**EXPERTS** 03.04.2016 / 27

## QUESTION OF THE WEEK

I've got damp walls and the paint is peeling. What is causing this?
Andrew Munro, High Wycombe

Damp has three main causes Arain coming from above; rising damp, where the damp-proof membrane has been bypassed; and burst pipes or badly capped-off

Don't ignore any of these. Damp will eventually lead to rot - possibly dry rot — in roof timbers and floor joists, causing even more damage

Most "falling damp" is caused by leaking gutters and downpipes or cracked flashings over eaves or wall tops. Many modern flat-roofed extensions fail where the roof meets the original wall: the lifespan of roofing felt can be as little as 12 years. All of these require simple repairs that should be carried out by a good roofer or builder.

a good rooter or bullder.

It may sound blindingly obvious,
but rising damp is usually caused
by bridging the damp-proof course
(DPC). Many new landscaping
schemes do this, with paving, tarmac or planters that allow moisture to gather above the level of the DPC In older properties, modern cemer renders can bridge a slate DPC or, even worse, draw moisture up and trap it in the brick and stone.

A good way of dealing with damp is to dig a French drain — a small trench, 12–18in deep and 12in wide, ideally with an open drair

channel — then fill it with gravel.

If you live in an old building with damn, don't rush to have the plaster ed off and the walls injected with chemical damp-proofing, then replastered with modern gypsum or cement render. No injection system works in stone, and in brickwork it usually lasts only 12 years. Instead it's important to allow the old walls to dry out and breathe. If the moisture cannot escape, any work you do

Our neighbour is constructing an orangery. The hammer piling work undertaken for this over a three-week period has resulted in a lot of dust and the constant vibrations have led to cracks appearing in the plaster in our newly decorated house. Can you advise me on my rights regarding redress?

Melissa Abrahams, north Londor

As a general rule, if a neighbouring landowner does something on their land that causes damage to your property, you can claim compensation representing the cost of the repairs. If the work is still being done, put your neighbour on notice of the damage being caused and ask for the building progress to be stopped. If the works have finished get a repair quote and make a written request for payment from your neighbour If they do not pay, a court claim could be issued, in which you might need the evidence of a building surveyor to prove that the cracks were caused by the

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Do you need help from one of our experts? Email you questions to omehelp@ sunday-times.co.uk Advice is given

without responsibility

internally may be

of no use. If you

need to replaster.

practical: it breathes and is

much more forgiving when damp.

as a watercourse nearby, tanking the

walls with a waterproof render such wails with a waterproof render such as Sika (sikawaterproofing.co.uk) may be your only option. This is often the best method of lining a cellar. Always check the airbricks and

ventilation around the perimeter

walls. These can get blocked, leading

If you have a serious problem such

Good news! Fogged-up bathroom mirrors, clogged showerheads and other bathroom ms can easily be fixed. Here's how...

■ Blocked showerhead Scrub using a liquid descaler and an old toothbrush Steeping for two hours in a solution of equal parts white vinegar and water also helps to remove the scale deposits.

Limescale on taps Clean regularly with a dilute solution of washing-up liquid, then rinse and dry. Do not use abrasive cleaners. To remove heavy

TOP TIPS

limescale deposits, soak a cloth or paper towels in descaler or white vinegar and wrap around the tap. Leave for a few hours, then rinse and dry thoroughly. Don't use descalers or vinegar on gold- or brass-plated taps, as they can permanently damage the finish.

■ Fogged mirrors Wipe with a drop of neat washing-up liquid, then buff with kitchen paper to keep **Good Housekeeping** mirrors from misting up.

> goodhousekeeping.co.uk/ institute

materials, style, wooden or concrete posts,

ease of access and whether there are any plants attached to the fence. Expect to

pay £150-£300 a day. Most reputable companies will offer a no-obligation quote.

Steven Zockoll is managing director of

Storm Katie blew my fence over What should I expect to pay to fix it?

Grace Wilson, Surrey Fencing is vulnerable to wind damage,

0800handyman.co.uk Is there a way of touching up scuffs on Farrow & Ball estate eggshell without having to repaint the entire wall? Cara Chester, Harrogate

Don't we all love F&B? Spying Elephant's Breath on your neighbours plantation shutters is a sure sign that your area is moving up the property ladder. Recently, I was lured in by its beautifully chalky Brinjal Purple and used it in a hallway. Big mistake. Within days, it was scuffed and marked. No amount of patching was going to save it. So I'm afraid there is no solution other than repainting but use its modern emulsion range instead. Dan Hopwood is a leading interior designer, former head of the BIID and a television presenter; danielhopwood.com

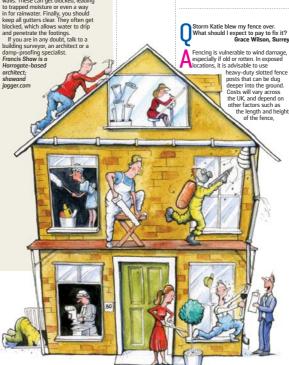
l have a dwarf Buddleja 'Buzz' plant in a pot. Do I hard-prune it like any other butterfly bush or leave it alone? Jo Stott, Cambridge

These mini-mes are the new butterfly bushes on the block. Instead of rampant growth, they put their efforts into a succession of red, blue or white flowers right through summer. Prune now by reducing the spindly ends back to a pair of strong buds 15cm out from the central branch framework. In summer, as container-grown plants run out of food, the length of the flowers shortens. When this happens, trim lightly to healthy leaves and top up with slow-release fertiliser granules. Toby Buckland is a garden writer and the host of tobygardenfest.co.uk

am planning extensive building

works. I often see portable loos outside homes, along with the skip. Is this now the done thing? CRS, Goring-upon-Thames

This is not your responsibility, but the builders'. They are required to make provision for their workmen to powder their noses. If the homeowner is happy to allow the workers into the house to use a lavatory, there is no requirement for a portable toilet. Few people, however, are prepared to agree to this unless the outside loo, or one close to the back door. William Hanson is a leading etiquet coach; williamhanson.co.uk



## Home he

If you've got a household problem, whether it's rising damp or a legal wrangle with a neighbour, our new team of experts are here to offer advice