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GARDEN

The text of this article has been revised April 2018



Garden

There are three bird baths in the garden. The large one is often full of starlings having a communal splash and sometimes a wood pigeon will sit in it and have a soak. My garden soil has a lot of clay, although the grass always stays green and healthy but the rest of the garden is very dry and hard for most of the year. After many years, I have found that the best way* to deal with this is to have permanent* shrubs and perennials, and then have the flowers in pots around the back door, conveniently close to the water tap. It makes a big difference having coloured pots, providing

extra interest. I am rather fond of the stripy pyjama one. I generally put another smaller plastic pot inside, so that it can be easily lifted out for changing or removal at the end of the season. However, most of the plants are not precious, so during winter they usually get left as they are.

* Omission phrase "bes(t) way"

* "permanent" See www.long-live-pitmans-shorthand.org.uk/distinguishing-outlines-2-rule.htm "prominent/permanent/pre-eminent"

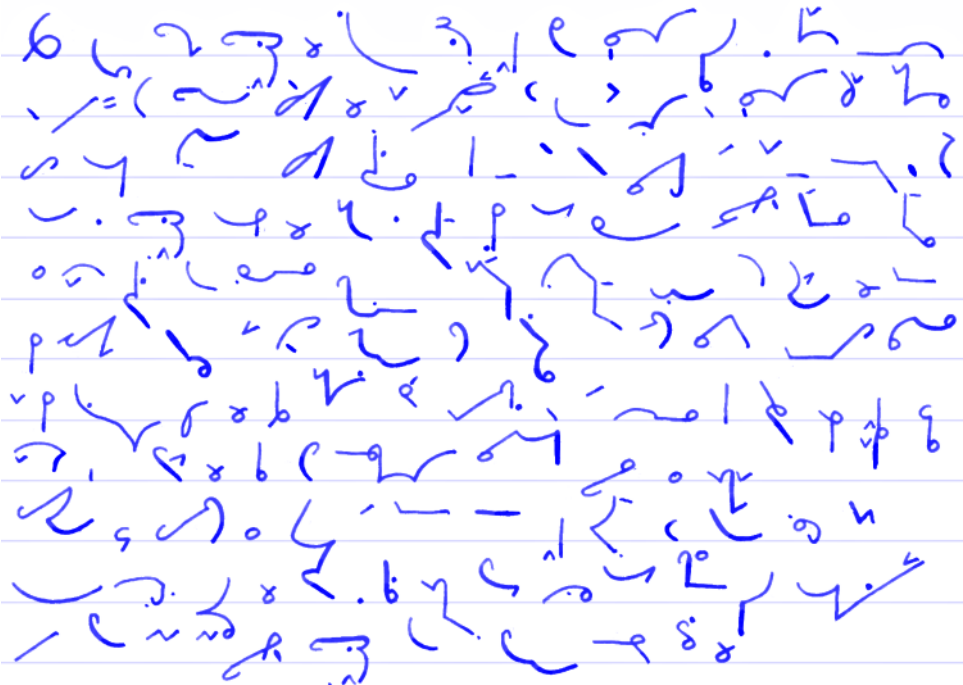


Garden

This rose is called Maid of Kent and is a very prolific grower, although not much scent but plenty of small thorns. It is leaning on the shed and has travelled along the trellis in both directions. I have many climbing roses covering the fences and I think it is well worth braving the thorns to get the blooms. The only care they get is tying in where necessary and a good chop back at the end of summer. It is always good practice to preserve any new long stems, which should be bent down horizontal to make the buds break and produce new shoots for next year. The roses are never sprayed and the sparrows

enjoy nibbling the greenfly. Later on the shed was replaced by a greenhouse and the rose had to go, but another Maid of Kent has been planted further down the garden against a fence where some privacy was needed, and in that position it has the space and freedom to grow as large as* it likes.

* "as large as" Do not phrase, as it would be too similar to "as much as". If you always phrase this latter one, and never the first one, then the two are always well differentiated.



Garden

This is the view from the greenhouse. After wearing out several small sheds, the time came to rethink garden storage. I realised that if all the middle to small sized items went into long storage containers, it could all be hidden and I could keep two of them in a greenhouse instead. I have a double seat in the centre, and use the box tops as my table for snacks, drink, Ipod*, laptop, knitting* or sewing. I can sit and watch the birds on the lawn and having their baths, and they are happy to carry on as long as I sit* fairly still. It is the ideal spot to retreat to, and makes it possible to sit outside when it is mild but blowy. Its other extremely handy use is to dry the washing when the weather is changeable and I can

go out shopping without being concerned about intermittent showers. The days of tripping over the mess in the dark shed interior are over, and I use the greenhouse for everything except plants.

* "Ipod" Always insert the second vowel in this and in "Ipad" to differentiate

* "knitting" Always insert the vowel in "netting, knitting, knotting", especially the first two as they are both on the line

* "sit" Always insert the vowel in this and "stay" as they are similar in outline and meaning



Garden

Beyond the lawn is the fish pond. As soon as you walk past, the fish come swimming at you from all directions, expecting food. I believe they sense the vibrations of feet before they see the person. Sometimes when startled they make a big splash so it is not a good idea to sit by the pond with your food on your lap. There are some tench who lurk on the bottom, but they are

difficult to see as they are dark green and more shy. Sometimes all you can see is their red eye. Goldfish are easily tamed so long as you don't make any sudden movements. You can train them to eat bread from your hand. The fish like to settle in the blanket weed and snooze amongst the oxygen bubbles. Blanket weed is very good for lining aquatic baskets.

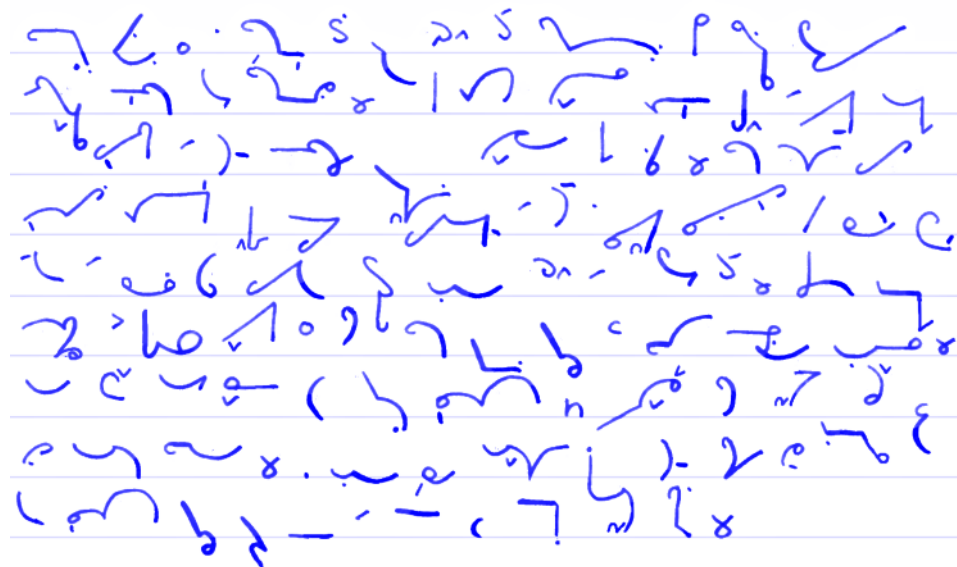


Garden

The pond has a large water filter box and in hot weather the fish line up at the outlet to get into the stream of fresh oxygenated water. This is normally a sign that the water lilies have too many leaves and are depriving the water of oxygen by blocking the surface. There are also two air blocks on the end of tubes from which columns of bubbles rise. Sometimes they sink into the mud and have to be pulled up and cleaned off. The fish also like this corner because

there is a lot of pond weed and small insects for them to eat and I often see them pushing into the corners to flush out any edibles. This is also a favourite* place for frogs who spawn every year. The tadpoles and froglets hide behind the baskets.

* "favourite" Note that "favoured" has a Left FR stroke



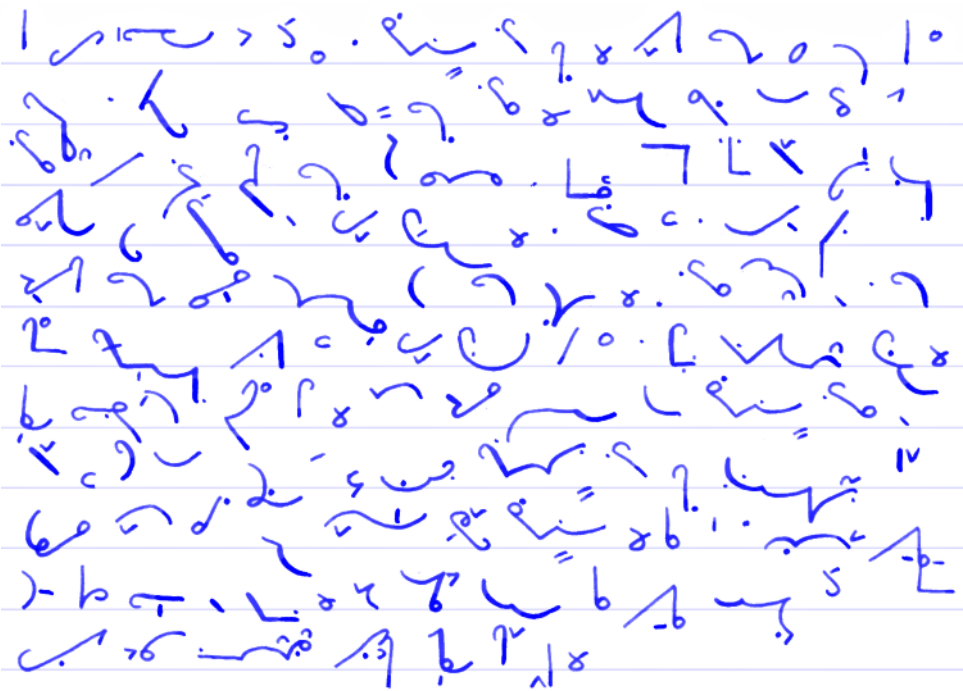
Garden

Creeping jenny is a very good plant to have around the pond perimeter, as it spreads everywhere and provides cover for the froglets. It also likes to grow down and root* into the water, and so covers the butyl liner at the edges. Very early one morning I looked out of the kitchen window and saw a huge heron, which soon flew off, and since then we have plenty of netting* around and over the pond. It is important to get the measurements of the defences right as they are very big birds, with greatly extending necks. In flight in the sky they appear smaller, but you realise their

actual size when they land in your garden. The netting is not entirely continuous so there are lots of gaps for smaller birds to be able to come and go without getting trapped.

* "root" Insert the vowel, as this could look like "reach" which would also make sense here

* "netting" Always insert the vowel in "netting, knitting, knotting", especially the first two as they are both on the line

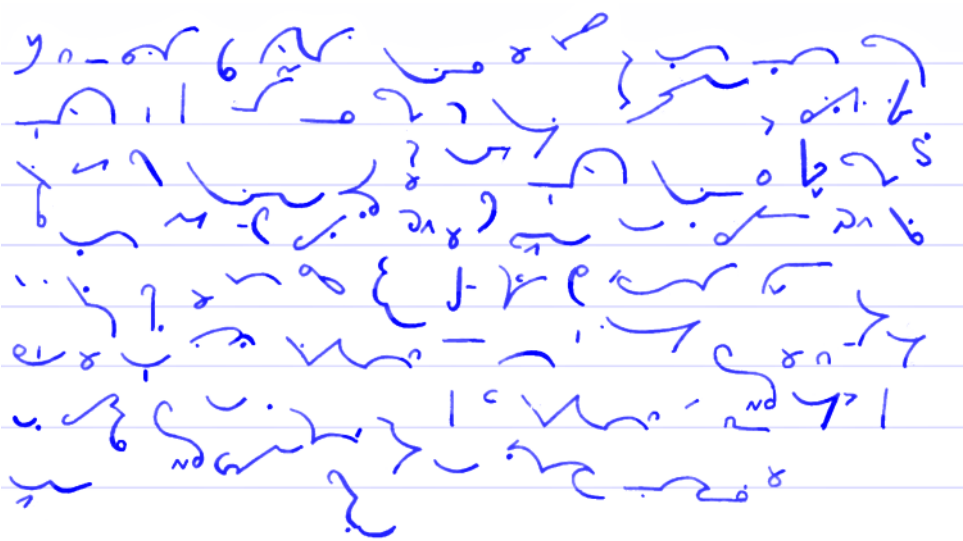


Garden

At one corner of the pond is a Spartan apple tree. Right from the first year it has produced a large number of* clean pest-free apples. I never spray any plants and the apples are completely trouble free, although sometimes the twigs get attacked by woolly aphid hiding under blobs of white fluff. A blast with a narrow jet of water from the hose removes them very easily. The apples mature to a very dark burgundy red with white flesh which has a delicate perfumed flavour. It is not crisp or sharp at all. I am always looking for Spartan apples

to buy when they are in season, and when the ancient Bramley apple tree eventually died, this was my chance to have my own supply of Spartan. It is on a medium rootstock so it will not grow too big. I think it enjoys having its roots underneath the pond where the soil accumulates rain water and does not dry out.

* "large number of" Note that the phrase "large part (of)" which omits the last word in order not to look like this phrase

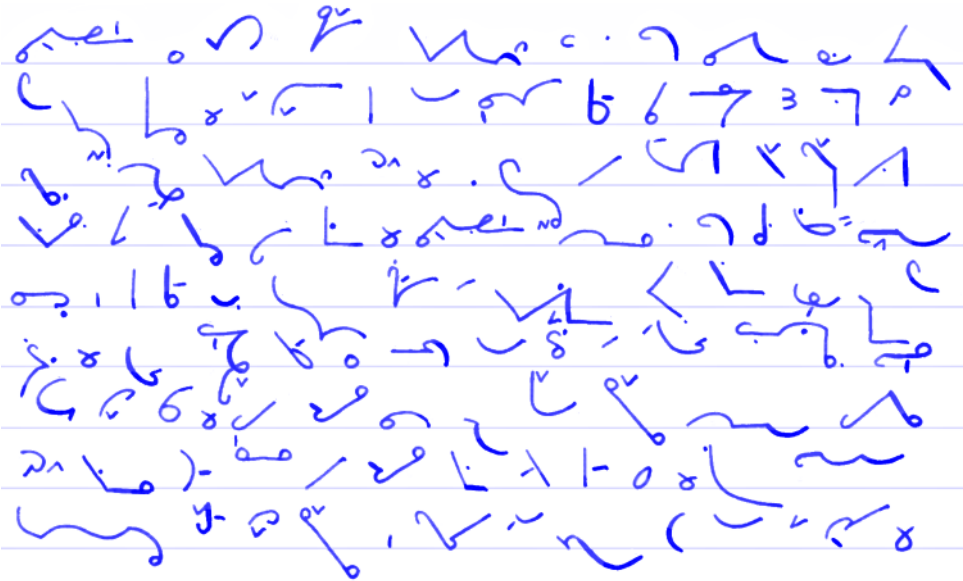


Garden

I wish you could smell these lovely pinks. I used to think the name came from their colour, but it actually comes from the word "pinch" referring to the serrated edge of the petals: remember pinking shears? In fact the colour pink is derived from the plant name and not the other way around. They are growing in a circle around the base of a pear tree. I am surprised that they have done so well as they normally like full sun.

No man-made perfume can improve on natural flowers. You only need one of these flowers in a room to fill it with perfume and you can enjoy it, knowing that you are not* breathing in harmful chemicals.

* "you are not" This phrase does not use halving, as that would look too much like "you will not"

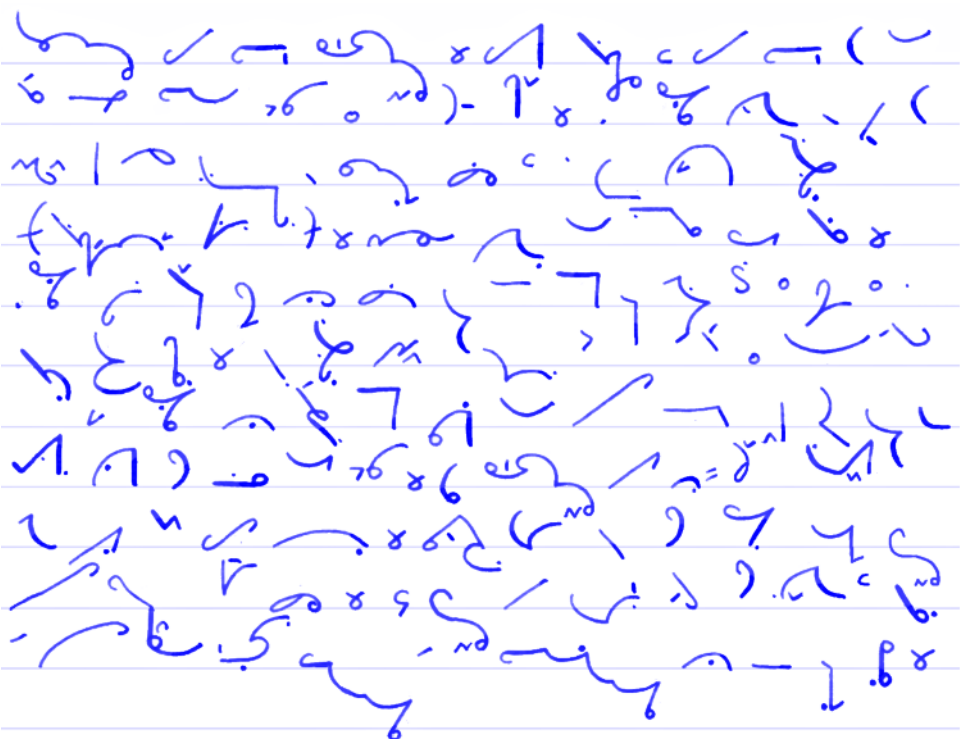


Garden

Honeysuckle is also highly perfumed with a very heavy scent which can be overpowering at times. I like it in small doses, which is exactly what you get as the breeze moves the perfume around. The flowers are followed by bright red berries which the birds will take. Honeysuckle makes a very dense fast-growing screen, but it does need firm control and periodic chopping back if it is not to take over completely. Even the clothes line* post is

covered in plants and often the clematis grows along the line as well. We always seem to have tiny spiders making webs around the pegs, so socks are always pegged up toe first. After gardening for many years, I don't mind spiders but I prefer not to bring them in on the laundry.

* "clothes line" Downward L in order to join the phrase



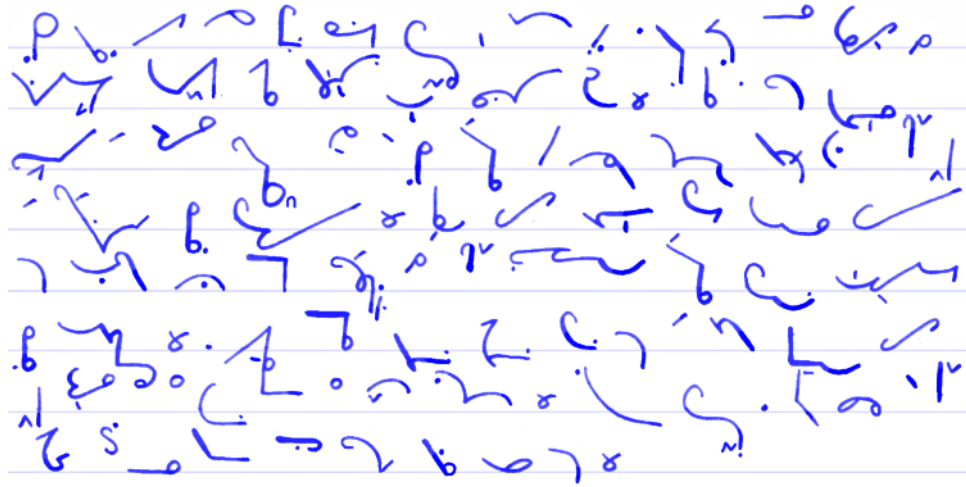
Garden

For some years we grew sunflowers*. We had better results* when we grew them in pots, because the garden soil is so dry. The snails love to chew them and I found it most effective to smear the stems with a thick layer of Vaseline (petroleum jelly). You must not leave any gaps near the base. The snails will bite through the main stem if they can get to it, and fell the plant, as surely as a beaver felling trees. Putting Vaseline round the rim of the pot is another option but the snails may possibly get sealed in, rather than kept out, especially if they have already laid their eggs in the soil.

These sunflowers are the mid-size variety and have reached about one metre. Hopefully they will put their energy into flowers rather than producing tall stems. When the flowers are fully open, they are alive with bees, and later on occasionally goldfinches and greenfinches may come to eat the seeds.

* "sunflowers" The FL is reversed, in order to make the join

* Omission phrase "better (re)sults"

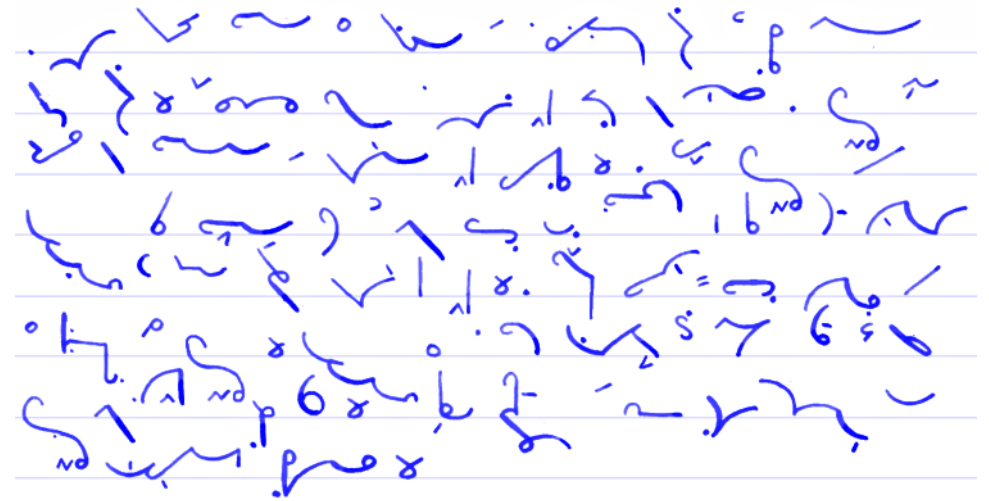


Garden

Sweet peas are the most delicate scented flowers, but I am cheating a bit here because this one is the perennial variety and it has absolutely no smell whatever. It is a very vigorous grower and always produces lots* of seed pods, which must be removed before they dry out and propel the seeds everywhere. It is not one to grow over the fence where your neighbour may get frustrated as the dried crackling pods

fling unwanted seeds in all directions. The rootstock gets bigger and thicker every year, and I remember digging one out that was as thick as my arm. After flowering the top stems all die, and then the plant comes back again from the base next year.

* "lots" Insert the vowel in this and in "masses" as they are similar in outline and meaning



Garden

The middle part of the garden has paving and a circular path, with seats and another bird bath. I sometimes bring a meal out here to be amongst the flowers, and not always be gardening and pulling out weeds. The white flowers are feverfew which is growing through what should be clean neat gravel, but it is so lovely that I could not possibly pull it out. The bright yellow-green* leaves are as decorative as the

flowers. Feverfew is a very variable plant and only those with the best flowers should be allowed to seed themselves. It is not troublesome and you can easily remove any unwanted seedlings.

* "yellow-green" Insert the second vowel in "yellow" as "yellowy-green" could also make sense

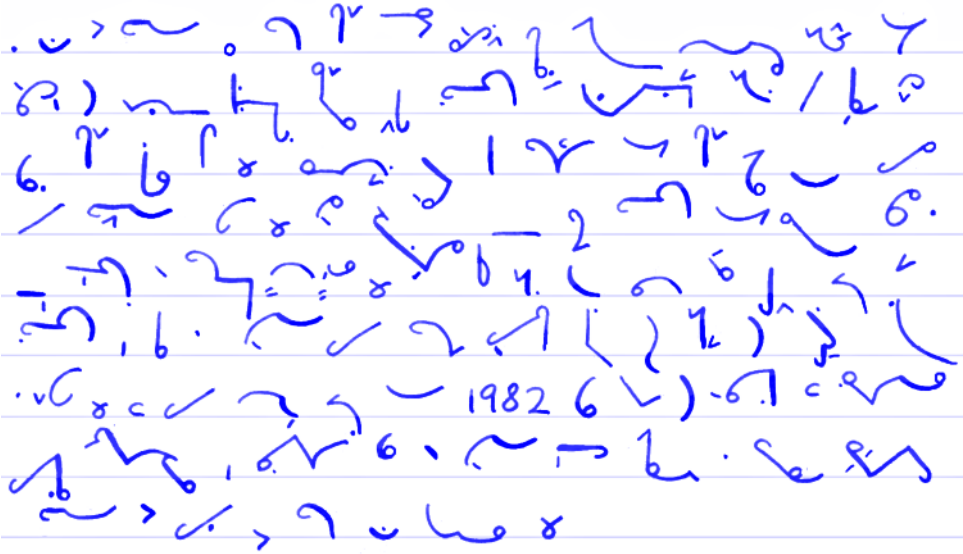


Garden

This is the central part, looking back towards the house with the early morning sun coming from the left, on a warm October day before any cold weather has finished off the plants. Top right you can see the black water filter box for the pond. This area used to be* one big shrub bed but one day I was working in the middle of the bed and realised what a good view I had from there looking back towards the pond. I also had nowhere to sit and admire

it all, apart from perching three legs of my wobbling chair on a narrow and sloping curving path. I was too greedy for plants and ended up working but not admiring. The decision was made there and then to reduce the work and increase the enjoyment. Now the area is paved with room for a chair or two from which to watch the happenings in the pond.

* Omission phrase "use(d to) be"



Garden

The end of the garden is very dry because of the surrounding trees and after many years I found the only solution was to make decorative stripes out of gravel and variegated ivy, which does not mind these dry conditions at all. Skimmia bushes do very well in the dry, and these young ones are growing well. Lots* of bluebells come through the gravel in the spring, as well as a good covering of forget-me-nots. At first I did have some pots down here on the gravel but it is a long way from the water

tap so that idea was abandoned after a while. When we moved here in 1982, this part was solid with saplings, weeds and brambles, but happily that is all long gone and it is now a pleasant suburban garden all the way to the very end fence. (2043 words)

* "lots" Insert the vowel in this and in "masses" as they are similar in outline and meaning