



### **Problem Area: Boggy Corners**

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/tomshiddengarden>

The Scottish Gardens' Problem Area: Boggy Corners

A damp, wet corner in a Scottish garden is a common challenge, but it can be transformed into a thriving bog garden or a vibrant damp border. The key is to select plants that are not just tolerant of wet soil but actively thrive in it.

## Understanding Your Soil

Before you start planting, it's helpful to assess your soil. Dig a pit about 45-50cm deep and see what happens.

**Poor Drainage:** If water collects in the pit overnight, you have poor drainage. This is common in clay soils. You can improve this by digging in plenty of organic matter, which helps break up the clay, or by planting on slightly raised mounds.

**High Water Table:** If the pit fills with water even when it hasn't been raining, you have a high water table. In this case, you will need to choose plants that can tolerate waterlogged conditions.

## The Best Bog and Damp-Dwelling Plants for Scotland

Here is a selection of plants well-suited to the Scottish climate and damp conditions, categorized by type.

### Small Trees (up to 4m)

#### *Sorbus pseudovilmorinii*

**Description:** A small, graceful tree with finely divided leaves and clusters of white flowers in spring. The real showstopper is the autumn display of berries that start pink and fade to white.

**Height x Spread:** up to 4m x 4m

**Hardiness (RHS Scale):** H6 - Hardy in all of the UK and Northern Europe.

#### *Amelanchier lamarckii* (Juneberry or Serviceberry)

**Description:** A small, multi-stemmed tree with year-round interest. It has a beautiful display of white, star-shaped flowers in spring, followed by edible berries in summer, and a spectacular fiery autumn leaf colour.

**Height x Spread:** up to 5m x 4m, but can be kept smaller.

**Hardiness (RHS Scale):** H6

#### *Salix* (Willow)

**Description:** Many willows thrive in wet conditions. *Salix exigua* is a good choice for its height and spread of 4m. Other varieties offer a range of colours and forms, with some featuring ornamental catkins in late winter.

**Height x Spread:** Varies by species, but up to 4m x 4m for smaller varieties.

**Hardiness (RHS Scale):** H6-H7 - Extremely hardy.

## Shrubs

### Cornus alba (Dogwood)

Description: A fantastic shrub for year-round interest. It has striking, colourful stems (red, yellow, or orange) that provide a welcome splash of colour in winter after the leaves have fallen. It also has white flowers in spring and summer.

Height x Spread: up to 3m x 3m

Hardiness (RHS Scale): H7

### Hydrangea paniculata

Description: This type of hydrangea has large, conical flower heads that start white and often fade to pink or red in autumn. They tolerate damp soil and provide a long flowering season from summer into autumn.

Height x Spread: up to 3m x 2.5m

Hardiness (RHS Scale): H7

### Myrica gale (Bog Myrtle or Sweet Gale)

Description: A native Scottish shrub that is perfect for a truly boggy area. It's a low-growing, deciduous shrub with aromatic, grey-green leaves. It's also known to repel midges, a great bonus!

Height x Spread: up to 1m x 1m

Hardiness (RHS Scale): H6

## Herbaceous Perennials

### Astilbe (False Goat's Beard)

Description: Known for its feathery, plume-like flower spikes in shades of white, pink, red, and purple. The fern-like foliage is also very attractive.

Height x Spread: Varies by variety, from 30cm up to 1m.

Hardiness (RHS Scale): H7

### Rodgersia

Description: A large, architectural plant with huge, bronze-tinged leaves and upright plumes of pink or creamy-white flowers in summer.

Height x Spread: 1m x 1m

Hardiness (RHS Scale): H7

### Hosta (Plantain Lily)

Description: Prized for its large, decorative foliage that comes in a wide range of colours, sizes, and textures, from bright green to blue-grey, and variegated. They love damp, shady conditions. Be mindful of slugs and snails, a common pest in Scotland.

Height x Spread: Varies by variety, up to 90cm x 75cm.

Hardiness (RHS Scale): H7

### Iris pseudacorus (Yellow Flag Iris)

Description: A classic bog plant, the native Yellow Flag Iris produces striking, vibrant yellow flowers in late spring/early summer. It is a very robust and vigorous plant.

Height x Spread: 1.5m x 1m

Hardiness (RHS Scale): H7

### Caltha palustris (Marsh Marigold)

Description: A native perennial that provides a burst of cheerful yellow flowers in early spring. It is a perfect choice for the very wettest part of the bog garden.

Height x Spread: 30cm x 30cm

Hardiness (RHS Scale): H7

### Primula japonica (Candelabra Primula)

Description: These primulas produce whorls of flowers on tall, upright stems, resembling a candelabra. They come in a variety of colours, from white to pink and red.

Height x Spread: 60cm x 30cm

Hardiness (RHS Scale): H5 - Hardy to most of the UK.

## Planting and Care

### How to Plant

**Prepare the Area:** Dig a hole about 30-50cm deep. If you are creating a new bog garden, you can line the hole with a pond liner to retain moisture, but make sure to pierce a few holes in the bottom to allow for some drainage and prevent the soil from becoming completely stagnant.

**Amend the Soil:** Backfill the hole with the excavated soil, mixing in plenty of well-rotted organic matter like compost or leaf mould. This helps improve the soil structure and nutrient content.

**Planting:** Plant your chosen plants, ensuring the top of the rootball is level with the soil surface.

**Watering:** Water thoroughly after planting. It is best to use rainwater if possible, especially for plants that prefer acidic soil.

## Care and Maintenance

**Watering:** Bog plants need consistently moist soil, especially during dry spells. Use a water butt to collect rainwater for this purpose.

**Mulching:** A thick layer of mulch (such as leaf mould or wood chips) around the base of the plants will help retain moisture and suppress weeds.

**Feeding:** Bog plants generally don't require heavy feeding. The added organic matter in the soil provides most of what they need.

**Division:** Many herbaceous perennials like hostas and irises can be divided every few years to maintain their vigour and create new plants. This is best done in early spring or autumn.

## Q&A

**Q:** Can I put a bog garden in a shaded corner?

**A:** Yes, many bog plants, such as Hostas, Astilbe, and Rodgersia, thrive in partial or even full shade. However, some plants like Yellow Flag Iris prefer more sun. Choose your plants according to the specific light conditions of your corner.

**Q:** What if my wet area is caused by a hard clay layer?

**A:** If the waterlogging is due to an impermeable clay layer, you might consider creating a raised bed to improve drainage. You can also plant on mounds within the bog garden area.

**Q:** What about slugs and snails?

**A:** Slugs and snails can be a problem in damp gardens, especially for plants like Hostas. Consider using slug-resistant varieties, or implementing slug control methods such as beer traps, copper tape, or biological nematodes.