

Getting a bit too big for its boots



GARDENING NOTES WITH JIM McCOLL



WE HAVEN'T reached this stage with any of the plants in the new garden for the very good reason that they are not that old (mostly true – read on). Wherever you garden, there are always some plants that surprise you by filling more than their allotted space quite easily. Sometimes that is because they were planted too closely in the first instance, perhaps purposely, to cover the ground quickly, and sometimes it is simply because you saw a plant somewhere else and fancied trying it in your own plot knowing, in your heart of hearts, that it would get too big.

There is a cracking example of that in our new garden – among the rowan berries, haws and crab apples, there could be a few acorns to harvest as well, come time. Yes, indeed, I have planted two young oak trees simply because I grew them from seed and they have a very long way to go before they will become somebody's problem. Most of the questions we field are about shrubs and trees that have outgrown the available space. They tend to be blocking out light from windows or just from other plant specimens. They have to be dealt with positively and, in some cases, you could be busy at the job right now.

All the early-summer-flowering shrubs, such as Deutzia, Weigela, Philadelphus, Kolkwitzia and Cytisus, are best pruned immediately after flowering, but I am saying, if they are causing a problem, it is not too late to have a go at them now.

The technique is to cut out the tallest branches to a side-shoot down in the heart of the bush. Pruning back the tips is not the best way to tackle the problem. You could take out up to one-third of the growth

and, if you work selectively, you are unlikely to spoil the overall shape of the bush. Consider making this an annual task – in which case, you can get away with much lighter pruning and, as a result, fewer problems will arise. Pruning is a task that puzzles new gardeners, and the best way to learn is to watch someone else who is experienced at the job.

a river bank, rising to its potential 40ft high and spreading to 40ft, with the branches trailing in the water – what a picture, what a beaut. And just look at that reflection in the water – isn't it a delight? Hacked back annually to fit into a front garden in Pollockshaws? Naw, there's something wrong there, by the way. The message is, when selecting woody plants, by all means

pick something you fancy – but do a wee bit of homework. After all, woody perennials, trees or shrubs may last and give great joy for 20 or more years. These are not suitable for an impulse buy. They are an investment and should be selected with as much care as you would choose a pension fund – you might even find the plants are more reliable.

The question is: in a modest suburban garden, if a specimen tree does grow bigger than expected, can it be reduced



That famous
Monkey Puzzle
tree

Keeping up with the neighbours

Fans of Aussie soap *Neighbours* can now buy the same furniture as their favourite stars, writes **Susan Welsh**

NEIGHBOURS, everybody needs good neighbours – but what about having the same furniture as them?

Milan Direct, Australia's largest online designer furniture shop – and supplier of furniture to the set of popular TV soap *Neighbours* – is now, for the first time, in a position to sell to customers in the UK.

The online store has a range which includes everything from iconic lounge chairs to designer-inspired office chairs and from sofas and ottomans to coffee and side tables. The range of modern-retro classics has been inspired by the most influential designers of the 20th century, ranging from the purism of Le Corbusier to the iconic

Barcelona Chair of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, one of the pioneering fathers of modern architecture.

Products featured on the Neighbours show include an Eames reproduction lounge chair and ottoman, a ball chair and Miss K and Arco lamps.

“For several years now, we’ve been providing a champagne lifestyle on a lemonade budget to thousands of happy customers across Australia and New Zealand,” said managing director Dean Ramler.

“Initial feedback in the UK has been excellent.

"Our range of high-quality designer chairs, tables, desks and office furniture will excite everyone looking for a classic look and stylish furniture."

■ For further details, see
www.milandirect.co.uk

