



# Rain

on the allotment

Or

## **Nature teaches to be with what is and to forget the nonsense of what should be.**

N is already on the allotment. He came early as usual. He cannot sleep, so he digs instead. Now he is soaked, but proud, tired but alive. We switch on the heater in the communal shed, make tea and push two chairs together. He will sleep for an hour. R is sitting in the small greenhouse smoking. I join him. We just sit - and he tells me his dreams. He does not come to work on his plot. He has not got one. He walks around, helps where he can. He never misses a session - and of course always makes sure to tell me his dreams. H is here as well. But she has to leave for an appointment with her solicitor. It takes her nearly two hours to come, but today she had to come even for just a few minutes: after nearly 8 years she got her ILR - for herself and her family. Impossible not to be in tears. I phone F. It is raining, she points out. What are you doing at the moment, I inquire. I sit on the bed, feet up, because I am afraid of the mice in the flat. So, you prefer being with your mice, rather than with us on the allotment? Long silence - and then: NO, I'd love to be with you, of course. I hate the mice... why didn't I decide to come??? I am so silly!!! Why do I always find a reason to stay miserable...? I phone S. She has a 3 month old baby. We always call her from the allotment. Tell her about her plants and pass the phone to other group members. When the weather is warmer she will come with the baby. Another phone call. F has forgotten again. Can you please remind me next time in the morning. No, I hear myself saying, I am not your babysitter. If you cannot take responsibility for remembering, maybe we cannot work together. It is the first time I can confront her like this. I hear her swallow hard - but she knows what I mean. And then A rings. He is still in bed: It is raining... A big man like you gets pushed around by the weather? I ask him. By the way, your friend R is here. Oh no. He says. I would love to be on the allotment now...

*Wednesday, 30 April 2008, Colindale allotment between 11 and 3pm*

Jochen Encke