

Any Questions?

Linda Scott proves there's no such thing as stupid question



Since starting to sell plants at fairs in 1999, it has been my pleasure to meet many lovely gardeners from absolute beginners to total addicts. Being one of the addicts myself I totally understand. At least it's a healthy addiction with many physical and mental benefits.

The range of questions I have been asked over the years varies greatly. One gentleman admitted he had never gardened before, and after acquiring his first garden he wanted advice on plants that were easy to grow and would fill his plot quickly. After hopefully pointing him in the right direction he finally asked if the plants he had just bought needed taking out of the pots before he planted them. A lesson for me not to assume that things are obvious just because I've been doing them for years.

Another lady had bought a plant from me to put in a pot, the following year she came back and said it wasn't doing very well. Apparently it repeatedly grew well for a while then almost died before recovering again. After some discussion I realised there were no drainage holes in the pot and the poor plant nearly drowned every time it was watered. Again, just because we more experienced gardeners know these things we shouldn't assume everyone does.

Most customers just want advice on the best plants for particular areas of the garden such as dry shade or very wet areas. Some ask me to identify a plant from a photograph and if I don't know the answer one of the other nurseryfolk at the fair can usually help. A more difficult identification is when someone asks, 'I have a plant in the garden with blue flowers, can you tell me what it is?' or 'My plant has long narrow leaves, what is it?' After a bit of a question and answer session we can usually get to the species if not the exact name.



"Don't be afraid to ask a question. The stallholders are always happy to try and help"

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs

At the other end of the scale are the really experienced gardeners who know as much, and probably more than me. These conversations are where I get to ask the questions and learn about plants I don't know.

Sometimes my husband Stephen comes to the fairs to help. He is very good at helping with things such as unloading and parking the van but is not a gardener, so please forgive the hesitation if you ask him a botanical question. All the other stallholders find it amusing when I am chatting to them on their stall and my phone rings, they know that someone has asked Stephen a question and I need to return pronto! He is getting better, try him on bearded iris.

So whatever your gardening experience please don't be afraid to ask a question. I and I'm sure the other stallholders are always happy to try and help.

Linda is an expert and enthusiast on hardy geraniums.