

# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Fuchsia magellanica



Erigeron Karvinskianus



Fargesia Asian Wonder

## Autumn is moving fast but the garden is still looking wonderful

**M**ID October already, autumn is moving fast but the garden still has much to offer in terms of colour and interest. I've got three large fuchsia shrubs of magellanica, commonly known as the hardy fuchsia, in the back garden, which are looking beautiful this week. It is ideal for hedging, especially for a coastal garden, providing some protection can be given from direct sea winds. It is a medium shrub, typically growing to around 4ft to 6ft in height. It produces small, single flowers with red tubes, wide-spreading sepals and purple corollas. It is hardy through most of the UK, apart from inland valleys, at altitude and central/northerly locations. It may suffer foliage damage and stem dieback in harsh winters in colder gardens but the plant can withstand temperatures down to minus 10C. You can see mine above. I will cut it back after flowering to keep it the same height next year.

There is just one more garden in Sussex to open for the National Garden Scheme at the end of the month but nothing until then, however, there are still many beautiful gardens you can visit across the county. One in particular, for stunning autumn colour is the National Trust's, Sheffield Park.

Advanced booking is required to guarantee entry during the busy autumn season through until November 20 for both members and non-members. You can book up to two weeks in advance on the website, or call the box office on 0344 249 1895. If you are feeling energetic, fully explore the parkland and follow a three-mile trail, taking in all the views and landmarks across the parkland? This is a moderately hard walk that will take you about an hour and a half and dogs are welcome on short leads.

A relatively easy bamboo to look after is Fargesia "Asian Wonder". It is a recently introduced variety which is ideal for UK gardens. Its hardiness, colourful appearance, and non-invasive growth habit combine to make it a great choice. In its native China, it is a favourite food for pandas, but here in the UK

it is a versatile landscaping plant for a variety of planting situations. The leaves are long, narrow, and mid-green, and remain year round, making it ideal for use as evergreen screening. I grow mine in a large container.

A plant every visitor to Driftwood passes by is the beautiful Bupleurum fruticosum, commonly called shrubby hare's ear. This plant will provide nectar and pollen for bees and the many other types of pollinating insects. It is an evergreen shrub, growing up to 2m tall, with simple, obovate, blue-green leaves and clusters of tiny yellow flowers in summer and early autumn. It is an excellent evergreen, medium shrub for coastal situations. It is hardy through most of the UK but may suffer foliage damage and stem dieback in harsh winters in cold gardens but can take temperatures down to minus 10C.

Regular readers will be fully aware of my involvement with Macmillan Cancer Support.

At a recent meeting with the South East fundraising manager Megan Watson she surprised me with a wonderful gift for the garden, a rose called "Macmillan Nurse". You can see me pictured with it, having planted it in a large container on the new patio.

This modern rose is an excellent little shrub rose with large old-fashioned, rosette style blooms of white, occasionally flushed peach, borne in clusters. It is subtly scented and prolific throughout the summer and autumn against dark green, glossy foliage.

It is also shade tolerant and perfect for growing in containers. It would also make an eye-catching statement if used as a hedge to edge your home.

It is an incredibly healthy and rightly popular rose. I look forward to seeing it grow in the coming years.

Possibly one of my all-time favourite plants for the garden is a gorgeous small daisy, erigeron karvinskianus, which goes by many common names, notably Mexican Fleabane.

It grows best in full sun in fertile, well-drained soil and flowers from May, right through to October. The plant is fully hardy too.



Geoff and the Macmillan Nurse rose

Masses of small daisies, emerging white, then turning pink, with yellow centres, give this plant an unusual, two-tone effect.

The plant is versatile, being low-growing, happy in sun or partial shade. It's also tolerant of coastal conditions as my own garden proves with it growing everywhere. Try it as an edging plant, in a mixed border, alongside paths, in a gravel garden, spilling over walls, or planted in the cracks in paving. Bees and butterflies love all erigerons, so they make a wonderful addition to a wildlife garden, too.

You only need to purchase a couple of good plants and then you will find it coming up in many spots around the garden. They are so easy to look after too.

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



Shrubby hare's ear