



Green and pleasant

IT'S February and Spring is in our sights. This month we'll expect to find signs of the approaching spring, with wildlife waking up as light levels and temperatures hopefully begin to increase. There's also plenty to do indoors this month to prepare for the season ahead. Outdoors, as the garden comes to life again, it's time to prune shrubs and climbers, such as Wisteria as well as evergreen hedges.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

The next few weeks can almost feel like a turning point in the garden. It's still cold outside, but a wonderful indicator of the upcoming Spring are all the amazing bulbs slowly emerging from the ground, and more importantly, the days are finally getting longer.

Sunshine in February

Euryops pectinatus, the grey-leaved euryops, (pictured in the header) is a species of flowering plant in the family Asteraceae, endemic to rocky, sandstone slopes in the Western Cape of South Africa. It is a great stalwart to have in your garden. It's beautiful flowers looking like pure sunshine on a grey winter day. It is a half-hardy, fast-growing shrub, bearing bright yellow daisy-like flowers on long stalks, above grey-green foliage.

It blooms from early summer to mid-autumn, and is perfect for growing in a sheltered sunny border. Its flowers are hugely attractive to pollinators, including bees and butterflies. The milder weather in recent weeks has meant mine are looking pretty amazing in February. Another dazzling sunshine yellow can be appreciated from the delicate flowers on *coronilla glauca* too. I've got three in my front beach garden all looking spectacular this month, along with the beautiful, stand-out, fluorescent flowers of my hellebore *argutifolius*.

Snowdrop Heaven

Last month I mentioned all the *National Garden Scheme* gardens opening for snowdrops, this month I'll focus on just one of them. *Pembury House* in Clayton, near Ditchling. It has been opening its garden gate for many years now and is taking bookings each morning, 10:30 to 12:30, every Tuesday to Friday from the 10th of the month through

until the 11th March. All slots are advertised on the scheme's website at www.ngs.org.uk. You can book as an individual, couple or small group. Depending on the vagaries of the season, their hellebores and snowdrops are at their best now. It is a country garden, tidy but not manicured. There is always in progress on new areas. The plot's winding paths give a choice of walks through its three acres of garden, which is in and enjoys views of the *South Downs National Park*. The owners highly recommend wellies, macs and winter woollies, what's more you can take your four-legged friends on a lead too. Home-made teas are included in the £10 entrance. Booking is open now, so log on and secure your tickets for a wonderful morning out.

Jobs to do in the garden

This month is the perfect time to prepare yourself for the summer. Check your tools are sound and your garden machinery is in good working order and apply a little TLC to anything that needs it. While you're at it, why not tidy your shed ahead of the imminent planting & sowing season – I'm pretty sure you'll thank yourself for a clean and tidy space later! Weather permitting have a go at blitzing perennial weeds in your beds and kitchen garden. Dig them up, roots and all, to get a head start on the blighters before the weather warms up.

If you haven't already, cut back the old foliage from ornamental grasses before any new growth appears, clip them to within a few centimetres of the ground. Overwintered fuchsias can be pruned back to one or two buds on each shoot. If you have any winter pansies out there, make sure you remove the faded flowers, to stop them setting seed. More importantly, this will encourage a flush of new flowers when the weather warms up.

Visiting Driftwood in 2022

This year sees a vast reduction in my garden opening. Age and a pair of dodgy knees certainly focuses the mind on what you can and cannot do anymore. Driftwood will only open for two public days this summer, over the weekend of the 23rd and 24th July, as part of the *Macmillan Coastal Garden Trail*. A big bonus will be the presence of TV Gardener, Christine Walkden, who has generously agreed to travel to Sussex on the 23rd and open the event at *Driftwood*.

Anyone wishing to view the garden this year will need to book a visit, any day between the 1st June and the 31st July. I'm sure there will be a lot of interest with the redesign project I undertook at the back, last Autumn. Certainly, the many positive comments I received on social media indicate that. *Driftwood* is currently listed in the *National Garden Scheme's "Garden Visitor's Handbook 2022"* and will, once again, be listed in *BBC Gardeners' World 2for1* offer booklet which comes out in their May issue. Tickets for both the *Macmillan Trail* and private visits to the garden can also be booked online through *Macmillan Cancer Support* too. Full details can be found on the events page of my website.

Read more of Geoff's garden at: www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk

Geoff's garden, Driftwood has appeared on BBC2 *Gardeners' World*, was a finalist in *Gardeners' World Magazine Best Small Space* and a finalist in *Lewes District Business Awards 2018* as 'The Tourist Destination of the Year'. Read the amazing 5-star reviews on TripAdvisor. Amazing feature in *Coast Magazine* and an American magazine, *Flea Market Garden Style*. Read all about Geoff's trips to Buckingham Palace and Royal Garden Party in 2018 and his work for the community.