

**It's  
a funny  
old  
world**

# Is it wrong to festoon a fence with fake foliage?

This week's columnist: Comedian Helen Lederer

“I'm not one to rubbish other people's belief systems – particularly as someone who had her own house feng shui-ed to get rid of any rogue karma. The previous inhabitants had moved out to get divorced, so I felt the need to take precautions. So far, so good. I thank the rose quartz and wind chimes for keeping my marriage intact.

But I do remember being told it wasn't good karma to have fake flowers in the kitchen. Or maybe it was if they were south facing, or if the leaves were spiky? This concern about faux foliage was troubling me as I began to tackle my new obsession: neighbourly privacy during lockdown.

Like most of us, my movements were very limited over lockdown. I was either in the kitchen trying to avoid the bread bin or I was in the garden with my headphones. I'm very lucky to have a garden, but my patch of land is also very cosily aligned with next door. In fact, the only thing that separates us is two-inches-thick of fence. Every sneeze,

scream or whisper can be heard (even with headphones) as if they were only two inches away... which, of course, they are. And while I'm also grateful for the gift of sound and sight, I was also beginning to get tetchy at the proximity. Then I had the epiphany. Fake foliage. If I could cover the holes in the trellised fence with greenery, I could pretend I lived in a maze of my own making. If I couldn't see what was going on next door, it would all be fine, surely?

**'Every sneeze  
or whisper  
can be heard'**

Other people must have had the same idea because most of the instant hedge solutions were sold out online.

Luckily, I could still get hanging ivy, trailing ivy or fake flower ivy in virulent green plastic, with a refreshingly cheap price tag. Just before I clicked for a next-day delivery, I had a pang of guilt. What if I confused the bees? Would I harm the planet? I paused to consider alternatives.

There weren't many. Moving was one. Suggesting they restricted use of their trampoline was another,

and taking a portable keyboard outside to learn some Bach was a third. None of these felt plausible.

Maybe I should take a 'leaf' out of my recent mindfulness TED Talk advice. If I could change the way I thought about other people's noise and activities, I would be less affected and become a better human as well.

I would suggest we create a door in the fence and have a communal site where we could all live as one. But there was a problem – I could never let anyone else use my barbie tongs or share my outdoor cushions. Is that mean? Don't answer... ”

+Helen Lederer's Comedy Women in Print Prize is open for entrants now at [comedywomeninprint.co.uk](http://comedywomeninprint.co.uk)

## 'My funny old week'

**WHERE I'VE BEEN** The local park with a farmers' market on Sundays.

**WHAT I'VE SEEN** My TV gets switched on at 6pm and stays on until I get woken by my own snores. Netflix, I love you.

**WHO I'VE MET** The dry-cleaner, who transformed my muddy old coat into an urban fashion item in just a few days.

**WHAT I BOUGHT** Some marvellous see-through shelf stacking trays that sit on my desk and give off a new sense of hope and order.



**NEXT WEEK Christopher Biggins**

Woman's Weekly 15