



# Green and pleasant

**MARCH has much to commend itself for. There are three key days for your diary this month. The 19th of the month sees us celebrate Mother's Day. The first day of Spring follows on the 20th and then on the 26th of the month, the clocks go forward, which is always something to celebrate from a gardening perspective. The frequent sunny days will provide us all with the opportunity for an increasing range of gardening tasks. It's time to get busy preparing seed beds, sowing seed, cutting back winter shrubs and generally tidying up around the garden.**

---

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

---

**In March, the days are noticeably longer, and it's an opportunity to get out into the garden to enjoy some early spring sunshine. Frosts and sometimes windy weather mean that some tasks must wait, but there is optimism in the air with warmer weather and longer days ahead. As the weather gets warmer and plants start to wake up, so do pests and diseases, so it's useful to make some early checks on the health of your garden.**

## National Garden Scheme

Opening for the scheme on Mother's Day is a beautiful garden in Arlington. *Bates Green* in Tye Hill Road, BN26 6SH. It opens from 10am to 4pm

for pre-booked visitors only. Full details at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk). This 1.5 acre garden has been owned by the McCutchan family since 1921 and was developed and skilfully planted by Carolyn McCutchan when she moved to the property in 1968. Since Carolyn's death in 2019, the garden has been undergoing a period of restoration. It surrounds the farmhouse, which was originally a small gamekeeper's cottage and has very distinct areas, which enable plants from different ecological conditions to thrive including a small pond to encourage wildlife. In the woodland garden spring bulbs abound followed by herbaceous woodlanders and hardy cyclamen. In the more formal shaped middle garden, colour is the main theme, starting with tulips and alliums. *Bates Green* is in a tranquil setting, surrounded by pastures grazed by

sheep with views to the South Downs. The six-acre conservation meadow adjoining the garden contains a wealth of flora and fauna. The Winter Garden is positioned so that the low rays of sun make the most of the coloured leaves and stems of the many cornus, with bulbs and plants grown for interest from autumn through to spring. Why not book your visit and surprise your Mum?

## Wallflowers

Pictured in the header are some pretty yellow wallflowers growing in the beach garden at *Driftwood*. They are commonly grown as a spring bedding plant. Most wallflowers are biennial, and are grown from seed in late spring and then planted out in autumn, you can also buy bare-root wallflower plants for autumn planting. They will flower the following March, offering a splash of colour when there's little else in bloom like those above. They combine beautifully with spring bulbs. They are best grown in moist but well-drained soil in full sun to partial shade.

Perennial wallflowers are also available, and have become increasingly popular in recent years. Varieties such as 'Bowles's Mauve' and 'Winter Orchid' flower almost continually throughout the year, making them great value in small gardens. They are a great provider of nectar, so can provide a reliable source of food for pollinators over a long season.

## Gardening jobs for March.

There is much to be done in the garden this month if you have the time to get out there! Plant tender summer-flowering bulbs, including gladioli, in early spring for a great show in the summer. Now is a good time for pruning roses too.

If any of your garden plants or climbers need supporting this year, put them in now, so they can grow up through them, making them less obvious. Adding supports afterwards is trickier and often looks unattractive. If you are planning on moving deciduous trees or shrubs, now is the time to do this task, provided the soil isn't frozen or waterlogged.

If you have a mahonia, as I do, cut out the top rosette of leaves after they have flowered, to encourage branching and make the shrub look more attractive. Finish cutting back dead foliage from perennials and ornamental grasses in order to make way for new growth.

If you have overwintered some fuchsias, prune back to one or two buds on each shoot. This will encourage a bushy growth habit.

I have some winter-flowering heathers at the side of the house. It makes sense to prune now, as the flowers disappear, to prevent the plants becoming leggy. Keep an eye out too for slugs as the weather warms up. Pay special attention to soft, new growth, which slugs love. I've just cut off the old leaves on my hellebores to remove any foliar diseases and make their stunning spring flowers more visible.

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