

GEOFF STONEBANKS

The Driftwood Garden Diary



Robust and dependable shrubs

Don't forget that the clocks go back this weekend and it's Halloween on Friday!

If you and your family usually go out trick or treating, why not plan a smaller celebration at home with some Halloween garden ideas for children?

Think up ideas for a treat-filled treasure hunt, perhaps hide sweets, chocolate treats and small Halloween themed toys in your garden for them to find.

One idea might be to make a bug hotel, kids, I'm sure, will be excited at the idea of building their own spider B&B.

You could use recycled materials, a pallet might be a great starting point. Build it up in layers with bits of plastic drainpipe, plastic bottles, bamboo canes, bricks and cardboard. Stuff these with wood chips, straw, hay, dry leaves and loose bark to create the perfect place for spiders to crawl into.

Alternatively, create the classic Halloween lantern from a pumpkin to adorn the front door or back porch.

I've just purchased a new hedge trimmer, as my old one was not doing a great job. I've been busy cutting back the lower hedges in the back garden, notably along the central path. You can see they look much neater and tidier after the trim and have a good impact on the overall look of the plot.

I mentioned a new hydrangea, Groundbreaker Blush, a few weeks ago. It is a rare and exciting new arrival to the world of hydrangeas. It is truly perfect for those of us who love these robust and dependable shrubs, yet have smaller spaces for which larger varieties can be too overpowering. It is an astounding, dwarf shrub which reaches a more petite height and spread of around 40-50cm, perfect for containers on balconies or patios as well as open ground.

A wonderfully exuberant abundance of blooms emerges from July to November, spreading floriferous joy wherever it grows. As you can see from the picture above, flowers are both pink and white in varying degrees, depending upon the maturity of



Hydrangea Groundbreaker

the blooms, with a stature ideal as groundcover if planted 'en masse'. You can even cut stems for vases, making the most of this beauty inside your home too. This is a fully hardy, deciduous shrub which will not need any additional winter protection.

A pretty rose that has kept flowering in the garden is the fabulous climber, Cecile Brunner. It is a vigorous, large, almost thornless climbing rose to 4m in height, with copious smooth dark green leaves, and bearing large clusters of beautifully formed, fully double, pale pink blooms, 4cm in width, and flowering from early summer to autumn, you can see one of the blooms pictured in my garden.

A reliable old favourite at Drift-

wood is the pretty osteospermum, a lovely mauve one is pictured growing at the top of the garden. Osteospermum, otherwise known as the Cape or African daisy, is a good choice if you are looking for long-lasting, colourful blooms through summer and right into the autumn.

They are often used as a front of border plant in milder parts of the country, or annual bedding, osteospermums also make great container plants. There are many colours to choose from and the vibrant daisy flowers attract pollinators. Many are tender or half hardy and are usually treated as annuals or summer bedding plants. But there are some varieties that will come back every year, if planted in the right

location and given winter protection as those in my garden tend to do.

Regular readers will be fully aware that I take hundreds of images in my garden to use in my published writing.

All are taken with my iPhone and I have just invested in the latest, a 17 Pro. I've discovered it has a fantastic camera and is proving much more adaptable and useful than my previous iPhone 14. I could not resist the selfie with the matching orange mirror in the garden.

If you have got crocosmia in your garden, then now is a great time to lift and divide large clumps as the flowers start to fade. Push a fork under the clump and lever them up, pulling the fo-

liage to help.

They are shallow rooted so should come up quite easily. Divide the clump with your hands or with hand forks into groups of several corms and replant at the same depth. Cut back the foliage if it has started to yellow. There is a garden open for the National Garden Scheme in West Sussex this weekend, Denmans, in Denmans Lane, Fontwell is the final opening in the county until next year. It opens tomorrow, Sunday from 11am to 4pm with entry £10 and children £8. Denmans is a Grade II registered post-war garden renowned for its curvilinear layout and complex plantings. Details at www.ngs.org.uk Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk



Trimmed hedges



Geoff's new iPhone 17 in cosmic orange I



Osteospermum



Rose Cecile Brunner