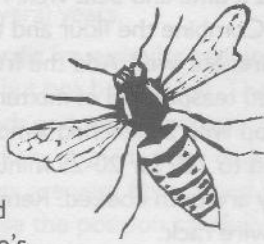


Contemplating Life's Blessings

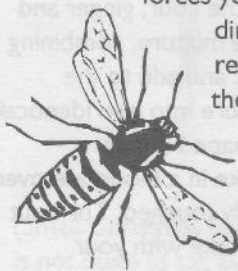
Hasn't it been an annoying season of European Wasps this year? Whenever I want to take my cup of tea outside and sit under my favourite shady tree, I have to decide whether it's worth having to avoid the wasps first.

Every house needs a shady tree. Let's not even begin to talk about carbon sequestration by juvenile trees, or the reduced heating and cooling needed indoors because of the tree's filtering effect, or the delicious fruit that trees can bear. Every person needs such a tree to sit under and be still occasionally.



Contemplating doesn't happen easily inside. I'd have to lock myself away and then I'd still be disturbed by shouts of, "Mum, where are you???" Somehow, being surrounded by the leafy canopy of the tree provides more seclusion.

Contemplating has been a must over the past year. Life becomes more and more busy with a young family (and they tell me it just speeds up as they become teenagers) and with work and other commitments – until it pulls you up sharply and forces you to reassess your



direction. There are stark reminders everywhere about the tenuous nature of our link to the living world, of people whose life direction has veered off course by devastating news.

My shady tree and comfy seat allow me to sit and just be and appreciate the blessings that are my life. There are worse things in life than a few annoying wasps.

Maria Ciavarella of Donvale, Victoria wins \$20 to spend at her favourite *Australian Better Gardens & Home Ideas* outlet.

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