

**Q** Our neighbours have installed a washer-dryer with the hot-air vent directed into our garden, and they often run it at night. Our azalea/rhododendron has started to suffer, particularly in the winter. I have placed two plastic boards near the vent to direct the warm air away from the garden, only for my neighbour to remove them. I have thought about erecting a fence, but we live in a conservation area and would likely need a full planning application.

My inquiry is twofold – what are the long-term effects on these plants of being continually blasted with hot air, especially in subzero temperatures? And where do we stand legally regarding the vent, as it directly affects our property?

**B Wright, via email**

**A** This reminds me of a joke, says the garden writer Toby Buckland (@tobygardenfest.co.uk). How many Ludlites does it take to change a lightbulb? What's the change? And what's a lightbulb? I mention this because Ludlites, although famously change-averse, are "early adopters" compared to plants, which have any change, especially sudden fluctuations in temperature. In the case, leaves will be tempted into growth by night-time blasts from a tumble-dryer vent. The foliage will be tricked into producing soft growth at night that won't survive the wintry temperatures of the day. Though it's unlikely to kill your rhododendrons, they will end up scorched on one side. Which, if you have to look at them, is no laughing matter.

You might be able to seek a legal remedy if the hot air is causing a substantial interference with the enjoyment of your land, says Ed Cracknell, senior associate at Russell-Cooke Solicitors (russell-cooke.co.uk). The vent itself may be trespassing on your land, especially when its cover is attached, depending on where the legal boundary lies. A court may well consider the intrusion too slight, though you could try contacting the council to see if it will pursue this as a statutory nuisance.

You should discuss your concerns with the neighbour first to see if an amicable solution can be agreed. Diverting the air would almost certainly be less expensive than legal action.

**Q** How do you remove moss from your roof?  
**Michael Healey and Brian Daniel, both via email**

**A** For safety's sake, we advise hiring a professional, but if you attempt to do it yourself, always hire a reputable scaffolding company to access the roof.

To remove it manually, go onto the roof with a brush and scrub the moss off the tiles/slates. It should come off quite easily. When you're done, spray the roof with a fungicidal anti-moss wash, using a small pressure sprayer. This will remove any leftover moss and prevent regrowth.

The second, faster way is with a power removal tool such as a lightweight scarifying machine. Once it's been removed, as before, use the fungicidal spray.

When the moss comes off, it may block your gutters. To prevent this happening, install a gutter brush product beforehand. This will take no time at all.

Many people suggest jet-washing, which is stronger than a pressure washer. We do not recommend this, as tiles or slates can be damaged. In America, some roofers install copper wire or strips on the roof – when it rains, the dissolving copper is said to kill moss. This is not common practice in the UK. The copper run-off is not targeted and will kill plants on the ground below.

**JJ Roofing Supplies; jiroofingsupplies.co.uk**



Do you need help from one of our experts? Email your questions to [homehelp@Sunday-times.co.uk](mailto:homehelp@Sunday-times.co.uk). Advice is given without responsibility.

**Q** We recently had a new double-glazed window fitted in our lounge. In the autumn, condensation started to appear on the outside pane, which faces east. This never happened before, or on other panes. When the sun rises, the droplets disappear. Is our window faulty?

**Graham Howard, Bath**

**A** Condensation on the outside of your double glazing means it works effectively: heat from inside is not escaping. The temperature of the outside pane falls overnight towards the ambient temperature, then warms in the morning as the sun rises. If the glass temperature remains below the dew point and the air is humid (common in morning mists), then moisture condenses on the surface, forming droplets. As the temperature rises, the condensation dries up. That this does not occur on your other windows suggests the new window has low-emissivity glass units and is of superior thermal performance.

**Michael Holmes, spokesman for the National Homebuilding & Renovating Show (March 23-26, NEC, Birmingham; [homebuildingshow.co.uk/national](http://homebuildingshow.co.uk/national))**



## QUESTION OF THE WEEK

I'VE INHERITED A FARM. IS NOW A GOOD TIME TO SELL IT?

**G Andrews, Norfolk**

**A** There are two ways to answer your question: one is objective and one is emotive.

Land values have fallen by about 10% in the past year due to a fall in farming profitability – surprisingly, as yet, the Brexit vote has had little effect on prices. There are fewer active buyers out there and only half the land put on the market nationally has actually sold. That said, what has shifted has done well, with almost 90% of farms sold in 2016 reaching their guide price.

The range in prices achieved on a sale is enormous across the UK – between £6,000 and £12,000 an acre. What is apparent is that the price of land is much more related to its location than to its quality.

West Norfolk has always been a popular part of the world, with high demand and low supply, which is reflected in its land values. It is a most attractive part of the country and is sought after by farmers and non-farmers alike.

Looking forward, there is no doubt that Brexit will create uncertainty in the rural and farming market. At the moment, farmers receive a subsidy payment per acre from the EU under the common agricultural policy. When Britain leaves the union, there must be a big question mark over whether these subsidies will continue at

current levels, if at all. This will affect profitability, making farmers less likely to buy land at today's prices.

The proportion of farmer buyers has fallen from 62% to 58%, but there has been a doubling in the proportion of lifestyle buyers. If the

number of farmers buying in the east of England continues to drop, we may see more than half the land being sold to non-farmers for the first time.

And that is the emotive side of the answer. High-net-worth investors have always been interested in buying land, be it for its amenity, for its sporting opportunities or to provide privacy and seclusion for their house. While the income they derive from the land is important, it is not the key driver. They just want to enjoy the benefits of owning land, and there may be tax benefits as well. As the saying goes, they don't make land any more, and in some areas, including west Norfolk, it has a scarcity value.

So, if you look at your uncle's farm purely from an investment viewpoint, over the short term there is more chance of a fall in prices than a rise. In the medium term, however, it is still a safe investment to hang on to, and doing so may bring tax advantages.

What's more, if you derive enjoyment from the farm, this has a central value, as many people through the centuries have found. You may find that your heart rules your head and you decide to keep it.

**Michael Fiddes, head of Strutt & Parker's Estates & Farm Agency**

## TOP TIPS

**Toothpaste isn't only good for your pearly whites. It can come in handy for cleaning the house, thanks to its mild abrasive properties – use the white version, rather than a gel.**

### MAKE TAPS SHINE

Run a bit of toothpaste over your bathroom fixtures on a wet sponge to get gunk off the chrome.

### WIPE AWAY MAKE-UP

If lipstick or mascara smudges your mirror, countertops or fingers, use toothpaste to wipe the pigment away.

### ERASE WATERMARKS

These unsightly rings on wood can be buffed away with a damp cloth and a little toothpaste. Mix it with baking soda for severe cases.

### BANISH GARGIC ODOR

When pungent cooking scents foul your hands, rub with toothpaste and rinse.

### BRIGHTEN UP TRAINERS

To make tennis shoes white again, scrub with toothpaste.

■ [goodhousekeeping.co.uk/institute](http://goodhousekeeping.co.uk/institute)



# Home help

Want to know how to land the best profit from an inheritance or remove the moss from your roof? Our experts are here to advise