

GEOFF STONEBANKS

The Driftwood Garden Diary



Disaster strikes in my greenhouse

I'm well ahead of schedule in putting my garden to bed for the winter.

Or I should say I was, before an awful disaster in my greenhouse earlier in the month.

Through late September, I carefully lift all the containers of tender succulents from around the garden, those in terracotta pots and those in plastic pots, buried in the raised bed to look as though they are in the ground.

It's a tremendous undertaking each autumn but especially challenging this year, as on Tuesday I am going to have steroid injections in both my wrists.

I have been troubled by painful wrists for some time, making basic tasks both in the home and in the garden even more difficult and uncomfortable.

So, you can imagine, lifting heavy pots is particularly challenging.

I was so pleased, once they were all safely packed in, as you can see in one of the images.

Imagine my horror to discover that the trestle base, holding up the main wooden tabletop on the left-hand side, had given way overnight and everything tumbled down onto the concrete floor!

It was a mess, as pictured.

It took me all morning to carefully rescue the damaged plants in order to start potting them up again.

Thankfully, none were beyond recovery, but 8 terracotta containers were smashed.

Having carefully sorted through the damaged plants, I was able to utilise all of them, albeit with a batch of smaller plants, as many stems had been broken.

I ordered a new metal frame for the wooden table top and everything has now been carefully restored for the winter.

I've yet to set up the heater there, which will ensure it does not drop below about 7/8 degrees through the colder weeks



Geoff Stonebanks in his garden

of the winter.

My annual preparations also include packing away a lot of the sculpture and glassware from the garden over winter, to ensure none is damaged and to extend its life.

All this goes into the summer house, after packing up and covering the 3-piece suite and all the soft furnishings.

You can see it beginning to fill up in the picture above.

Like the greenhouse, it is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle to get it all in.

Once everything is away, I can then walk around the garden

and think through any changes I want to make ready for next year!

There are going to be quite a few small changes across the back garden, some completed by me but the bulk of the bigger tasks by my regular garden landscaper.

Next week will see him and his team do work around the studio, putting in a concrete base behind, where currently there is some rotting decking and repairing the woodwork of the building and re varnishing it all.

I've had to remove an Elae-

agnus x ebbingei shrub from beneath the apple tree behind the corten steel pond as it had begun to die.

I'm planning on relocating a large hydrangea into the spot, which is currently in a container.

A lovely tree I planted in the garden, probably 12 years ago now, is a Sorbus intermedia, more commonly known as Swedish whitebeam.

It is a broad-headed, dense deciduous tree.

The foliage of this whitebeam variety is what differentiates it from its close relatives.

Its leaves are broadly oval, deeply lobed, and dark green, with a felted underside.

In late spring, the foliage serves as a contrasting backdrop to masses of dainty, white blossoms that appear on the tree.

The flowers are followed by highly-decorative, bright red berries, produced in large clusters, as seen in the image below.

Versatile and resilient, Swedish whitebeam is not fussy when it comes to soils.

This ornamental tree will thrive in any well-drained, humus-rich soil, regardless of its type.

It performs well in both full

sun and dappled shade, and exposed or sheltered locations.

Its tolerance of salt sprays and strong winds make it a great choice for coastal gardens like mine.

As the name suggests, Swedish whitebeam is native to Northern Europe and it can survive in areas where winter temperatures drop to 20 degrees below zero.

Fully hardy in the United Kingdom, this ornamental tree is appreciated for its good constitution and adaptability and is considered low-maintenance.

No regular pruning is required to keep its multi-stemmed form, looking tidy and neat.

While on holiday recently, I could not resist buying the pretty kalanchoe pictured.

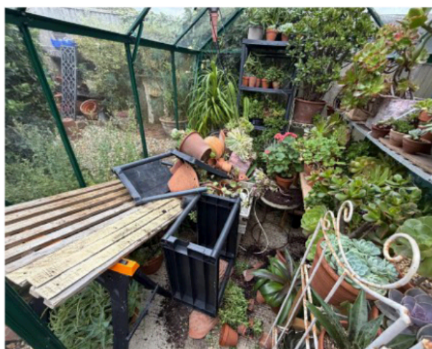
It is a genus of about 125 species of tropical, succulent plants in the stonecrop family Crassulaceae, mainly native to Madagascar and tropical Africa.

I read somewhere that a kalanchoe species was one of the first plants to be sent into space to the Soviet Salyut 6 space station in 1979.

Read more of Geoff's garden on the Driftwood by Sea website, or follow both him and the garden on social media.



The greenhouse before disaster struck



Chaos hits the greenhouse