

INVADERS

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There are some beautiful hardy plants that would be lovely to have in the borders but simply will not stay in one place, and in extreme cases rampage everywhere.

Euphorbia cyparissias looks absolutely lovely in early summer with its brilliant greeny-yellow bracts set upon feathery foliage. I knew its habits when I planted it in 1995, on one side of some yellow conifers at the top of our entrance steps. I thought it might not penetrate through the conifer roots to the border beyond, and it didn't. However, we tired of the conifers and once they were gone, off it went. It is still there, though I shall shortly attempt to remove the bulk of it. I suspect that I shan't get it all.

I subsequently planted the variant *E. cyparissias* 'Fens Ruby' in another dry spot. This has reddish-purple tinged leaves and I hoped it would be less rampageous. No chance. One spring I found small red shoots in the lawn up to 2.5 metres from the source plant. That has gone.

Some years ago, I saw a lovely *Thermopsis* in a nursery. *Thermopsis* have greyish-green leaves and spikes of light yellow lupin-like flowers in early summer. I knew that there were clump-forming types and invasive ones. I did not have any reference works with me, and I asked the nursery-woman if it was an invasive one. Oh no, she said. Well, it *was* invasive (possibly *T. lupinoides* or *T. montana*), and is one of those plants that send up new shoots a couple of feet from the original plant. The new shoots are attractive (blue-tinged grey-green) and they also have the ability to invade lawns. Most of that went, although I do occasionally find a rogue shoot. I must try and locate a non-invasive species such as *T. lanceolata*.

Years ago, on holiday in Greece, I fell in love with *Convolvulus althaeoides*, especially in its silver-leaved form, subsp. *tenuissimus*, which shows off its pink bindweed flowers to perfection. Some years later I bought a plant from Glebe Cottage Plants and, knowing it was invasive, planted it in gravel alongside a path. It was next to a narrow, raised border but separated from it by stones. It spread just as I hoped in the gravel, but after a few years found its way through the stones to the raised bed. I do pull some out but I love it, so it stays.

I have a pale-pink form of *Schizostylis coccinea* (this genus now seems to be called *Hesperantha*: why?) My variety flowers from October into November. In fact, after this mild winter it is flowering as I write in March. It was in the garden when we arrived. It is quite nice, though it spreads too much for my taste, and seems to regenerate from small pieces of rhizome. Also I do not find its leaves to be an asset, unlike those of common montbretia (*Crocsmia x crocosmiiflora*), especially with the light behind them. This was another plant in the garden when I arrived which invades everywhere, including lawns. There are so many better behaved varieties of *crocsmia*, a good dozen or more of which I have. However I suspect montbretia will be with me forever.

A major task this year for me is the complete renovation of one of my borders. It is rectangular in shape, measuring roughly 16 feet by 15 feet. It can be accessed from a lawn on two sides, and by grass paths on the other two. It has never been properly renovated, and it will be a hard job.

When we arrived there was a large patch of a rose, which I believe to be *Rosa gallica* 'Versicolor' (also known as *Rosa mundi*). It is still there. It has palest pink, semi-double flowers, striped irregularly with deep pink. It flowers once, in mid summer. This is a very old rose, known since at least the 16th century. It may be even older, as a romantic legend associated with this rose suggests it was named after 'Fair Rosamund', mistress of Henry II. So much for the romance: the reality is that it suckers widely and sometimes reverts to the plain deep pink (or light crimson) *R.*

gallica var. *officinalis*. Digging it out will be difficult, and we are bound to leave some pieces of root which will sprout again. Still, as it has been in the garden for so long I would not like to lose it completely.

Another shrub which suckers through this border is *Clerodendrum bungei*. This shrub has upright stems to six feet bearing deep green, slightly glaucous heart-shaped leaves, and in late summer corymbs of scented pink flowers emerging from purple-pink buds. I love it, apart from its wandering habit. New shoots can arise six feet away from the original so it is quite a difficult shrub to manage; perhaps it could be surrounded by lawn where the mower can keep it in check. In my garden it has gone underneath a grass path and emerged in the middle of a laurel hedge. It cannot do any harm there. The *Gardeners' World* website describes its spread as 50cm, which could scarcely be more inaccurate. I will have to eliminate much of this shrub and be more disciplined about removing young emerging shoots in future.

The other tasks in this border will be removing bluebells, nettles, couch grass, and some ornamental plants such as alliums and crocosmias that I want to save and replant. It makes me feel exhausted writing about it, let alone doing the job!

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