

Why women need sheds more than men¹

Pottering in a shed is apparently good for men's health. But what about women? Surely their need to get away from it all is far greater



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The shed: not the preserve of men. Photograph: Getty Images/Image Source

The nation's first professor of men's health, [Alan White of Leeds Metropolitan University](#), has announced that sheds are the answer to men's ailments. Apparently, pottering around doing odd jobs is therapeutic. "There's a sense of achievement that men get from starting a task and seeing it through to completion. It's good for self-esteem." Unlike women, of course, who thrive on going at things half-arsedly and looking around with satisfaction at the end of a day at all the things they didn't manage to finish. But perhaps we'll come back to that. You know, if I can be bothered.

White's discovery is being adduced as evidence in support of the "men's sheds" charitable scheme to bring communal sheds to the shedless, where they can meet, potter – maybe pootle, why not? – and be gently encouraged to visit the doctor when they get a twinge or headache instead of hoping that mending the lawnmower will do. Obviously I'm not sure what form this encouragement takes, as my gender forbids my entry to these hallowed sanctums – maybe some cheerful posters, maybe an undercover health official, or maybe a communal shed is like the Secret Seven's gang hut but with prostate exams instead of a password. Who knows?

The [men's shed movement began in Australia](#) about four years ago and there are now 20 sheds under its aegis in the UK. I wondered then, and I wonder now, why it was decreed that men needed sheds more than women. Which sex has historically had the power to barricade itself in its study/club/recently conquered country and relax with a glass of port? Conversely, whose lives have traditionally been dominated by serving the needs of others? Whose concentration is most often broken by calls on her (oh, I'm sorry – have I given the game away?) time from children or co-habitees who still don't know where the clean towels are kept, and miscellaneous idiots at work who believe that it is the nearest woman's job to clear up the literal and metaphorical messes they leave behind?

Yes, women need sheds far more than men. Where's our charitable funding? I'm writing this in a freezing loft conversion and can hear husband and baby coming up the stairs to get me, though at least only one of them is crying at the moment. What I wouldn't give for a dozen metres of muddy turf and a tangle of thorny thicket to deter them. Maybe I'll just institute a mandatory prostate exam instead. Yes. That ought to do it.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/shortcuts/2011/nov/30/women-need-sheds-more-men>