

## More questions and answers from the HPS Advisory Service

Emma Reece

**From A:**

I hope you're the one to help me solve my problem with *Anemonopsis macrophylla*. I obtained seed from a seed distribution scheme some 8 years ago, and now I have 3 plants in 'woodland type' shade in different places in my garden.

All are bulky plants. They look healthy until they start to bud up, then the foliage crisps and dies, and then the flowering stems do the same. In my opinion they have plenty of moisture, but it's been suggested that they're not being kept moist enough. Please help! They are such beautiful flowers when they open.

**To A:**

First, congratulations on germinating such rare and valuable plants. *Anemonopsis*, the false anemone, is a monotypic genus in the family *Ranunculaceae*. Its distribution is a very limited montane woodland area on Japan's main

island of Honshu.

The elegant, nodding lilac-white flowers resemble small lotuses, as suggested by its common name – Renge-shoma – which roughly translates from the Japanese as 'the lotus-flowered woodland herb with compound serrate leaves'. This is not to be confused with another beautiful woodland perennial, *Kirengeshoma*, which has yellow blooms.

Having researched this genus I conclude that they are not easy to place unless you can provide a humus-rich, preferably acidic soil, which is moist but well drained. You don't mention exactly where your specimens are planted. It sounds as though you are keeping the roots moist, but the air surrounding the plant must also have high humidity.

This woodlander needs shelter from cold drying winds. I suggest this is the most important factor, particularly crucial when the

plants come into flower, a time when they need extra cossetting. Is it possible to provide more shelter from the wind? This species is happy in semi-shade, so using other plants for protection will be effective as long as they don't rob your anemonopsis of moisture. You could use trees or shrub hedges, or perhaps bamboo screening, to filter out the wind; or you could provide a temporary physical barrier such as netting, woven hurdles or proprietary windbreaks when the plants start to bud up.

Check the direction the prevailing wind comes from – usually the southwest in the UK – and take it from there. Aim to reduce the wind's speed before it reaches the plants. Check also for any wind funnels which intensify the wind's speed and strength when the air is channelled between hillsides and along valleys, through corridors of established trees, or between adjacent buildings.

If you find it necessary to move the plants, take great care to keep them cool and moist, and incorporate some leaf mould into the planting hole prior to planting.

I wish you the very best of luck – it will all be worth it when you gaze upon such exquisite blooms. Please do let me know how you get on.

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*Anemonopsis macrophylla* at Edrom Nurseries

**From B:**

Our neighbours have had an extension built on the side of their house, and as a result we need a tall garden screen. We're thinking of using bamboo, growing to 7 foot.

The bamboo would be contained within a paved area with a brick wall on one side, paving in front and a wall behind. Our vision is narrow but tall!

**To B:**

Here are my suggestions – you will need to go and look at the plants in the flesh (or rather in the leaf) before you buy, to ensure you obtain good specimens with excellent colouring. The *RHS Plant Finder* is a good tool to search for nurseries; you will find it online or in your local library.

Whichever nursery you decide to visit, do ring them first to see which plants they have in stock. However, there's considerable confusion regarding the naming of bamboo so don't be alarmed if the nursery calls them something else!

I'm assuming your designated area provides suitable conditions for bamboos. They like a moist, well-drained soil in a sheltered, sunny site and won't tolerate constantly wet, boggy or extremely dry conditions. Before you plant, I would advise you to dig in some well rotted

garden compost or manure to improve the moisture-holding capacity of the soil.

There are two types of bamboo: running and clump-forming. Running bamboos are considered invasive and require a physical barrier in order to prevent them from straying to neighbouring areas and other gardens. Clump-forming bamboos grow in tight clumps and don't tend to wander as enthusiastically.

It sounds to me as though your site will restrain the plants. If there's any doubt, you should line the side of your planting trench with a robust barrier such as paving slabs, corrugated sheets or a root-barrier fabric. Ideally, lay your barrier down to 1.2m deep.

*Phyllostachys nigra* is an elegant, stylish bamboo with running rhizomes. The glossy canes are initially green but, with time, they will become blackish/brown and grow 4–5m tall.

*Pleioblastus simonii* 'Variegatus' is a vigorous bamboo which will require restraint, and will need to be thinned regularly. Its common Japanese name is 'Medake', meaning 'Woman Bamboo', which I imagine refers to its graceful appearance and elegant leaves. This bamboo bears intermittently variegated leaves, blue/green with white stripes. It grows 3–4m tall.

*Fargesia murielae*, the

Umbrella Bamboo, is clump-forming. It has arching, yellow/green stems and is bushy all the way to the ground, making it ideal for screening.

*Fargesia nitida*, the Fountain Bamboo, is a clump-forming bamboo with purple-flushed green canes to 4m and slender, dark green leaves. I particularly admire this plant.

Water your bamboos regularly for the first year and during dry periods. In the spring, take some sharp secateurs or loppers and remove any weak, dead, damaged or spindly canes, cutting them down to the ground. You may also wish to thin out some of the older canes so that the form and colour of the newer canes can be appreciated.

I hope your bamboo screen will provide the privacy you wish to regain. 🌿



*Fargesia nitida*

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