



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

Q CAN YOU RECOMMEND A SMALL PLANT with fiery leaves in autumn?
Sydney Holden, Cambs

If your garden is shady and sheltered from wind, a dwarf Japanese maple such as 'Red Pygmy' (£29.99 ornamental-trees.co.uk) will give you bright red leaves that are also lacy and decorative the rest of the year. For a sunnier, exposed garden, grow cotinus 'Grace' (right, £17.99 crocus.co.uk), which has beautiful purple-red leaves in autumn. Cut it down to 30cm each winter and it will stay small.



Q THE EVENINGS ARE GETTING DARK but I'd still like to go into my garden when I get home from work. Can you recommend a stylish portable light?
Michelle Kelly, Wolverhampton

We like this sleek Fermob Balad Outdoor Lamp (£57, nunido.co.uk) as it's portable enough to carry as

you walk through the garden and also easy to hang up in a tree or on a pergola for a static light. You can also buy an additional lampstand, which is useful if you don't have anywhere handy to hang it up, and turns it into a lamp for indoors too. To light the way along a dark path, try installing spread lights (lumenalights.com), which cast light downward onto the paving.



WORDS: MELISSA MABBITT. PHOTOS: GAP, ALAMY, SUTTERSTOCK



Autumn is the ideal time to move a shrub of up to 2 metres in height, just water well

Q I PLANTED A SHRUB IN THE WRONG PLACE and now it's too big for the spot. Can I move it without killing it?
Cheryl Bailey, Oxford

Yes, you can. You'll need a strong plastic sheet to lift it onto and an extra pair of hands for the heavy lifting. Dig a trench around the roots about 30cm from the main stem on either side, aiming to retain as much soil around the roots as possible. Use a spade to lever the root ball out of the ground and lift it onto the tarpaulin. Make a hole where you want the bush to go that's as deep as the root ball and twice as wide. Lift the bush by the roots using the tarpaulin and place it in the new hole. Fill the gaps at the sides with soil, firming it in with your foot. Water the roots with a full can. Water once a week with a full can from May to September. ➤

Q WHAT CAN I DO WITH THE COMPOST after emptying summer pots?
Clare Keen, Norfolk

Old compost is perfect for using as a blanket around plants. It will help add nutrients to the soil and stop weeds from forming. Remove any old bedding plants first and use a hand trowel to break up the compost, which will be compacted. Spread it between your plants in a layer that is a couple of fingers deep.



EASY IDEAS



I STRUGGLE WITH MOST SECATEURS as they are too large for my hands. Is there another tool I can use?

Keely Taylor, Hastings

This is a common problem for women gardeners as most tools in

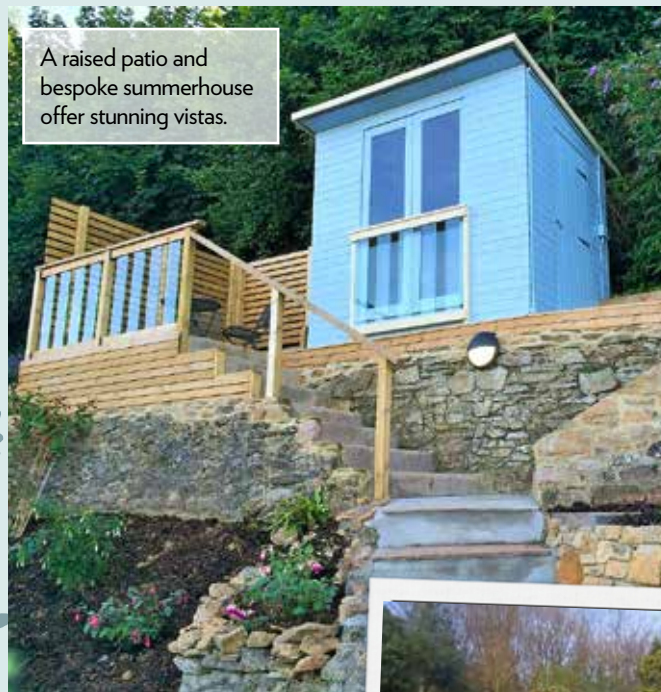
the past were designed with men in mind. Burgon & Ball Micro secateurs in green or terracotta (£9.99, burgonandball.com) are ideal for smaller hands. Felco No. 6 Compact secateurs (£33.89, worldoffelco.co.uk) have closely set handles that are easy to hold if you haven't got a wide grip.



MY BOX HEDGES ARE BEING EATEN by something, what's going on?

Poppy Winstone, London

It's almost certainly box tree moth, which is a new pest in the UK and so far, only affects London and the surrounding areas. Caterpillars with greenish yellow and black stripes eat the leaves in summer and spin a blanket of silk to cover the area. If you notice the leaves on your box have been nibbled, it's probably caused by this. It's difficult to get rid of them with pesticide sprays. The best solution is to pick off the caterpillars by hand, or you could hang a pheromone trap (£24.96, agralan-growers.co.uk) near the bush, which catches adult moths and stops them from breeding.



A raised patio and bespoke summerhouse offer stunning vistas.

ASK THE DESIGNER

HOW CAN I MAKE the steep bank at the back of my garden into a usable space?

Gwen Jones, Chester



The overgrown hillside garden before the transformation

"This project in Portishead had a similar challenge.

There were 64 steps to the summit up the side of an old quarry, which was very difficult to access.

"We re-landscaped the slope into beautiful tiers and reconfigured the steps. The new retaining walls became an opportunity to create individual bespoke beds for fuchsias and acid soil loving plants. The icing on the cake was a fully bespoke summerhouse to harness the beautiful panoramic view of Portishead town, the Gordano Valley and the Welsh coastline. We built it into the side of the hill to maximise space and create an intimate seating area to enjoy the special views.



CHRIS RIXTON
GreenBird
Gardening Ltd

Painted with Cuprinol Coastal Mist and Country Cream, it opens out onto an Indian sandstone patio from Castacrete with sleek screen fence and glass balustrades that don't hinder the view."

Chris Rixton is director of greenbirdgardening.co.uk

CONTACT www.moderngardensmagazine.co.uk

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