

# Bishop's Move guide to moving your garden

in association with the Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society



Moving house is stressful enough for non-gardeners but those who consider the garden as important as the house suffer still more. In response to questions like, "Is the kitchen big enough?" the gardener wonders, "Will my favourite fuchsias grow here?"

It is a wrench to leave a garden that has been planned, planted and nurtured over the years. But, like a new house, a new garden is full of opportunities. You can leave behind old problems such as heavy shade and a weedy lawn and enjoy features of the new plot – perhaps a beech hedge, a water garden, a colourful maple tree or a vegetable patch.

If you are moving from North to South, grasp the opportunity to grow figs and melons. If relocating in the opposite direction, savour the prospect of prize-winning leeks and celery.

In addition – and with care – you should be able to take many favourites with you from the established garden. The key to success is to start propagating new plants from old as soon as you think about moving house. Grow seedlings and cuttings in pots then, when you eventually hit the road, you will have a collection that is easy to handle and to transplant. As the plants will be young, they will grow vigorously once settled in their new home.

Overall, there are two challenges to consider: **horticultural** and **legal**.



**"It wasn't until the 1990's that I turned my attention from music to gardening. I had moved from London to live in the country and – upon meeting my husband, Hal, and starting a family – I decided what a great idea it would be to grow our own fruit and vegetables. Little did I know then how much there would be to learn. I**

**went to horticultural college, where my love affair began – with gardening, of course!**

**Compared to gardeners who have spent a lifetime in the profession, I am a novice, but I do understand their passion for working with plants and flowers. I also understand how important it is to have organisations like the Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society to help horticulturists in need and I am always happy to lend them my support."**

By Kim Wilde



## HORTICULTURAL CHALLENGE

There are three ways round the problems of moving plants and trees – digging up, taking cuttings and, appropriately enough, splitting! Before you bother to try either method, note what grows well in the gardens in the neighbourhood of your new home. If, for instance, there are only a few rhododendrons and they look sickly, the soil probably has a high lime content and is unsuitable not only for rhododendrons but azaleas, camellias and most kinds of heather.

### Digging up and transplanting THE EASY WAY:

Some shrubby plants such as periwinkles form clumps which can be dug up and cut into several rooted sections. Others, like lilac and snowberry, grow suckers – new shoots arising from the roots. A shoot can be sliced from the edge of a bush, with a piece of root attached, with a sharp spade. Many plants such as hellebores and foxgloves drop seeds which grow into young plants. In all these cases, the plants can then be dug up and put into pots of soil ready for the move.

### Digging up and transplanting THE HARD WAY:

However sentimentally attached you might be to, say, a silver birch bought to mark a silver anniversary, it will probably be too well established after two or three years to survive excavation and transplanting.

If you decide a tree or shrub is too important to leave behind, it must be prepared carefully to be moved with a large amount of soil round the roots. This makes the load very heavy and, even then, will not guarantee success but is worth trying. Dig a circular trench around the tree 45cm (18in) from the trunk

during spring, summer or early autumn. When the trench is 30cm (12in) deep – more if it is a large tree or shrub – dig towards the centre, creating a cup-shaped rootball.

Avoid damaging the thicker roots. If the ground is at all dry when moving day looms, flood the trench with water a number of times in the period before the move.

Before actually lifting the tree, dig deeply underneath it, damaging the main taproot as little as possible. For a deciduous tree, the move should ideally take place in late autumn or early spring and, for an evergreen, in September.

Proper after-care is as important as good transplanting. Once the tree or shrub is in place, water thoroughly and keep a one-metre circle of soil around it clear of weeds and grass for at least two years. The chances of survival for deciduous trees and shrubs that are in leaf when they are moved can be increased by pruning back up to one third of the foliage, though this may spoil the shape of some trees for several years.

- **Taking Cuttings** – A huge range of trees, shrubs and climbers, including roses and fruit bushes, can be propagated from cuttings. It is worth trying any species, particularly from April to September. The ideal length for a cutting varies from plant to plant but most shrubs, etc, will root from 7cm-10cm (3in-4in) cuttings. Prune a healthy shoot from the shrub, cut immediately underneath a leaf joint and also cut off the tip. Then remove all other leaves except the top pair. Take several cuttings and insert them in a pot of cutting compost where they will start to root before you move. They can be planted in the garden of your new home when fully rooted, which can take up to a year. Dipping the end of each cutting in hormone rooting powder will assist rooting.
- **Splitting** – Flowers that form clumps – bulbs such as snowdrops and perennials like Michaelmas daisies – can be split. Autumn and spring are the best times for splitting. First, dig up the clump. With bulbs, simply pull off a handful, put them in a pot with some soil and return the rest to the ground. With perennial plants, split young sections from the edge of the clump, each with a couple of shoots and a piece of root. Pot up some of them, replant some and discard the old, woody centre of the clump.



## LEGAL CHALLENGE

Finally, secure your legal rights to anything from the garden you wish to take. Legal requirements have become much stricter. Years ago, house sale contracts referred to permission for the vendor to take "certain roots and cuttings", which sounded suspiciously like a licence to dig up almost anything. Now the two sides should agree what stays and what goes, in the garden as well as the house. To avoid misunderstandings, the list of plants, containers, garden ornaments, bird tables, etc, to be taken by the vendor should be included in the contracts. Once contracts are exchanged, the people moving out are bound by that agreement and, if they take anything else from the garden, might leave themselves open to legal action. The same would apply if there were no agreement in the contracts relating to garden property.

### Further Information

This leaflet has been compiled by Bishop's Move in association with the horticultural charity the Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society Charity No. 15408R. Copy by Peter Surridge.



The Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society is the country's only charity dedicated to helping people in gardening professions. The Society offers a helping hand to anyone working in, retiring from or who has worked in horticulture.

If you would like to know more about the Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society, either to make a donation, volunteer to help raise money, or because you, or someone you know, may need their help, please call: **0845 230 1839 a** or visit their website at **[www.perennial.org.uk](http://www.perennial.org.uk)**