

Little at Large

THIS being organic week, I'm going to join the debate from the point of view of a professional gardener who has been trying, for years, to find the right balance between a nice garden and the need to care for the environment.

Organic gardening is certainly an emotive subject.

There are those who think that organic methods of cultivation are the only remaining way to save our planet and at the other extreme there are those who think that organic gardening is a lot of balderdash and the refuge of hippies in kaftans and sandals, living in communes eating brown rice and sunflower seeds and happily dancing to the rhythm of their tambourines.

I believe they are neither.

I have been a professional gardener for more than 25 years and I can vividly remember, in the old days, people surrounded by large, white clouds, treating their cabbages with DDT.

Now, I don't want to go back to those days and the chemical industry does not wish to do that either, with so many products being banned over the last few



**Garden talk, by
Simply Garden's
Martin Little**

years. But I must say that even the garden, nowadays, has been infiltrated by that dreadful thing called political correctness.

Therefore, if you are not 100 per cent organic you are branded as an irresponsible son of the soil.

So, where can we find a happy medium?

I am a big fan of organic methods, which I tend to follow as much as I can.

But how easy is it, for example, to have a lush and weed-free lawn without the

use of a lawn weedkiller and fertiliser?

One of my clients is a self-confessed organic disciple, but even she insists on having her roses sprayed with Rose Clear.

And, when you are paying someone to maintain your garden for you, it's a matter of money as well.

Nobody likes seeing weeds creeping up everywhere, but it is certainly time-consuming having to pull them up by hand or hoeing them off.

Also, with the cost of plants mounting, who wants to see their prize specimens devoured by slugs or caterpillars?

Over my years of experience in gardening, wherever I have worked, I have always tried to work with nature, rather than against it, constantly feeding the soil with lots of organic matter and by vigilant control of pests and diseases (prevention is better than cure).

But I also never allowed myself to feel guilty for the occasional helping hand from chemicals!

**Happy gardening
Martin Little**