

# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Daffodils appearing



Wallflowers



White camellia

## Are you prepared for spring?

**C**AN you believe, we're into March already which heralds the first day of spring on the 20th and the clocks going forward on the 26th, both key dates in any gardener's diary.

This week I have been busy pressure cleaning the paths and patios in the garden ready for visitors later in the year.

It is a major task, even more so with the creation of the new patio areas over the last two years. I reckon it can take me almost a week, in short sharp spurts, working my way down from the top of the back garden to the end of the drive at the front of the house.

Each spring it never ceases to amaze me how dirty the slabs get over the course of a year and it is extremely rewarding to see the fresh clean colours reappear.

This month, I am beginning to see some lovely daffodils start to appear in the garden. They work really well with a variety of other spring flowers, including wallflowers and primulas, and are perfect for a spring pot display.

You should deadhead after flowering and it is best to let the foliage die down naturally, to provide the best display the following spring.

Daffodils do best in full sun but will tolerate some light shade. They should be planted in moist but free-draining soil. They can easily be grown in containers, in borders or naturalised in lawns.

You can also cultivate daffodil bulbs en masse, to give you a fantastic spring show.

With colours ranging from white and yellow through to delicate pinks, there is a selection of daffodil bulbs and narcissus bulbs for everyone.

Mentioned above are wallflowers, which do really well at his time of the year too.

The best thing about wallflowers is that they have a lovely scent.

They make for perfect winter and spring bedding plants, if you keep picking and dead-heading, they'll flower for months.

They come in a wonderful range of rich colours and make great cut flowers too. I reckon they look their best when planted in large drifts, rather than dotted through garden

borders. Try underplanting both daffodils and tulips with wallflowers for a truly impressive combination and a stunning spring display.

If you go for perennial wallflowers, they are exceptionally long flowering and will add colour to your garden for months.

Regular readers might know that I have been volunteering for the National Garden Scheme since 2012, both opening my garden and volunteering as their publicity officer in East and Mid Sussex.

If there are readers who would like to support the scheme but are unable to open their own garden, there are other things you could do instead.

Remember how much they donate to nursing and caring charities each year and how good it would feel to be part of that process.

There are many opportunities to support the scheme in a volunteering role, that can range from baking cakes for a garden opening near you, supporting garden owners by taking money at the gate or helping serve the tea and cakes, to taking on roles such as the one I have.

The county organisers and all their assistants are volunteer posts too and full details can be found under the "get involved" tab on the scheme's website [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk).

You could become part of the Sussex county team, identifying new gardens and supporting our garden owners.

Or perhaps you are a keen photographer? They are always looking for great quality photos of their garden open days to help them feature the gardens and promote the work they do.

Inspiring, rewarding, sociable, a joy and a privilege are just some of the ways their volunteers describe their experience as part of the team.

If you are over 16 and have an enthusiasm for the National Garden Scheme, they would love to hear from you. Details are on the web site.

Opening for the scheme this weekend, on Sunday, is the Manor of Dean from 2pm to 5pm with entrance of £5.

The garden is in Tillington, near Petworth and has approximately



Geoff and the new patio area

three acres of traditional English garden providing extensive views of the South Downs. There are herbaceous borders, early spring bulbs, a bluebell woodland walk, a walled kitchen garden with fruit, vegetables and cutting flowers.

March is also a great month to see beautiful camellias on show in the garden.

I've got several potted shrubs on display at Driftwood this week including a beautiful white one, pictured, that I've had for almost 30 years.

Like many white flowers, white camellias symbolise purity and innocence. They are often used in weddings. They can also symbolise admiration and respect.

They grow best in partial or dappled shade.

Read more of Geoff's garden at [www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk)



Newly power-cleaned paving