

## **Barely Believable: Steve Fuger**

Our neighbour of ten years barely waits for us to go away so she can have a good ol' nosey about the place. For example:

We'd barely taken off for a winter holiday, when she forced open the purposely bolted greenhouse door, twisting it and shattering the glass. She claimed a storm did it, refuted by another neighbour who patched it up and saved the plants (bless him).

We'd barely left for a hot summer weekend away, when she decided to heroically water our greenhouse, in spite of instructions not to, and to keep out, as himself had fully automated it. Instead of using a watering can from the greenhouse, she unearthed one around the back, the can with the red watering rose to remind himself that this one is for when he absolutely must use weedkiller. Thus, she destroyed a year's worth of seedlings, fruit and vegetables, plus multiple years' work on specimen plants and fruit trees.

Barely containing her affront at not being asked to feed our cat when we were away, she found a scrawny stray, which she fed, persistently emailing us to report our cat was not being cared for and repeatedly pushed the stray in through our cat-flap.

We were barely into the first evening of a weekend celebration with friends when she phoned to say her cat was shut in our barn. Said cat is grossly overweight and would benefit from a fast. She wanted to hack off the antique lock, which we forbade. Yet another neighbour (bless him too) carefully removed the fixings and refitted them afterwards. Meanwhile, because her animals would perish after five minutes without food, she shoved handfuls plus water through a hole (big enough for her cat to get through incidentally); then didn't clear up afterwards when she could have but left it for when I returned. And so presented an invitation for opportunistic rats.

Rats? Oh yes. Barely a day passes that we don't see members of the colony our neighbour nurtures under her sheds and chicken houses. Every morning and late afternoon she scatters fresh bread and especially cooked spaghetti and sweetcorn all over her garden. Birds of the large noisy variety descend in flock-loads in the mornings, load up and bomb our place on the way out, and the rats feast nightly on this high-octane fertility fodder.

You couldn't make it up. Could you?