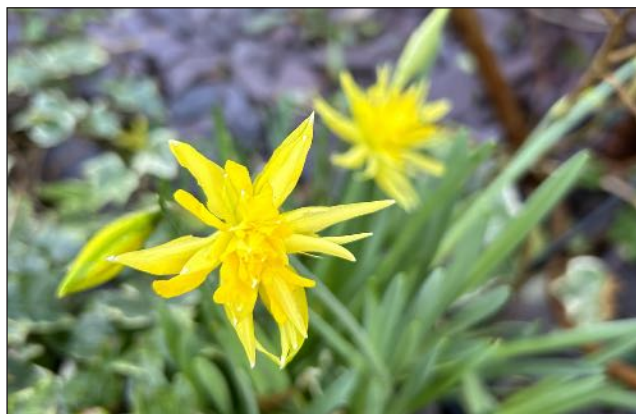


# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Rip Van Winkle daffodil



The beach garden



Coronilla glauca

## Never mind the rain, the beach garden still looks wonderful

**D**ESPITE the pretty awful weather in the early part of the year, not to mention the horrific amount of rain that has fallen, the beach garden at the front of the house continues to look amazing.

This is especially true on the days it attracts some sunshine. It never ceases to amaze me how plants just accept what is thrown at them and are quite resilient in the face of adversity.

The wind and the torrential rain through February really took its toll around the garden but the planting in the front has stood up to the conditions well.

One plant in particular dazzling this week is the coronilla glauca. You can see its stunning yellow flowers pictured above. It is a dense evergreen shrub with bright green leaves and umbels of fragrant, pale yellow flowers in late winter and again in late summer.

These are followed by slender pods. Coronilla is particularly useful in coastal areas where it will happily tolerate exposed conditions. This hardy shrub also makes a superb wall shrub. The shrubby scorpion-vetch, as it is also called, is native to the Mediterranean Basin.

Another yellow favourite in the garden at this time of the year are pretty daffodils and narcissi.

I have a very attractive dwarf narcissi growing in my garden which produces a star burst of intense double yellow flowers in early spring.

The clustered flowers can be used as a cut flower but be careful as they do emit a sticky goo which is toxic to other flowers. Always commented upon, Narcissus "Rip Van Winkle" receives lots of positive comments.

Its secret lies in the finely divided petals that create a golden nova when they begin to open. It's been taking gardeners' breath away for more than 130 years and Rip Van Winkle daffodils are true heritage blooms.

Take advantage of their compact height and use them to highlight the edges of flower beds or use them as absolutely charming pot plants on patios or sunny windowsills.

Camellias are continuing to

dazzle across the garden too and one of my personal favourites is coming into bloom this week. Camellia japonica William Bartlett produces pale pink flowers with accents of darker pink and is a must-have addition to your seasonal display.

They are hardy through most of the UK apart from inland valleys, at altitude and central/northerly locations but may suffer foliage damage and stem dieback in harsh winters in very cold gardens.

The plant can withstand temperatures down to minus 10C. It is an eye-catching, evergreen shrub that is celebrated for its gorgeous, large flowers and lush, glossy foliage. Its compact, rounded shape makes it a stunning focal point or an elegant addition to a grouping in the garden.

The standout feature of the William Bartlett is its abundant formal double blooms, which are a pale pink, splashed and streaked with darker pinks, reaching up to 4in in diameter. The blooms appear from late winter to early spring, making a brilliant contrast against the dark green foliage.

Opening this weekend for the National Garden Scheme is Bates Green Garden in Tye Hill Road in Arlington on Sunday, March 17.

The garden is open between 10.30am and 4pm but you need to pre book your visit online at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk). You never know, there may still be some tickets available, so why not take a look?

Light lunches will be available and the opportunity to look around a plantswoman's tranquil garden that provides interest throughout the year.

The front garden is a spring joy with narcissi, primroses, violets and coloured stems of salix and cornus. Visitors can also walk through a wild daffodil glade leading to the 24-acre ancient oak woodland.

Standing proud in the centre of my garden is a wonderful aloe striatula.

This aloe is one of the hardiest of all aloes and is a shrubby evergreen succulent with fleshy long pointy leaves which form on a stem, one of many on each plant.

Pretty flowers form in the early summer which are yellow raceme



Geoff and the aloe striatula

type up to 40cm tall. These form near the tip of each stem and flower on mass when the plant matures. It is from South Africa so this aloe makes a great coastal plant and is tolerant of windy conditions too.

It grows best in a free draining soil with an open sunny aspect, also makes a great pot plant although will get big over time.

It is a fantastic aloe which is proven to be hardy, down to at least minus 10C.

They grow fairly quickly into an architectural multi-stemmed specimen around one metre in height and spread and are very easy to grow and look after. It is best sited in a sunny position in well-drained soil (or pot) to ensure good growth and flowering.

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



William Bartlett camellia