

BAMBOOZLED (OR, WHAT NOT TO GROW IN YOUR GARDEN)

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When the high street discount stores in Sheffield included Netto, I used to pop into the Woodseats branch every now and then to see if they had any cheap - and desirable - plants on offer. At that time, I knew far less about plants than I do now. One day, about 20 years ago, they had a bamboo. It was a slip of a thing with one little 'cane', priced about £1.50. I planted it in a pot and threw the box away. It stayed in that pot for about 10 years and did very little; it did grow a bit but wasn't terribly impressive. But I'm stubborn and like to get my money's worth. So when we moved to our present house nine years ago, I decided to plant it in the garden. By that time, I had done some research into what sort it was and decided it might be one of the badly-behaved varieties. But as I say, I'm stubborn, and was determined to get my money's worth, so into the new garden it went.

It took ages to settle in, but did eventually grow into an impressive clump, evergreen and hiding an ugly fence. But after a heavy snow fall, it was pretty much flattened. So I chopped it back once the snow melted, and it sprang back to life with renewed vigour. By the end of the season it looked great. However, that autumn I noticed a cane had sprouted through a shrub about 4 feet from the main root system. I pulled it out. Then I noticed another one, about 4 feet in another direction. Stupidly, and stubbornly, I thought I could manage to contain this beast with an annual runner removal programme. LOL!

October 2014: I decided I'd had my money's worth and it had to come out. Easier said than done.

I cut the top growth down and tried to tackle the main rootball first. This was a solid mass, about 60 cm in diameter, which was firmly anchored to the ground by multiple running roots, all as thick as heavy duty outdoor electrical cable. The runners were up to 2.5 metres long, travelling in all directions; under the lawn, into hedges, under a fence into next door's garden. I managed to get them out by digging around each one until I could get a good hold of a piece, then it was simply a matter of pulling hard; it was like pulling up an underground cable. That process left several unsightly channels across the lawn.

Then it was onto the main root ball, which felt as if it was bolted to the ground. It took several hours, two spades, two garden forks, a pair of loppers and a large hacksaw before it finally surrendered. It was so heavy it took two of us to get it into the wheelbarrow, and it left a large crater in the bed. I am not kidding myself though, I bet there will be some lurking underground waiting for spring to come.

A few months ago a chap asked a question on GQT about removing a 40 foot (40 foot!) bamboo hedge. He'd brought a sample with him as he didn't know the variety, but it sounded like mine. The panel's advice was to move house...

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