



Green and pleasant

IT'S November already, winter is well and truly on its way. Halloween is behind us, Bonfire Night is ahead and before we know it, it will be Christmas and so much to do beforehand! The leaves are falling rapidly, wind and rain will be on the increase, our tender plants will need protecting from the upcoming frost, gales and freezing rains. Move plants into the greenhouse, or into a sheltered spot, but if you can't, it is worth wrapping plants or pots. Remember winter can be a tough time for birds in terms of water and food, so keep supplies well topped up.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

This month is the last chance to liven up you garden for Spring! You can plant tulip bulbs for a fabulous spring 2023 display. Tulips are arguably amongst the most popular of bulbs we buy in the UK, they are valued for their brilliant and many flower colours and shapes. What's more, you can choose from an amazing range to suit your plot and your design ideas, from the practical to the more flamboyant. Go for it.

Agaves

This time of the year is especially busy at *Driftwood*. I have such a large collection of succulents that need protecting throughout the winter months. There are many aeoniums

which were all put to bed, either in the front or back porches of the house or in the heated greenhouse, back at the start of last month. I'm currently in the process of ensuring my equally large collection of agaves are safe for the upcoming cold weather too. In the header, you can see my pots of *Agave parviflora*, which is native to Arizona in the United States and Sonora in Mexico. Whilst they cope well through the summer months out in the beach garden, they do not like frost, so need to come under cover for the winter.

I have many other types in the garden too, notably *Agave Montana* and *Agave Ovatifolia*. The former is a rosette-forming, evergreen, perennial succulent to about 1.5m. The leaves are light greyish-green, edged and tipped with reddish spines. Unlikely to flower in UK, but in the wild it produces huge, club-shaped

inflorescences made up of tightly clustered yellow flowers on short branches. The latter, commonly called the "Whales tongue Agave", can grow up to 1.5m high and 2m across and has almost white, pale blue-green leaves. The leaves are broad and almost egg-shaped in outline, with only small teeth on the scalloped edges but tipped at the ends with sharp spines. Mine is still relatively small planted in a large container. Both are more suitable to be left outside in coastal areas.

Consider a Spring Display

If you haven't yet decided to plant some bulbs for a wonderful display next spring, it's not too late to do so this month! There can be few sights as beautiful as tulips in springtime. Fortunately, you don't need to be gifted with green fingers to be able to create your own stunning display. If you follow these simple steps, you'll soon be reaping the rewards of these fabulous blooms. Tulips like sunny spots with not too much shade. Tulip bulbs do not like wet or waterlogged soil, so make sure your soil has good drainage. The general rule of thumb when planting tulips is to plant at the depth of the bulb. So, prepare a hole three times the depth – around 15cm, drop the bulb in pointy side up, then cover with soil. Keep a space of 12–15cm between each bulb. If growing in pots or containers you can plant them in clusters, closer together, which will result in gloriously showy container displays. Once planted, give your bulbs a good watering to allow the soil to settle. Then wait for nature to reward you next spring!

November jobs in the garden

Now is the time to cut down faded perennials that are looking tatty, then mulch the surrounding soil

with garden compost. You'll need to protect plants that are borderline hardy, such as agapanthus, with a thick mulch of straw or garden compost. You can plant bare-root hedging, roses, trees and shrubs this month, before the weather turns really cold.

Ideally, move containers of alpine plants under cover to shelter them from winter rain. You can insulate your greenhouse walls and roof with bubble polythene as a safeguard. Make sure all your tender plants are safely under cover and kept frost free and remember to monitor greenhouse temperatures with a max-min thermometer and turn on heating if needed. Wash out all empty pots and trays and store neatly under greenhouse staging, ready for use in spring. Ideally, check your greenhouse plants regularly for overwintering pests and try to avoid splashing foliage when watering, as it will dry slowly in cool weather and fungal diseases may set in. When it is not practical to lift or move your tender plants, the best way to protect them from the winter cold and wet is to wrap them up in fleece in situ. In exposed or cold areas, even relatively hardy plants may need protection.

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.