

## To Downsize - Or Not

Margaret White

To me this is a very personal decision based on several considerations. For us several factors came together to influence our decision. The small bungalow opposite was demolished and replaced by a huge house which took away our view and dominated our outlook. A nearby factory site was sold to a company specialising in small developments of houses designed for the over 55s. I had spent twenty years developing my half acre garden and opening it for NGS – it was seriously in need of a revamp which would take considerable time and energy and having reached seventy both are not as readily available as twenty years earlier.

We studied the developer's plans and looked at some of their developments. We liked the house design and spotted that in one corner of the proposed development in our village was a larger plot which faced south east. We decided it was now (or possibly never), paid a deposit on the new build and put our house up for sale. It took several months to find the right buyer (who isn't a gardener!) during which time our new house was completed and became ours just three years ago. We soon realised that for us it was the right decision.

Anyone who has moved into a new build where the garden has been 'landscaped' will know what we found in the 'garden'. After struggling with a shade border on the north side of the house for three days to remove the builders junk, I decided to use some of the 'profit' from the move to employ a firm to terrace the steep slope at the rear and import some reasonable top soil. This was not a stress-free solution but it meant that by autumn 2016 I could start planting.

The terracing has given me two large raised beds which should help as my back increases its protests. It has steps at one end and a slope at the other. There is a large bed for shrubs and spring bulbs, three small areas for soft fruit and vegetables, my shade border which houses my (growing) collection of snowdrops and an area outside the patio doors where I can display pots of bulbs and other treasures in season. With help, I also created a small rock/scree garden by the front door. Then I treated myself to a cedarwood garden building which is part potting shed, and part greenhouse.

Having such a small garden allows more time and energy to grow plants well and enjoy them. My aim has always been to have interest all year and three years on I think I am still able to achieve this. I am having huge pleasure creating this new garden and there is still space for many more plants.

