



Green and pleasant

AS we start the new year, January is often regarded as the coldest month and it might be the middle of winter, but the days will start to lengthen and your garden will start to grow. Why not take time to plan for the coming gardening year ahead, maybe order seeds and new plants. There's bound to be some dry sunny days to enjoy the fresh air too. Remember to check your winter protection, ensure stakes, ties and supports are still working after any severe weather.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

Maybe put out food for the birds and perhaps leave some garden areas uncut for a little longer, to provide shelter for wildlife in your garden. January is a time for fresh starts, renewed energy, and grand plans for the twelve months ahead. That said, it can be really difficult out there, due to the cold and the ground being so hard.

New Year's resolutions

Have you made any resolutions for the coming year? A fun idea for your garden might be to take a photograph from the same point, on the same date in each of the 12 months of the year! Maybe using several points of interest. This is

something I've done over the years and it is quite surprising to look back at the collection and actually see the changes, across both the months and the seasons of the year!

Another idea might be to create a different look in your garden this season. Perhaps try moving containerised shrubs around to different locations. You will be quite surprised how easy it can be to make your plot look a little different each year! If you have pieces of sculpture in the garden these can be relocated too.

Why not decide to list all the plants you buy so that you don't forget what you've got! If, like me, you open your

garden, it is inevitable that visitors ask what certain plants are and it can be embarrassing if you don't know. In recent years, I have logged them all down so that I can recall their names if asked. It's a good idea, even if you don't open your plot as friends and family may ask! If you rely on plant labels, they can fade or go missing, so why not get yourself a notebook that you can record your purchases throughout the year! It might be an idea to leave a bit of space under each entry so you can write details about the plant as the year goes on. Make sure you record where it is planted too and you'll be surprised how much of a valuable resource this can become over time!

Driftwood By Sea plans

This season is likely to be a bit hit and miss for me! I am scheduled to open the garden again, by arrangement only, between 1st June and 3rd August. Last month it was confirmed that I need a new left knee and am currently on the *NHS* waiting list. I'm told it's likely to be next autumn but if, in the unlikely event, I'm offered an earlier date I will have to accept and this may impact on my openings. We'll have to wait and see.

National Garden Scheme

The scheme's web site for this year's garden openings is now up and running. The first 2025 *National Garden Scheme* gardens begin to open next month for the revered annual snowdrop events. It really is amazing how many visitors brave the weather each year to go and see them. However, there is one plot, 5 Whitemans Close, that will open its garden gate later this month in Cuckfield! This garden shows that winter need not be dull as there is

much to see and enjoy in the depths of winter. The owner has collected many single and double snowdrops, hellebores, bulbs and other winter treasures, some not widely known. See the enormous *Daphne bholua* that scents the garden for weeks on end at this time of year. The garden postcode is RH17 5DE and it opens on Saturday 25th, Monday 27th, Wednesday 29th and Friday 31st of January from 11am to 3:30pm by arrangement only, so please phone **01444 473520** or email **shirley.carmanmartin@ngs.org.uk** for information & booking. Homemade teas are included in the entrance price of £8.50. Full details can be found at **www.ngs.org.uk** along with its February days too.

Garden tidy up

January is a good month, on dry crisp days, to clear away soggy, collapsed stems of perennials and compost/discard them. I've got some wonderful hellebores in the beach garden, which you can see in the header. I have just removed foliage marked with black blotches, to limit the spread of leaf spot disease and show off the stunning flower heads.

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

Geoff is a multi-award-winning garden owner, garden writer & broadcaster. Driftwood has appeared twice on BBC2 *Gardeners' World* and was a finalist in *Gardeners' World Magazine Best Small Space*. See the amazing 5-star reviews on TripAdvisor. Read all about Geoff's work for the community, appointment as a Coronation Champion and trips to Buckingham Palace including two Royal Garden Parties, in 2018 and 2023. Read the many published features on the garden in national, local and worldwide media, including TV.