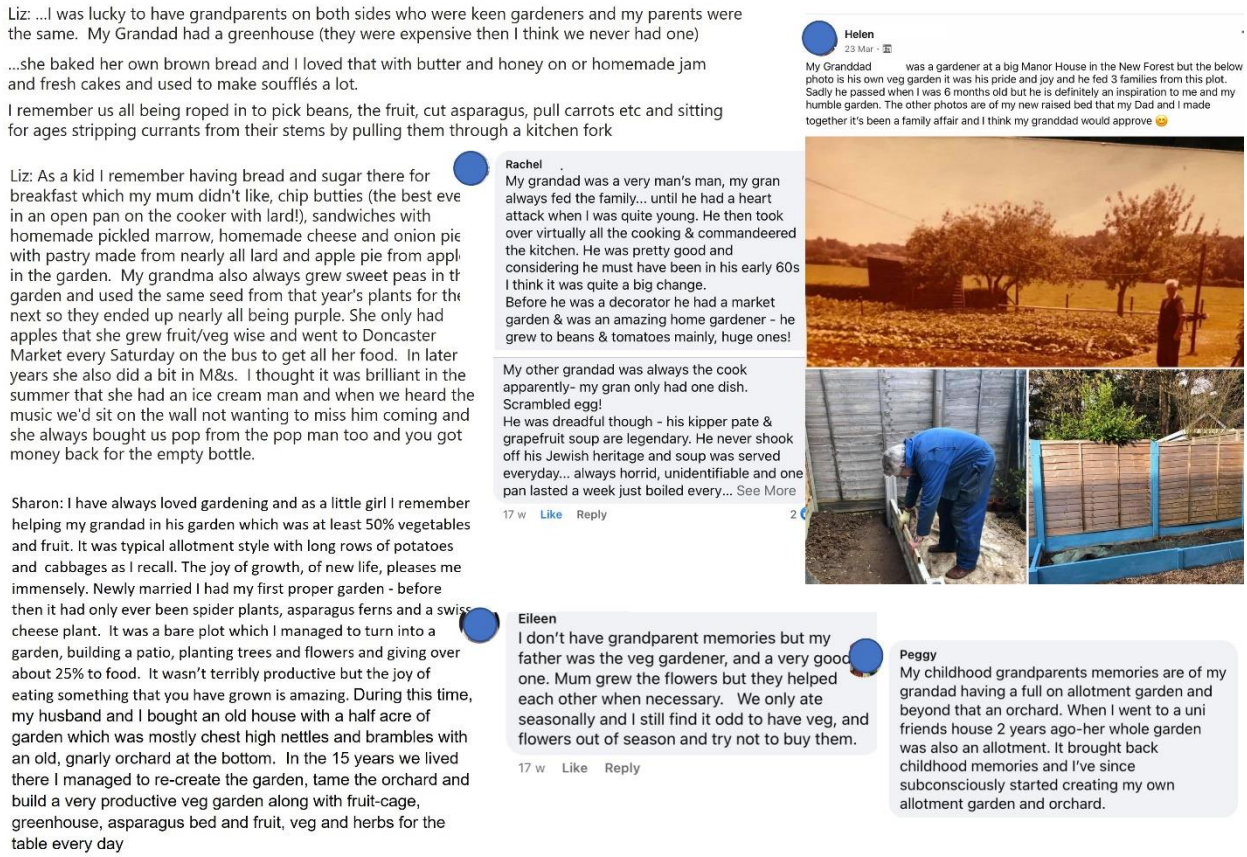

Figure 3 Memories of childhood, food and gardens

Helen was so glad to be able to spend time with her dad in the garden during the pandemic. Prior to that, neither had unhurried or unstructured time to spend with each other. They were able to make and paint a new vegetable bed, share the cost of having soil delivered, talk about gardening, recall memories of family members, and enjoy the harvest.

Liz has kept her dad's gardening notebook, detailing all his crops, yields and plans. She didn't know why she'd kept it, but something held her to it, bringing the memory alive, the past into the present. She also has her mum's cookery books and uses many old or family recipes (Figure 4). She talked about her dad growing a wide variety of vegetables, some that were not quite so

common at the time such as fennel and celeriac, and she remains impressed by all that he did. She wants to do the same in her garden, to revive the memory and re-experience it.

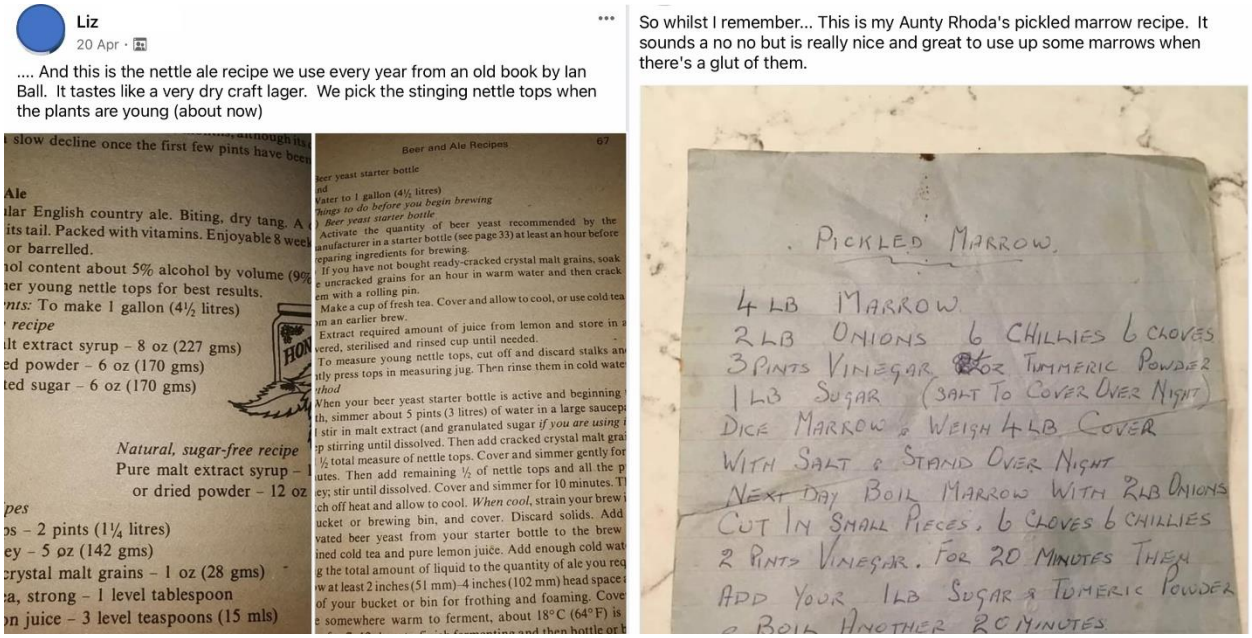

Figure 4 Liz's Family Recipes

I asked participants in my study for images or commentary on cooking meals, and whilst there were many photos of meals posted and comments in abundance about how wonderful home-cooking tasted[4], the conversation nearly always spun back to the garden and the origin of the food: how it was grown, the enjoyment of harvesting it, the memories that accrued in its preparation and consumption. It was apparent during our conversations, that GYO held much significance for all participants. The meanings associated with food revealed themselves to be a heterogeneous assimilation of many experiences, memories and knowledge that became embodied in the food itself. The essence of these elements is that they are actants in the network of food provisioning (Latour, 2005). Crucially, being present and involved in <u>all</u> aspects of the food-sourcing network ensured a far greater connection with gardeners' food and engendered a sense of fulfilment and satisfied appetite well beyond the mere physical and chemical exchanges that occur from nutrient absorption when consuming foodstuffs.

[4] See Taste, a major theme in this study

Sutton affirms that cooking contributes to creating identity and is a form of self-expression (2016, p. 355). Bringing Pollan's (2013) comments to the fore where he reflects on Levi-Strauss' contention that cooking differentiates man from animals, I believe that an addendum is necessary for modern man based on data in my study, and this should read today as:

Cooking differentiates man from animals and cooking food that man has grown himself identifies him[5].

3.1.3. Health

Physical Health

Gardening is good for mental and physical health although there is much to debate regarding the Cartesian dualism of mind and body in this respect (Brooks *et al.*, 2016). Participants didn't talk specifically about the physical health benefits of gardening, nor of nutritional science, although participants say their eating habits have changed with GYO because they are eating more fruit and vegetables and less meat (Triador *et al.*, 2015). Not only did this improve their diets, but participants believed that freshly picked crops were better for them[6]. Scientific evidence supports this (Rice, 1988). They did, however, focus more on the visceral benefits of gardening and of eating the food they grow.

Mental Health

Liz, Eileen, Peggy, and Amanda all value 'pottering' regularly in the garden. Pottering suggests no awareness or constraints on time, a sense of freedom, and links to being 'at-home', an uncensored, unstructured space where creativity can be explored (Tucker, 1994; Wardhaugh, 1999; Burchardt, 2002; Mallett, 2004). Time becomes hazy in the garden (Gross and Lane, 2007, p. 233; Arvay, 2018, p. 76; Schoneboom, 2018, p. 367), and as Amanda says, it is very easy to lose track of time[7].

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[5] My attempts to substitute the plural pronoun they, or use he/she, or replace *man* with *human* to remove the gender specification only resulted in an extremely clumsy statement that did not produce the desired impact.
[6] This is explored further under 3.1.6 Taste
[7] A blurring of time is pursued later under 1.12 Temporality.

3.1.4. Escape

A common theme for all my participants is that they *escaped* from the confines of the house to the garden during Covid lockdowns. Stuart-Smith (2020, p. 190) maintains that people instinctively turn to nature at a time of crisis. Jackie, talking to me by phone, would agree with this as she told me about the Serbian refugee gardener that she'd heard about on the news a while previously. We talked about how, in such dire conditions and circumstances, people want to grow plants or be *in nature.*

Jackie, Liz and Amanda all reiterated that their gardens had kept them sane during the lockdowns. "I would have been driven mad had I lived in an apartment or a house with a very small garden" (Jackie). Liz said that without a garden "…it would've driven me absolutely crazy". Sharon explained how gardening was good for her mental health, saying that physically going to the garden enabled her to be 'elsewhere' in her mind too. See also Figure 5.

When we were not allowed to go anywhere else, getting out and tending the garden was an enormous help - even when we were allowed out over the summer, the garden and its health always came first (Sharon, by email)

I woke up feeling quite ill today but going out in the garden helped. After two long days at work I could check on the plants this morning.
Salad growth under the cloches,1st blossom for my new apple tree,fruit trees all kicking in to action. Broccoli and marigold seeds are showing major growth 😄.
Acer is waking up. I'm so thankful that I decided to have flowers this year. I love the pink and yellow viola. I'll probably spend the day sitting In the garden reading magazines and drinking tea ☕

Figure 5 Comments on the garden supporting mental health

Stuart-Smith (2020, p. 206) understands the need to make a connection to life, when death and fear surround us. Throughout the study period, daily news programmes reported the number of deaths, number of infections, importance of staying at home and protecting the NHS from being overwhelmed with patients needing hospital treatment (BBC, 2020). The messages were bleak, upsetting, and relentless.

Contrary to Koole and Van den Berg's research (2005), my gardeners were not fearful of death in the garden, and actively looked for reminders that life continues. "I'm on a sort of hunt for signs of life all the time" (Sharon). Their lives and routines had been severely disrupted and previous habits of going out to work or shopping, or meeting up with friends i.e. going out to another place, transformed the home or the house from a place of private retreat or somewhere to relax (Honoré, 2004, p. 218). Those working from home could not even get away from work (Moore, 1984; Mallett, 2004, p. 71). Being 'at-home' for my participants felt like being caged-in or trapped. Rachel said, "I was going mad." Spending time in the garden was an opportunity to escape the news, to get out, to have a change of scene. "It [the garden] gave me something to focus on and a reason to look for different things" (Rachel).

The garden is considered an extension of home (Bhatti and Church, 2001, pp. 368–9; Gross and Lane, 2007, p. 227), but a separation seemed to come about during the pandemic. This was not verbalised by anyone per se but has emerged from participants' use of the word escape. The house as home, was still a safe place, but it was also where depressing or bad news was received, and people perceived this space as the confinement zone. "Stay Home" said Boris Johnson, the UK Prime Minister during the lockdowns (BBC, 2020). What seemed to come about for my group members was that the garden and not the house, became the 'at-home' place (Tucker, 1994) to where people were released from their confinement. They were out! Eileen talked of her greenhouse being her sanctuary. Amanda and Jackie referred to their gardens as their happy place, somewhere to escape to. Jackie also used the word 'escape' several times referring to her garden. These feelings again supported Koole and Van den Berg's (2005) research, that 'nature' means freedom[8]. Notably, however, for those participants who regularly gardened before lockdown, this perspective had not changed. Gardeners always view their garden as their private refuge.

A Connection with Nature

Academic research on gardening for mental health supports these comments (Kousoulis *et al.*, 2020), and identifies that a connection with nature helps to heal. Poets and literary works wax lyrical about the beauty, the peace, and the spirit of a garden (Burchardt, 2002, p. 166), which

[8] if nature is understood to be a suitable synonym for the garden.

was often cited by members of the study group. For my participants, it wasn't just *being* in the garden that affected them but *engaging* with it. Humans are sentient beings, and their senses are always active. As Ingold (2011, p. 95) would affirm, "The world is not just something to look at, but something to experience".

A relationship or connection with the Earth however, is hard to define (Stuart-Smith, 2020, p. 247). Participants sometimes struggled to find suitable vocabulary to explain their reasoning for feeling better in the garden and their reasons for GYO. Jackie faltered over her words, "… it [GYO] sort of ticks a box when it comes to you know, the basic instinct side of things, (pause) nurturing myself, you know". Participants wanted to describe something that I believe is not just an interface of agential happening, but a holistic response to more than a plethora of stimuli. Having recorded myself potting on some seedlings in the greenhouse and having attempted to provide a commentary for the film by talking about my phenomenological experiences, I can confirm how difficult it is to identify, talk about and focus on any one of my senses. I was absorbed in my task, but I felt an overwhelming sense of immersion in the world without any cognitive awareness, yet I was aware of everything nonetheless – the warmth of the sun, the sounds of the birds, the rustle of the wind, the scent of the soil, the fragility of the seedlings and so on. All these stimuli were felt at exactly the same time, and it was impossible to talk about any one of them before something changed and I was experiencing new sensations. This aligns with Shilling (2017) and Sutton's (2001, p. 15) observations that the cognitive mind always plays catch up with the senses. The complexity of this immersion in the natural world invokes Goodey's (1973) research and remains an enigma for me.

On further reflection, I have noticed how the rain seems to revive plants much better than when I water them with tap water from a hose or watering can. Carol also observed that whilst the herb seeds she had bought to grow on a kitchen windowsill did grow into healthy-looking plants, their taste was "extremely disappointing… even the basil tastes feeble". This prompted me to wonder whether plants need to be immersed in the world (Ingold, 1993), exposed, outside, and interacting with all the natural elements in order to thrive.

Participants feel connected with the Earth, as both a tangible and intangible entity. Sharon and Helen had not heard about the findings of grounding research, but when I raised the topic of

‘Earthing’ (Chevalier *et al.*, 2012; Wilson, 2019), they identified with this. Helen could relate to feeling better once she’d spent time outdoors and likened this to the practice of forest bathing in Japan. This led to discussions on an immersion in the world with all participants sharing a common ontology that humans are part of the natural world and are not separate to it (Descola, 2013). As Ingold posits, “In our world, there is no outside and we do not live separate to all around us”.

Helen said, “It’s almost like a meditational thing, like a re-connection sort of, with your, your you know, inner goings on”.

3.1.5. The Senses

Our senses are how we perceive and receive information from external and internal agents (Cohen, n.d.), thus they connect us to whatever the ‘other’ is. There is no closer connection for the body than food entering and assimilating with it.

Participants posted many photos on the PFbG of their gardens showing what they had done, what they had grown, what they had harvested, what they had cooked and eaten, all compiling evidence of relationships with food through their senses – touch, taste, sight, smell - Figure 6. Sharon and Peggy specifically referred to the joy of eating food they had grown themselves - Figure 7.

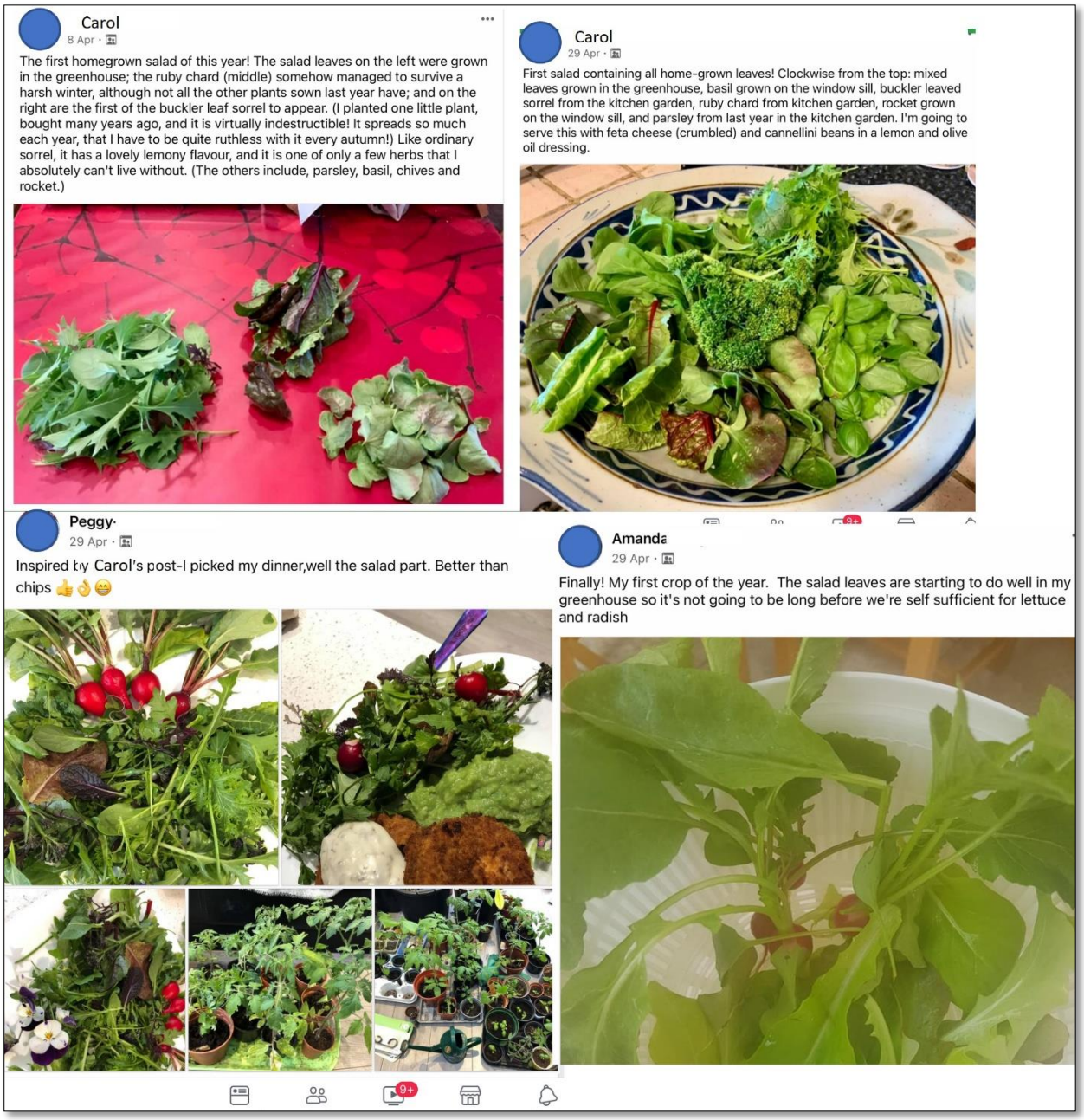

Figure 6 Salad Harvests

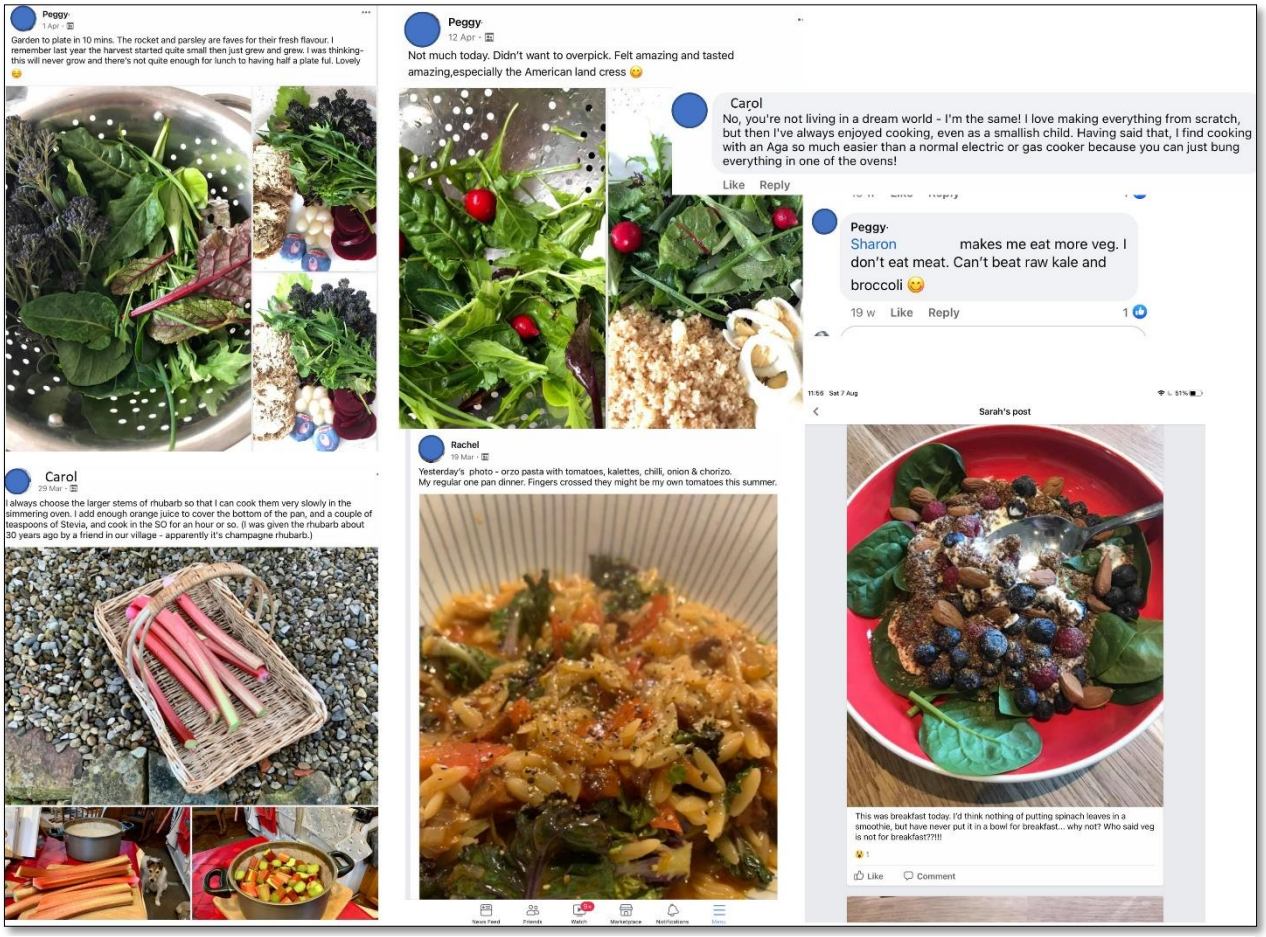

Figure 7 Cooking and Harvests

3.1.6. Taste

Taste was the sense most talked about by participants in my study and they were passionate about the unsurpassed taste of home-grown produce, see Figure 8. Amanda refuses to buy strawberries in the shops out-of-season. Despite requests and protests from her daughter that they are available on the supermarket shelves all year round, Amanda wants her daughter to enjoy the true taste of strawberries, freshly picked, ripened and still warm by the sun. “If you pick them and eat them there and then, it just tastes…well, just doesn't compare” (Amanda).

Jackie talked a lot about the taste of the vegetables harvested from her garden.

> “But with home grown, there’s definitely a difference in the taste...‘specially carrots. I mean carrots are just sensational. When you've pulled one straight from the ground and you cook it up, well, even eating it raw. Just so much

different from supermarket carrots. And I can say that for quite a few, if not for all of them. You know things like leeks, that taste a lot fresher and have more - something in them than supermarket ones."

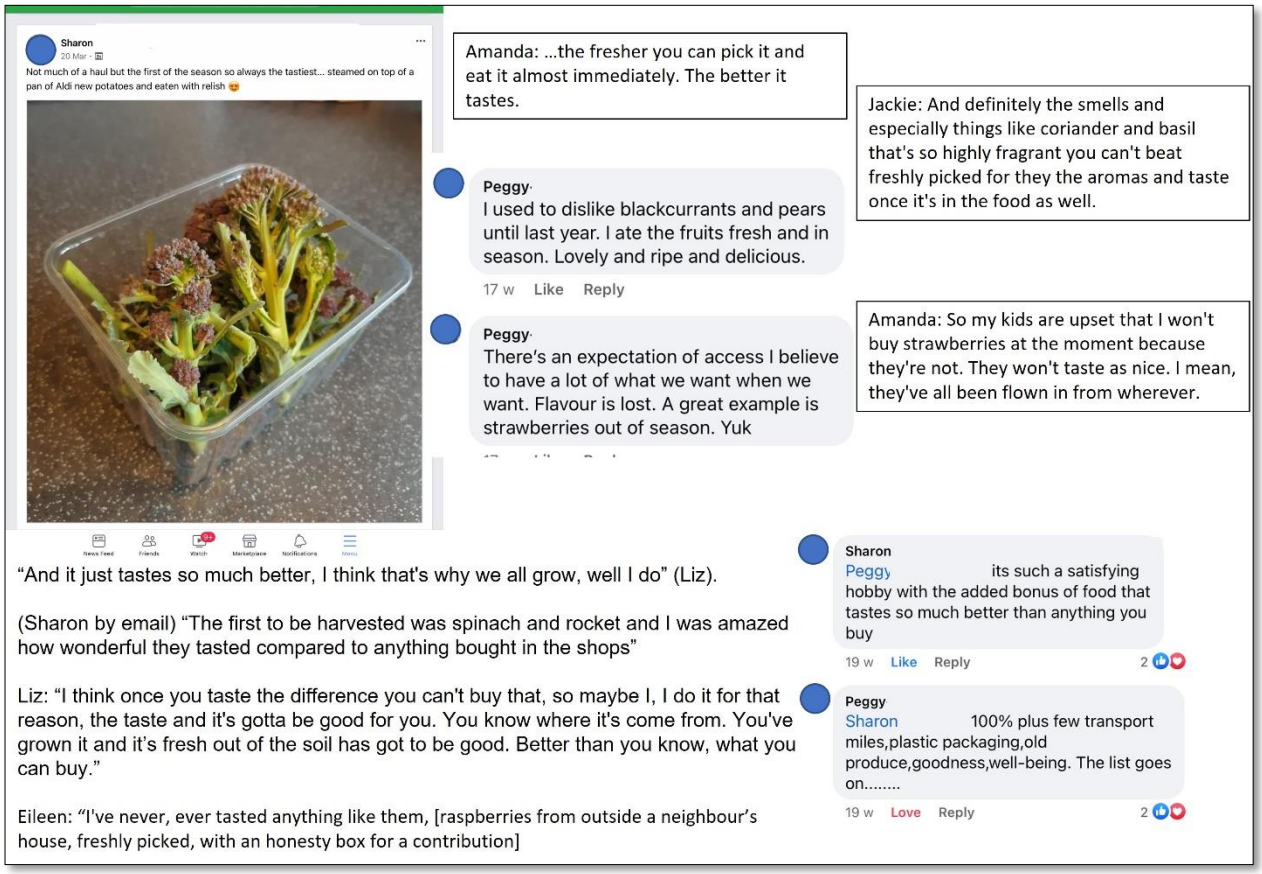

Figure 8 Selection of comments about Taste

Taste triggers far more than a sensory gland's response and is impacted by the experiences associated with that food (Goodey, 1973, p. 5; Sutton, 2001). Bourdieu (1979, p. 71) notes that taste is the most indelible of our senses stimulated at a very early age. Gardeners maintain and regularly exercise their taste buds, dismissing bold statements that the palate is a dead organ, and that people have reduced ability to respond to their senses (Orwell, 1959; Clark, 2004; Pollan, 2013). Taste triggers deep memories and nostalgia and can transport you to another time (Counihan, 1984; Sutton, 2001; Abbots, 2013; Coles, 2013; Freer, 2017; West, 2017). Eileen in my fieldwork would agree as she talked about the taste of freshly picked raspberries, "…it takes you straight back to childhood when you used to go out and pick a bowl for tea kind of thing".

If memories of childhood can affect taste in such a way, and cooking can affect taste because of the engagement with the food in its preparation, then my data would suggest that the memories of food's growth are also embodied in food and could affect taste in the same way too. A superior taste, therefore, is experienced with memories of its (the food's) creation. Meaning and memory thus manifests in taste (Bennett, 2010, p. xvi; Coles, 2013; Abbots, 2016, p. 126). Participants found it difficult to understand how people could be satisfied with the taste of produce bought from the supermarkets. Liz astutely remarked that unless people have tasted freshly harvested produce, they would not know that the flavours were inferior. Jackie also believed that once you'd tasted your own fresh produce, you'll never want anything else. My data suggests that people want a closer relationship with food, one that they can encounter by its taste, and relive as a memorable experience.

Bringing the past into the present by re-enacting a memory, creates a new memory. This suggests a palimpsest (Sutton, 2001), however with layer upon layer of relived eating experiences, I wonder if taste is a palimpsest in the same way. A new memory does not supersede the previous; it blends with it, the layers merge rather than obscure and result in a greater depth of memory and meaning, not a replacement. This thought was triggered by Ingold's (2002, p. 208) references to Western Apache story-telling in and of the landscape i.e. not putting meanings *on* the land, but allowing listeners to place themselves into a relationship *with* that landscape, a thought he pursued in the temporality of the landscape. So does taste change over time, with each new experience of it? The temporality of taste then, particularly in relation to produce that someone has grown themselves, could become an interesting focus for anthropologists in their food studies.

Another observation regarding taste suggests that anticipation plays a part. Research shows that the longer you wait for food, the tastier it is when you eventually eat it (Jenkinson, 2020, p. 81). Whilst the research talks of a few hours' wait, it is telling from my study that waiting for the first fresh pickings of the season conjures a much better taste, enjoyment, and satiation than any readily available produce from a store. The taste is of superior quality.

Quality then, for my gardeners, manifests in taste. Fieldwork data shows how gardeners attempt to sustain the quality of taste throughout the year, by preserving their food (Figure 9).

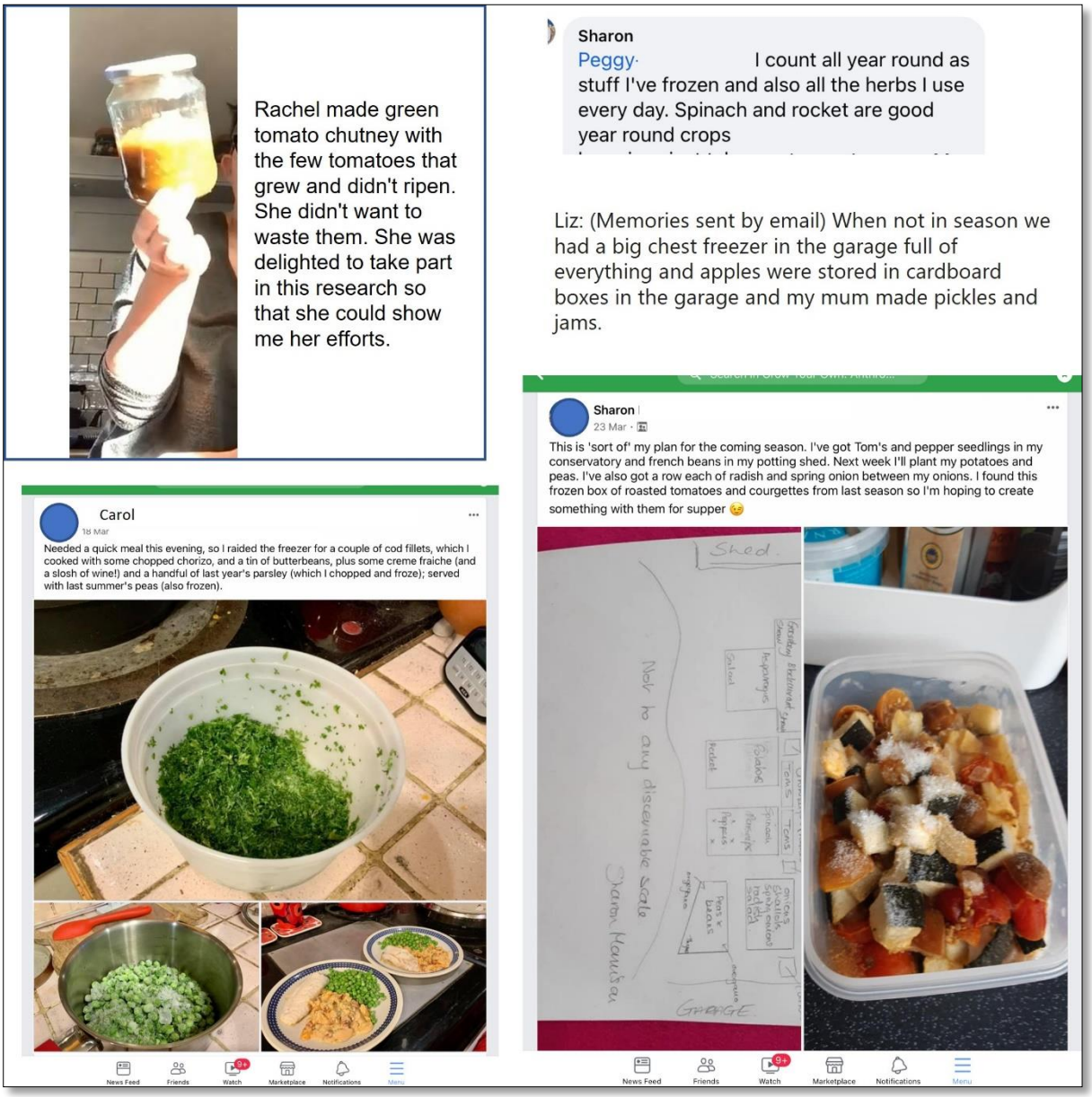

Figure 9 Comments about preserving home-grown produce

Jackie regularly batch-cooks and freezes meals to use up surplus harvests which enables her to enjoy the fresh taste of home-cooking even on busy days when she may not have the time to prepare and cook from scratch. Liz focusses on the taste of her beans and Helen talked of what storage means for her:

> “I … froze some runner beans last year. We … still got that taste…They were still frozen but nothing like them horrible soap-tasting things and chopped up veg rubbish people buy - but they actually were really tasty and tasted of beans still.” (Liz)

> “That kind of like making things last longer, storing things so you got a bit of a taste of specially in the deep depths of winter. You've got like a nice taste of spring and summer to sort of like hark back to. There's something quite sort of primaeval about that, in a way. Do you know what I mean? Like squirrelling stuff away for you know I enjoy that aspect of, you know, gardening and foraging as well.” (Helen)

The theme of taste also emerged from stories of foraging. Helen told us about her day foraging for wild garlic, inviting a friend and his daughter to join her. Not only did they amass loads that they made into pesto for future use, shown in Figure 10, but it was a lovely day, enjoyed by all three of them. Spending time socially together, outdoors, during a pandemic, gathering food felt as if they were transported back in time to the days of the hunter-gatherers, responding to the seasons. Liz joined in the discussion, having smelt garlic recently on a walk. She was enthused by Helen’s experience and pledged to return and forage for wild garlic herself, and then make pesto using Helen’s recipe (made with hazelnuts instead of pine nuts).

Figure 10 Helen foraging for wild garlic and making pesto

Foraging is a seasonal activity. Making the most of the seasonal produce by foraging is not of course, GYO. However, all the gardeners in my research had stories to tell about foraged foods and swapping recipes. Foraging highlights how participants respond to the seasons, and how they seek not only the taste of freshly picked food, but the experience of harvesting it as well. This provides more support for the suggestion emerging from my study that experiences, and memories contribute to taste.

One final comment on taste is how it differs for each variety of produce consumed[9]; the taste of a Granny Smith apple compared to an Egremont Russet for example. My participants were keen to taste new and different varieties of produce. Helen held up to the camera during a Zoom session, her recently purchased packet of lemon cucumber seeds that she was very excited to try (Figure 11). Liz, Eileen, and Amanda enjoyed the unusual taste of cucamelons – a blend of cucumber, watermelon, and lime that Eileen recommends to flavour a gin and tonic!

Figure 11 Helen's lemon cucumber seeds

Using different varieties of produce affects the flavour of meals and their nutritional composition, their goodness. Debevec and Tivadar's (2006) research suggests that it is not just ingredients that affect goodness. They state that homemade is full of goodness because of the social, cultural, and visceral experiences that create a relationship with food through cooking, preparing, and eating it. My study implies that home*grown* is another factor to contribute to the goodness of home*made*, bringing with it all embodiments from gardening.

Figure 12 illustrates how taste manifests for me from the phenomenological and visceral experiences of GYO.

[9] Note Attala (2017), and see 1.2 and 1.6

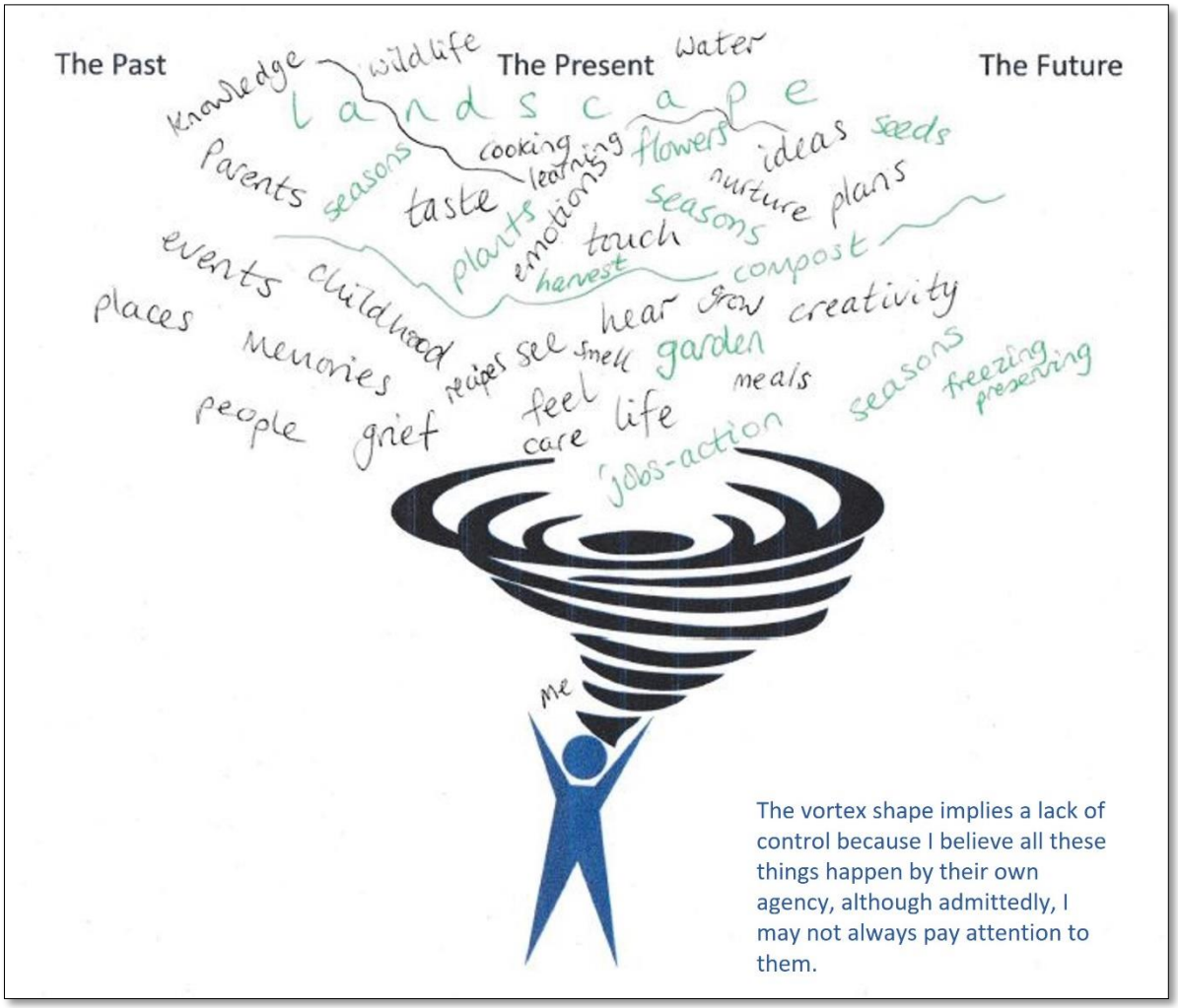

Figure 12 The Home-grown Food Vortex for me, as the gardener and consumer
Author's own, 2021

1.12 TEMPORALITY

Considering that a vortex is a flux and having highlighted the concept of the temporality of taste, I conclude that the garden is constantly changing and therefore experiences in the garden that are embodied into home-grown food, also change. The theme of temporality is now discussed and features the garden taskscape, seasonality, climate change, and sustainability.

3.1.7. The Taskscape

Following my detailed analysis of our conversations and review of the photos and comments posted on the PFbG, I initially *discarded* data where participants listed jobs that they were doing in their gardens as being just that – a list of jobs. To select a job from this list, and find meaning in it, seemed disingenuous to gardening because of how everything is intertwined, interdependent and enmeshed in a complex system of growing, nurturing, and harvesting. Gardening is a significant part of participants' lives and cannot be reduced to a list of jobs. However, the enthusiasm with which every gardener told me what they were doing, what they had done and were going to do, every time we met, plus show me evidence of it with photos and captions indicating their meanings, invoked Ingold's (1993) taskscape. GYO is not just a leisure pursuit but a way of life (Coveney, 2000, p. 119), one in which actions *with meaning*, create identity, purpose and good health. The tasks undertaken in the garden accrue and become the bigger picture, the holistic understanding of food-getting, the taskscape.

Participants perceived their garden taskscape then as a place to escape to, as explored earlier in this paper. Interestingly, Jung states that "[the answer] is not to escape, but to do" (cited in Stuart-Smith p.132). Indeed, gardeners in my fieldwork went to the garden to do tasks, to grow their own food. Jackie said she enjoyed the garden because it was something to do, but also it took the stress off your shoulders. Rachel, new to gardening during Covid lockdowns, often commented on her need to get out of the house and *do* something. The garden fulfilled that need. Participants understood gardening tasks as doing something to improve their health and well-being. These tasks deliberately or inadvertently, forged relationships with nature and with food and enabled participants to be more aware of the natural cycle of life in which they lived, the seasons and the weather. Noticing the power imbalances of nature over humans, Sharon pondered:

> "The seasonality of gardening is… it's just something that you just cannot push against. You cannot force it. You know you can use technology to a degree, but it's always at a cost, so you know, like in the Netherlands, for instance, where sort of like you know 20% of 30% of that land is under glass sort of thing, because of their growing programs. It comes at a cost of taste. You know it comes at a cost of variety, so you know the one thing about gardening is there's four seasons, you know, so you can count your life in the amount of spring, summers, autumns winters you've had. And you can't change the weather. You can't change the season."

Liz explained how she perceives life in the garden, "… seasonal fruit and veg are there for a reason… I know it sounds a bit corny but like a circle of life… growing flowering fruiting then you eat it, then the death of it, then it's all again."

Seasons are labelled the same every year but how they present and how they impact the taskscape is always different. Time is also a significant agent in the taskscape. A seed grows into a new plant, the old one deceased having left its legacy. The tree is another year older, and bigger, and will create more shade on the ground below, affecting what lives and grows there. So, the seasonal cycle is not a palimpsest, nor is it a circle, a term implying that the same comes about each year. Gell uses terms such as "again-ness" and "alternating time" in his dissection of Leach's work (1992, p. 34) and presents A- and B- categories of time-affected /-ing events (ibid., Chap.16). Just as Ingold (1993) talks of a greater depth in meaning arising from each event in the taskscape, so from this complicated notion I posit that the more time spent in the garden, the more tasks undertaken there, the more changes are experienced, therefore the fuller the Food Vortex and the greater the meaning of home-grown food.

With this analogy however, I revisit the Food Vortex, because participants were alluding to an innate connection with nature that seemed to be a two-way, or even multi-directional flow. Moreover, an immersion[10]. On reflection then, the vortex image does not accurately represent the embodiments in food because it portrays me, the human, as a passive receiver of these 'inputs'. My attempt to redraw the model confirmed how complex the holistic food-getting process is. Because participants struggled to articulate their connections with nature, I was sure that representing this in a diagram would be the solution, since vocabulary was not required. I concede, however, that the connections with nature and food that participants experience, are far more nebulous than anything I could portray in a drawing, and I could not imagine any way of representing an ever-changing taskscape.

The flux of the home-garden taskscape can be escalated from the local to the global. No more is the speed of change witnessed in the landscape than in our current planetary climate crisis. Current foodways significantly contribute to it (Kelly, 2002, p. 437; Mason, 2004, p. 112) and in

[10] See 3.1.4

line with Descola (2013) ousting a nature/human dichotomy, we cannot separate human health and the health of the planet because both impact on each other (Stuart-Smith, 2020, p. 277). Participants expressed outrage at the current foodways in England regarding food miles and their impact on the environment.

> "Why are we flying stuff in from Brazil and Morocco?" (Liz)
>
> "… and green beans, I mean they grow here. And I'm thinking flying them from Kenya and places… it's crazy!" (Helen)

Gardeners, in maintaining a proximity to their foods' origins, are acting to do their bit, however small. Jackie explains why she grows her own:

> "…that feeling… (*pause*) that… (*pause)* you've reduced your footprint, your carbon footprint a little bit, and you know you've not used the Earth's resources in transporting things or packaging them or whatever, so that, you know… (*pause*) that feeling of doing your little bit for the planet as well. It's all important for me."

Participants actively seek to buy food locally if they cannot grow their own which keeps the distance between their food origins and its consumption to a minimum (Kneafsey *et al.*, 2008). All participants in my study were women[11]. Women's involvement with food and the confidence they gain from their gardening has enabled them to convey powerful meanings (Counihan, 2008, p. 355). With this statement, however, as previously suggested, I recommend substituting the word women for gardeners - my participants act on this with their ethical choices as consumers of food, as well as in their gardening practices that demonstrate care for the planet and nurtures a relationship with their food.

They perceive this relationship to be an essential part of their connection with nature. I am reminded of the proverb: "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime" (anon). By growing their own food, their actions are sustainable. Plus, of great interest to anthropologists, the meaning ascribed to their food is

[11] Further research into the role that gender plays in GYO in England is recommended.

paramount and a certain freedom comes about when gardeners align their behaviours to non-human seasonalities, evading the social constructs of the clock and the calendar (Whitehouse, 2017). Whilst none of study group members declare themselves to be campaigners or influencers, they feel a sense of responsibility to the non-human world. As Schumacher (1976, p. 7) suggests, they have developed a self-reliance that enables them to bring about change.

This research has explored gardening during the Covid-19 pandemic, and whilst participants in my study have not changed their attitudes to food during this time, they have noticed that they and others are asking more questions about food supplies (Latham, 2021). With empty shelves and panic-buying, plus with everyone's daily routines upset and the stay-at-home order enforced, Helen's astute comment asserts, "People have more time to think about where their food comes from". I think what is happening with our food supply is that a vital element of food-getting is missing when buying food from the shops or relying on someone else to source it - the visceral and phenomenological experiences, memories, and stories of its growth. The Food Vortex is less full. The taste less flavoursome. The food has been grown, but we have not been part of its coming-into-being. We are less satiated. Using Ingold's analogy (2011, p. 127), if the sky in a landscape painting was removed and replaced with a block of blue colour, it wouldn't look anywhere near as good. So, if food were a landscape painting, and the intricate depth of meanings ascribed to home-grown food were the sky, then replacing the sky with a block of blue colour i.e., buying food from a supermarket wrapped in plastic packaging and pre-cooked, is nowhere near as good. People are looking at the foodscape painting and wondering how good *is* that block of blue sky, and how can they address the lack of detail, the quality, to make it better?

The Covid-19 lockdowns in England were not the only provocation for people asking more questions about the origins of their food. The UK's withdrawal from the European Union, which coincided with the pandemic during 2020 also impacted supplies and sources and continues to do so. I suggest that addressing issues of food security in the UK may be informed by further anthropological research into the meaning of GYO food. Several issues arise however if GYO were to become more prevalent: access, scalability, and priorities. The first is flagged up by Sara Venn of Incredible Edible Bristol who argues, "If we are telling people to garden because it's really good for you, … we need to create those spaces for people." Jung would concur,

“every human should have a plot of land so that their instincts can come to life again” (cited in Stuart-Smith, 2020, p. 132). Afterall, Jackie cannot imagine ever not having a garden to GYO now that she’s experienced what that means to her.

Coveney (2014) believes it is however, possible for anyone, whatever the size of their household or home environment, to GYO. There are already examples of Tower Gardens in Europe where housing is being designed with outdoor spaces for residents to GYO in dense urban cities (Knight, 2016).

Secondly, allaying concerns about the scale of GYO practices might point to examples from Tanzania, where gardens are designed for ‘ongoingness’, rather than scalability (Langwick *et al.*, 2021), a view that gardeners share all over the world anyway (Myers, 1998; Barthel, Parker and Ernstson, 2015; Koczberski *et al.*, 2018; Scott, Masser and Pachana, 2020).

Thirdly, priorities are a vast subjective concept for further research, although there are many examples of small-scale societies who value food-getting work highly because it is essential for life (Crowther, 2013, p. 69). Also, for Andalusian field labourers, the people who produce food are first in the hierarchy of things because, again, food is essential for life (Pratt, 2014, p. 26). In line with Eriksen’s (1995, p. 114) comments on the division of labour among Mundurucú in the Amazon, gardening as food provisioning is more important than hunting. In today’s world, and following the pandemic, more people are asking what is essential for *their* lives.

I posit that GYO is essential for life because the producer *is* the consumer and the individuals who consume food are not only responsible for its sourcing (La Via Campesina, n.d.; Bray, 2016) but have a relationship with it. The gardener may ‘dictate’ the meals for the week, depending on what is available and in season, as in mediaeval times (Hartley, 1954, p. iv)! For gardeners, the quality of food is important (Luetchford, 2014, p. 59)[12]. For retailers in today’s global food system however, quality is determined by its long shelf life. Seymore (2002, p. 13) calls such food “…dead: all the life has been taken out of it”. Mead (1943, p. 25) affirms that a focus on food sovereignty is the only way to affect change in future food habits and Seymore (2002)

[12] As explained in 1.4

declares this means “striving for a higher standard of living, not going back to the old days, or a lesser lifestyle”.

In conclusion, Spence’s work (Fleming, 2014) on how our senses give us clues that affect our tastes, has parallels in how the embodiment of the food taskscape affects how satiated, or nourished we are by our food (Langwick, 2018, p. 434). I suggest that the taskscape of the garden for food-sourcing, the meanings ascribed to the actions and actants within it, the phenomenological and visceral experiences that occur in that taskscape and the fusion of all time dimensions around it, constitute real nourishment from the food that is grown there. Ingold’s (2011, p. 130) theory conceives that the weather is not an object, but an *experience*. He further dallies with interchanging nouns and verbs, elucidating that the “wind *is* the blowing”. Applying this theory, I present a new notion about GYO, that “nourishment *is* the home-growing”. Eating home-grown food with all its associations and embodied meanings, nourishes more than any substance that is produced, supplied, bought, manufactured, or grown by someone else, and is uniquely experienced by each and every individual.

Conclusion

This project produced an ethnography of gardeners who were growing their own fruit and vegetables in their home-gardens in England, during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns and movement restrictions of 2020-2021. Two main themes of Relations and Temporality emerged from the data, and the meanings associated with a home-garden, versus an allotment or urban community project were discussed under several sub-headings under these themes.

I have discussed in this paper, how during the pandemic, people wanted to escape from the enforced confinement of their homes and sought refuge in their gardens. The concepts of home and being 'at-home' aligned closely with the garden as a safe place, where relations and identity can be expressed and enacted, without censure or judgement. Participants in this study explained how escaping to the garden (re-)connects them with nature, to the extent that they feel immersed in the natural world and they are not simply living *on* the surface of the earth, but *in* it (Ingold, 2011, p. 121).

Participants passionate comments on the taste of fresh produce included memories from the past, and how many experiences are re-enacted when growing in the home-garden, which then become embodied in home-grown food. The nutritional value of freshly-picked produce was supplemented by these embodiments to improve gardeners' well-being and health.

The garden taskscape (Ingold, 1993, p. 158) was identified and explained as an assemblage of actions or tasks that become the garden, with meanings imbued that are then also embodied in the food grown there. As sentient beings, growing their own food helps humans to establish their identity by developing a relationship with food, which extends to the garden environment, where they nurture that relationship.

Relating gardeners' connection to the world through their senses and their food, participants stress how important it is for gardeners to be and act as ethical stewards of the planet. Gardeners are fervently questioning the global food system and its damaging effects on the environment and doing their bit to reduce their carbon footprint, not as campaigners, but in their own space, where they feel confident to enact change and adapt their lifestyles to fit their

sustainable and ethical paradigms.

Based on how my participants ascribe meaning to food that they have grown themselves, I conclude with a new understanding of nourishment, that will be of interest to nutritionists, to health professionals, geographers, economists, food growers, producers, and manufacturers, to politicians and especially to anthropologists. This is a notion inspired by Ingold (2011, p. 130) who attests that the "wind *is* the blowing", so I posit that "nourishment *is* the home-growing". This suggests a need for people to develop a closer relationship with their food by growing it themselves, reversing the current trend of an increasing distance between food's origin and its consumption (Coveney, 2000, 2014; Mason, 2004; Counihan, 2008; Crowther, 2013).

I have elicited three recommendations from my findings: -

- for further research into the temporality of taste,
- for further research into the emotions of memories and how these are embodied in food that is home-grown,
- and a holistic study into GYO in the home-garden in more depth than the scope of this dissertation could allow.

It is hoped by many that the Covid-19 pandemic will be a springboard for change (Keith-Lucas, 2020) and this dissertation not only contributes to anthropologists' understanding of what it means to grow your own food but adds to the discourse on food sovereignty and its temporality.

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Appendix One: Consent Form

PRIFYSGOL CYMRU
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
UNIVERSITY OF WALES
Trinity Saint David

PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

Project Title: **Grow Your Own: Garden use as food sourcing and "meaning-making" during and following the Covid-19 National Lockdowns in England 2020-2021**

Please tick

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. ☐
2. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions. I am satisfied with the answers. ☐
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason. ☐
4. I understand that any information, images, or film supplied by me may be used in future reports, articles, or presentations by the researcher. ☐
5. I understand that any information, images, or film I choose to provide will be seen by other participants on Zoom or on the private Facebook page set up solely for this project, unless I prefer to send these direct to the researcher instead. I will contact the researcher to arrange this myself. ☐
6. I understand that my personal contact information will be stored securely by the researcher and will be used to contact me regarding this study. My personal contact information will not be shared with anyone else. ☐
7. I understand that the researcher has a responsibility to report any criminal or illegal disclosures made during the study. Other than this, the information I provide will be treated as confidential. ☐
8. I confirm that I am over 18 years of age, and I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

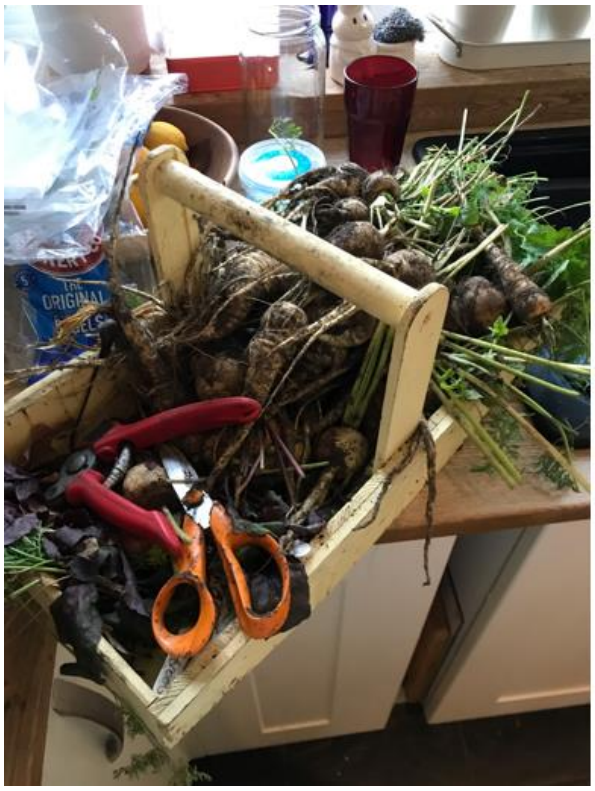
Would you prefer your story to be anonymised? *Tick if yes* (see below) ☐

The data used in this study will be in the form of conversations or images (still or film), that will be collected during group discussions on Zoom. If you prefer, I will take every practical precaution to disguise your identity and not record any identifying information on transcripts of our discussions. I will use an alias when referring to data supplied by you in my dissertation.

.....	.....	.....
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
.....	.....	.....
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Please keep this original and a copy will be kept by the researcher.

Please provide your email address for the researcher to contact you and invite you to join the Zoom group set up for this study.

Your email address: .....

Appendix Two: The Researcher's Garden – Zoom Introductory Session