

Yew Sow and Sew

Driving into a six hour hold up on his way back from London food salesman Jem Bailey thought there must be a better way of earning a living than this. He assessed what he had got to offer the world. An artistic bent, a City and Guilds in Interior Design, skills with fabric learned literally at his mother's knee, a desire to work outside in the summer and inside in the winter and in the evenings. These combined with practical skills and knowledge of gardening provided him with a business he enjoys and which provides him with a living. As a bonus, his wife Nicky is also self employed and can advise on handling the paperwork and bookkeeping of a business.

Going self employed can be nerve wracking so Jem got himself the security of a couple of mornings a week as maintenance man at the Wycombe Swan Theatre.

Jem's mother was an accomplished professional seamstress. She passed her skills on and now Jem is happy to make or alter curtains, alter men's and women's clothes and upholster chairs and sofas. After a hard day's gardening, fabric work is almost a relaxation - and he gets paid for it. He can even do it when he is looking after his five year old son.

In the coming year most of the income of the business will come from the gardening side. Jem is a one man business and he is happy to do small jobs. If he gets a job too big for him to handle he can call on help from friends and relations in similar businesses.

He recognises that the modern professional gardener relies on more than a spade and hoe. He is building up his equipment list with the recent purchase of a truck and a shredder.

The biggest problem of getting started was getting himself known in Flackwell Heath and gathering regular customers for both sides of his business. He reckons that The Grapevine is the most effective place for him to advertise because he is not paying to advertise to customers outside his chosen area. (A very sage gentleman – Ed)

Yew Sow and Sew is an unusual business but Jem is very comfortable combining the two sides. Like other business people in this series he is not aiming to become rich and fraught – he is happy to do work he enjoys and have time for his family.

Just in case you were wondering. He thought of the name Sow and Sew which said exactly what he did. Then he added the Yew just because he fancied it.

Tim Kendell