



Bamboo FAQ

We receive many calls and emails regarding bamboo and how to grow them. To help we've compiled this list of top questions asked.

Is all Bamboo invasive?

Most definitely No! Many bamboo species are tightly clump forming, staying put and remaining perfectly 'clumped' throughout their life.

Bamboos have two distinct root (or Rhizome) habits, loosely classified as 'clump-forming' and 'running'. Running bamboo can be very invasive often spreading several feet per year whereas clump-forming bamboo spread slowly from the base never sending out runners.

This leads nicely to the next question...

Can running bamboo be controlled?

Yes they can but still keep an eye on them! Rhizomes tend to grow in fairly straight lines away from the parent plant, often searching for light and better growing conditions. If you plant against a fence and your neighbours garden is sunnier then that's where they will head, be warned.

We recommend using or creating a root barrier to encourage the rhizomes to spread in the direction you want. This adds possibilities in that you can control exactly where and how you want the bamboo to grow, so straight lines are easy, curves and angles are simple to create too.

Root barriers are just physical barrier to the roots and are often sold in rolls at nurseries generally made of semi rigid plastic or woven polyethylene membrane. You can also make barriers by digging trenches, concrete barriers or even moats filled with water will stop them.

Generally most runners are near the surface so a depth of 45cm-50cm is usually enough. Though some such as *Pseudosasa* and *Sasa* are best given a metre barrier.

Which leads us too....

How do I get rid of a running bamboo?

When you are overrun with bamboo the best way is to cut them down to the ground and wait until new grow appears then cut again and again until it stops appearing. Herbicides do work, after all bamboo is just a boisterous over grown grass. Do however consider that if you use a glyphosate weed killer it will be absorbed by the roots and affect the parent plant too.

They can also be removed by digging, hard work but quite easy once you get under the main roots and treat like over grown turf. I once removed a whole grove from a previous garden a mini digger and literally peeled it away from the top 40cm of soil in giant carpet like lumps.

Ideally though after checking our website you will plant the correct bamboo for your garden.

What sort of soil does bamboo prefer, can I grow them in my waterlogged field?

Bamboo will grow in most soils but are happier in fertile moisture retentive soils that are not permanently water logged. In really wet soil bamboo will drown without drainage. It is possible to plant them in raised mounds keeping the root ball just above the water table to help them establish here.

They will grow in dry soils but will need a little help to get going, add organic matter when planting followed by a thick layer of mulch. Then keep well watered until established

If you wish to grow them long term in a container add 25% John Innes No3 to a good multi-purpose compost.

I want to use a bamboo as a screen or a hedge, how do I do it?

One of the most asked questions these days, bamboo are perfect for screening and hedging. Choose the upright forms of *Fargesia* such as *Fargesia robusta*, *scrabrida* or some of the *nitida* varieties. For taller screens or hedges try the larger *Phyllostachys* with accompanying root barrier such as *Phyllostachys bissetii*, *aurea*, *nigra* and *aureosulcata* forms.

Can I prune bamboo?

Yes, Definitely bamboo are very tolerant of pruning. They can be clipped with shears to create whatever shape you wish. If you want them to look really elegant I like to remove each year all old and spindly canes and then remove the side growth from the remaining canes (or culms as we call them) up to 90cm-120cm for a classic Japanese look.

Pruning can be done at any time of the year but take care not to prune newly emerged culms until they have fully

developed leaves.

Can I grow bamboo as a house plant?

No, not really. Bamboo enjoys being outside and as such requires high levels of ambient light in conjunction with cooler nights and warmer days. It also requires much higher humidity than you can achieve indoors. Further more indoors bamboo will rapidly succumb to pests such as red spider mite.

But I've seen lucky bamboo for sale in the garden center as a house plant?

Yes, lucky bamboo is perfect indoors. But lucky bamboo is not a bamboo! It is *Dracaena sanderiana* a tropical plant in no way related to bamboo.

Again for everyone at the back lucky bamboo is not a bamboo!

Are bamboo we grow edible?

Yes, most of the *Phyllostachys* are pretty tasty. Just remember it is only the freshly emerged new shoots that are worth eating. Harvest any unwanted shoots just as you would asparagus. Peel of the tough outer sheath, blanch for 30 seconds in salted boiling water then slice and add to your stir fry.

I think this is the best way to control misbehaving bamboo. Show them the wok!

I want to grow bamboo in a container forever

Well this is something many people wish to do. A lovely bamboo in a pot on the patio looking lush and exotic all year, what could be nicer. It's entirely possible as long as you are prepared to pamper your bamboo all year round. Bamboo needs to be moist but free draining so regular watering even in winter is required especially as the dense canopy often prevents enough rain from reaching the pot.

Feed though the growing periods, April to September and re-potting every 3-4 year. If you want to keep the same container size remove the bamboo from the pot in late spring, saw in half replacing half back into the pot and either re-pot the remaining half or make a new friend with a gift of a bamboo plant. Use a good compost ideally quality multi-purpose mixed with 25% John Innes No3.

One last thing try to avoid allowing the pot to freeze in winter as your lovely bamboo will suffer drought and the leaves will dry and fall – If you notice leaves curling this is a warning that your bamboo needs help.

Can I grow bamboo in windy or coastal gardens?

Well yes and no, generally bamboo are happiest in a sheltered position where they can look their best with pristine leaves. However a few such as *Phyllostachys bissetii* and *Pseudosasa japonica* can and do tolerate an exposed position just be prepared for a slightly scruffy look coming out of winter until the first flush of new leaves in spring.

I thought bamboo grew fast, mine hasn't done anything for months

Bamboo in the UK can grow up to 30cm in just 24 hours especially the larger *Phyllostachys*. Most visible growth occurs during a 3 month period from May to July typically. So if you purchased yours in say late August or September you'll have to wait until the following year to see much action. Same goes for that gorgeous black bamboo the lovely garden center man told you was clump forming. It will slowly build up a head of steam for a couple of years before it wakes up and shoots up all over the garden. You have been warned, we always say *Phyllostachys* bamboo sleeps for a couple of years when first planted then wakes up running!