

# Q & A

**GOT A QUESTION?** We've got the answer, whether it's about a plant, a tricky spot or a product you need

**Q I LOVE USING BERRIES** for autumn craft projects. What plants can I grow to keep a supply coming?  
*Kelly Smith, Glasgow*

If you have room for a small tree, a rowan will give you brilliant, firm berries. They are normally red or orange, but 'Pink Pagoda' has pink berries, while 'Joseph Rock' produces sunny yellow ones. If you want a smaller shrub, try the beautyberry, which has lustrous amethyst purple berries, or the firethorn, which has bright red or orange berries in autumn.



**Q WHAT'S THE EASIEST WAY** to put lots of daffodils in a border that's already got lots of plants in it?  
*Lynne Maddison, Sheffield*

A useful tool for doing this is the RHS long handled bulb planter (£32.99, [crocus.co.uk](http://crocus.co.uk)). It has a hollow spike that lifts out a core of soil,

leaving a neat hole for you to drop a bulb into. It means you can avoid bending and make light work of planting lots of bulbs.

Long-handled planters also make it easy to dig between bigger plants without making a mess. Make all your holes first so you can see the overall pattern, then drop a bulb into each one, pointed-side upwards, and fill the hole with soil.



*Keep your decking clean and slip-free and enjoy it all year round*

**Q HOW CAN I STOP MY DECKING** getting slippery when it rains?

*Alwyn Jones, Chester*

The best thing you can do is keep your deck clean as a build-up of algae and dirt can make it more slippery. Use a decking cleaner or restorer, available from most DIY stores, and thoroughly scrub the deck with a broom. If this doesn't solve the problem you could attach non-slip decking strips, which have a gritted surface. They are available in a variety of colours (try [slip-not.co.uk](http://slip-not.co.uk)).

If you'd prefer a solution that's less conspicuous, you can strip back your decking and re-treat it with an anti-slip oil, such as the one from Osmo (£50.51 [osmouk.com](http://osmouk.com)).

**Q I LOVE AUTUMN NERINES** but the leaves are dying away before they flower. What's going wrong?  
*Ella Kenworthy, via email*

Don't worry, this is normal. These gorgeous pink flowers will bloom in autumn after the strap-like leaves have faded away. If it's a wet summer like this one, the leaves might stay green all season, but normally they go yellow and wilt by midsummer. Simply clear them away, and the separate flower stem will sprout in autumn.



## EASY IDEAS



### CAN YOU RECOMMEND A SILVER BIRCH that

I can grow in a raised bed? I'm confused by all the options!  
*Sherrie Dick, via email*

Silver birch trees can grow very large, so they could outgrow a raised bed quite quickly. However, a multi-stemmed silver birch (ornamental-trees.co.uk), which has

several smaller trunks rather than one tall one, will stay smaller for longer. You could also try the gold birch, which has pale coppery bark and is happier having its roots restricted. The shallow soil will keep its height to about 6m tall.

If you grow a birch in a raised bed, you'll have to keep your tree well-watered, at least once a week with a full can, throughout the spring and summer.



### HOW DO I KEEP MY LOLLIPOP bay trees in good shape?

*Kim Pritchard, Worcester*

Small-leaved trees such as box and conifers can be clipped neatly with shears, but wider-leaved trees such as bay and laurel will need to be pruned with secateurs. This avoids cutting across the middle of the leaf, which will make it look ragged and brown.

Trim back leaves a little at a time all around the bush until you have an even rounded shape. You can trim in early September but don't wait any longer as pruning makes new shoots sprout, which might be harmed by winter frosts. You can start pruning again in spring and summer.

Super-stylish cedar screening and a colourful fence provide the perfect backdrop.



## ASK THE DESIGNER

OUR BOUNDARIES ARE OVERGROWN AND UNTIDY.

How can we hide the tumbledown wall and fences around our garden?

*Name and address supplied*



*This backlustre garden needed some TLC*



**CHRIS RIXTON**  
GreenBird  
Gardening Ltd

"The owners wanted a bright, bold and secure space. To achieve this, we needed to create good boundaries that would also screen the neighbouring damaged fences and tumbledown stone wall. A new feather edge fence, painted in Ronseal's 'Juicy Berry', has brought the shadier side of the garden to life.

"At the back, a beautiful new cedar screen fence fitted with contemporary downlights hides the stone wall and lights up the garden in the evening.

"Elsewhere, on the opposite side, an old brick wall has been re-rendered and painted a vivid lime. This provides a great foil for the new Indian sandstone patio.

"The top tier of the garden is now divided into triangles to make the space look bigger and creates two planted areas and a large patio space. The result is a low-maintenance space with year-round colour and impact!"

Chris Rixton is director of [greenbirdgardening.co.uk](http://greenbirdgardening.co.uk), a landscaping and design company in the South West.

**CONTACT US** Want some design inspiration or got a garden question you'd like answered? Get in touch, including a picture if you have one, by email at [moderngardens@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:moderngardens@bauermedia.co.uk)