

Garden gadget sounds too good to be true

Comment Bill Jamieson

A robot to trim overgrown shrubs and prune all my roses? Bring it on! But as I relax in my recliner to watch the mighty Bosch relieve me of those tedious chores, might it just be too good to be true?

I have more than 60 roses, many of them procumbents or ground cover plants. The blooms are great repeaters, but short-lived. No sooner have I dead-headed them than the next day yet more

dead heads appear. So I'm back out again with the arm-length gardening gloves and clippers, plus tubs for all the clippings. It's the gardener's draining equivalent of painting the Forth Bridge.

Then there's the climbing roses, the weeping standards and hybrid teas, And the nepeta and lavender bushes, the rosemary that's run wild, the creeping empire of bamboos, and the tall hedge that sprouts on a secret store of steroids.

So, bring on the Bosch as I cast aside Monty Don's "Garden jobs to do this week". You only have to glance at the list to slump in comatose fatigue.

But have the Edinburgh University researchers really worked year-round in a garden? And experienced the short life cycle of battery-driven garden gadgets?

Machines can fail. They need constant charging. And I have a shed full of them in various states of weariness,

malfunction, blunt blades, rust and disrepair.

Then the blades need replacing. Or long coils of brambles wrap themselves round the motor.

One prune style fits all roses? Pull the other one. "Calculated algorithms"? Ha! A robot set at hyper-trim may work for the procumbents but decimate the hybrid teas and ruin the climbers. Each rose type requires thinning from the centre and its own pruning technique – no way

can one pruning style match them all.

Even if it did, there's all manner of additional jobs left to do – checking for black spot, rust and powdery mildew; weeding and feeding, spraying constantly and watering in dry spells.

And does Mr Bosch pick up all the cuttings in his little box? Betcha he leaves you with all the back-breaking sweeping and clearing – and a sure-fire algorithmic her-

nia.

