



Green and pleasant

NOVEMBER is here, the clocks have gone back, the leaves are falling and it's getting colder and wetter. As autumn turns to winter, the main jobs in the garden are mostly about protecting plants and structures from the wilder weather which will inevitably arrive. Move plants into the greenhouse, or into a sheltered spot, but if you can't, it is worth wrapping them. Remember winter can be a tough time for birds in terms of water and food, so keep supplies well topped up.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

If you love a blast of colour with tulips in the spring, then now is the time to plant your bulbs in containers and borders to guarantee that amazing display. Remember to cover them with at least twice their depth of soil or compost! The effort put in now will pay dividends next year!

Autumn colour

There are many plants and shrubs that provide great autumn colour in the garden. One in particular at Driftwood at the moment is pictured in the header. It is a stunning coprosma, "Pacific Sunset". While it is an evergreen shrub, the colour deepens at this time of the year. It

has striking bronze leaves, splashed with cream, green and red and they look sensational in a border or large container. I've got 3 plants, 2 in a raised bed and one in a container which I've had for several years now. It prefers a sheltered spot, in moist but well-drained soil. I recently bought another variety called "Pacific Night" which is really frost tender. The coprosma is also called the looking glass plant!

A few other great autumn plants to have in the garden are beautiful asters which bring welcome late colour to gardens at this time of the year. Cotoneasters also provide a stunning display of beautiful berries in the autumn too and the birds love them as well. They grow in a herringbone pattern which make them great for training up a wall or over the ground.

Preparing for the first frost

It is always difficult to get the timing right, ensuring everything is safe and sound in the garden prior to the first frosts every year! Prime tasks should be to lift and store dahlias, cannas and begonia tubers that are planted out in flower beds or containers. All the guides say lift after the first frost and store the tubers carefully. The experts say dahlia tubers must remain dry but not dry out completely. Place in a dry, frost-free environment, evenly spaced in a tray or box and fill with sawdust, spent dry compost or vermiculite. I've covered mine with cardboard or you can add an extra quilt if you live in a colder climate.

Pansies

Last autumn I planted many pansies in the garden. Normally I would take them out as I planted my summer annuals. This year though, they were still performing so well, I left them throughout the summer amongst my displays! This time of the year is the perfect time to plant some. Pansies have the incredible ability to survive freezing winter temperatures and come out strong in the spring season. However, they can only be so resilient if they're planted at the proper time and in an ideal setting. Aim for a planting spot that will get about six hours of full sun each day. Pansies can grow in partial shade but will sprout best with ample sunlight. They should be well-watered right after planting to get them off to a good start. Take care to water the plant's soil and avoid wetting the flowers and leaves, which could attract disease. A layer of mulch added to the pansy plant bed will help prevent any cold weather damage come winter.

November tasks

Here's a few suggestions on things to do in the garden this month providing the weather is in your favour! If, like me, you have potted chrysanthemums in the garden, keep them moist and do remember to deadhead them regularly in order to keep the flowers coming as long as possible. If growing cyclamen, remove leaves that are yellowing, along with the faded flowers, by pulling them from the corm. To prevent leaves from turning yellow it is best to keep them in a cool and bright place. Check on your potted plants that are kept for flowering over winter and ensure they have enough water. For dormant plants being overwintered in a frost-free place you will need to cut down on the watering.

I've already picked all my fruit growing in the garden but if you have yet to collect yours, now is the time to do it. Pick ripe apples and, depending on the variety, either eat or store in a cool, dry place for later in the year. I tend to peel and poach all mine, then freeze in containers for use throughout the winter months, in pies and crumbles. I've also got a conference pear tree, that has produced good fruit too and have done the same with them. I've found the crop of apples this year has been one of the best and the size of the fruit has been larger than usual as well.

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.