



Background image: John Glover.

# Green and pleasant

**MARCH is officially the beginning of spring but it can still be very cold at times, so keep an eye on the weather forecast and wait to do jobs if conditions aren't quite right. The clocks also go forward on the 30th, so the lengthening daylight hours will help plants to really get growing and give you more time outdoors. Spring bulbs start to take centre stage in the borders and in patio pots, rewarding your efforts for planting them last autumn.**

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

**If you are in to growing vegetables, now is the time to get seeds started in the greenhouse, and you can sow hardy seeds straight outdoors into their final positions. It's also time to kickstart your flower displays. Start sowing flower seeds undercover to enjoy colourful displays come summer.**

## National Garden Scheme

This month, here are three wonderful gardens you can visit through the scheme. The first, *Bates Green Garden* in Tye Hill Road, Arlington, opens on Sunday 9th March from 10:30am until 3:30pm with entry £7 and children £3.50. This plants woman's tranquil garden provides interest through the

seasons with a woodland garden created around a majestic oak tree. The courtyard gardens have seasonal container displays and the front garden is a spring joy with narcissi, primroses and violets. Walk through a wild daffodil glade leading to the 24-acre ancient oak wood, home of the *Arlington Bluebell Walk* too. Pictured in the header, cyclamen at *Bates Green*, taken by John Glover.

Next, a gorgeous *National Trust* garden, *Nymans* in Staplefield Road, Handcross, which will open on Saturday 15th March from 10am to 5pm with entry £19 and children £9.50. This is one of the *National Trust's* premier gardens with rare and unusual plant collections of national significance. At this time of year appreciate blossom, bulbs and a stunning collection of subtly fragranced magnolias.

The third plot is *Limekin Farm* in Chalvington Road, Chalvington, near Hailsham, which will open at the end of the month across the weekend of the 29th and 30th March, from 2pm to 5pm with entry £8. The garden was designed in the 1930s and it has not changed in basic layout since then. The planting aims to reflect the age of the 17th century and original garden design. Flint walls enclose the main lawn, herbaceous borders and rose garden and there is a nepeta lined courtyard, informal pond and specimen trees including a very ancient oak. See many spring flowers and tree blossom too.

## Bulbs take centre stage!

This is the month when any spring bulbs we planted last autumn really take centre stage in our gardens. I suppose the main ones we all like to plant and grow are tulips, daffodils, crocus and hyacinths. I have quite a few of each at *Driftwood* in containers and many planted directly in the ground too. The great advantage of having them planted in a container means you can move the pot and place that fabulous splash of colour anywhere in the garden to maximum effect! Then, as the flowers die back, move the pot back to a less eye-catching spot.

Alternatively, if you adopt the lasagne method of bulb planting, which involves planting layers of bulbs in pots, just like making lasagne, the result is a pot crammed with wave after wave of spring flowers, giving you colour right through spring. To achieve this, place the latest-flowering bulbs at the bottom of the pot, with layers of earlier-flowering bulbs above them.

## Mother's Day 2025

This year the day the clocks go back and Mother's Day both fall on the same day, Sunday 30th March. In the UK and across the world the favoured gift for Mothers always seems to be a bouquet of flowers or a pot plant. We're told that the pink carnation specifically represents a mother's love, but white, which symbolizes pure or unconditional love and good luck, is another good choice. As a bonus, carnations are one of the longer lasting cut flowers that you can buy, which means your gift will last. It's all down to personal choice, my mother is not a lover of carnations and I tend to buy her favourite which are freesias. It seems the top five chosen for Mum each year are tulips, roses, peonies, carnations and orchids. Take your pick and buy what you think your Mum will enjoy.

## Four gardening jobs for March

Plant tender summer-flowering bulbs, including gladioli for a great show in the summer. Now is a good time for pruning roses too. Support your garden plants or climbers now, so they can grow up through them, making them less obvious. 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.

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