



Green and pleasant

NOVEMBER is the perfect time to start making plans for 2025. You can be ruthless with the plants that performed badly and consider removing them and replacing with a better variety. It helps if you make a note of all your good ideas, ready for next year. Try not to be too efficient during your final tidy up of the year. By not doing, you can provide over-wintering nooks and crannies for helpful garden creatures, such as hedgehogs, toads and ladybirds. Consider leaving tufty grasses, small log heaps and piles of leaves to keep them safe until next spring. They'll reward you by being on hand to control early pests.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

Dare I mention Christmas? There are lots of companies sending out e mails for you to choose your favourite, real Christmas tree and have it delivered from later this month through until a week or so before the big day! I've used the service in recent years and have always found the delivered trees are first class. Have you ordered yours yet?

Grasses

This time of the year is a great time to cut back many grass flowers or tatty seed heads. The flower and seed heads of ornamental grasses play a vital factor in providing winter interest

and look wonderful covered in frost or snow, but there's a good chance they are looking a bit untidy now as they collapse and break away. In this case, the best thing to do is to cut them back to the base with secateurs. The front beach garden at *Driftwood* is awash with many grasses, my favourite of which is *stipa tenuissima* or pony tails grass. It is a wonderfully impressive plant, with its evergreen base clump of leaves topped in summer with an array of flowering spikes, which turn from silvery green to gold. These can be cut and dried when first opened for use in winter arrangements indoors. Alternatively, they make a useful winter food source for seed-eating birds. I find these still look good through the winter, so tend to leave trimming mine until the Spring.

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.

Fireworks in the garden

With Bonfire Night on the horizon, there are quite a few plants that are very reminiscent of fireworks. One in particular, *Allium Schubertii*, is the firework allium par excellence, with vast wonderful dark pink, spiky flowers. It is very eccentric and showy while flowering and great when dried too. *Schubertii* is a bulbous perennial producing bright-green, strap-shaped leaves in spring, which die back before the flowers appear. These consist of 50 or more star-shaped, pinky-purple florets on stems of differing lengths producing a starburst effect up to 30 cm across. So maybe this month is a good time to plant some in your garden for great results in 2025 and beyond!

Another firework inspired planting might be *Pennisetum setaceum* 'Fireworks' (*rueppellii*) which makes a lively addition to bedding displays and patio containers. The fluffy seed

heads can be also cut to make elegant dried flowers. The colourful foliage of this fountain grass emerges with bold stripes of red, pink and green, before maturing to a rich shade of burgundy. From mid-summer to autumn, the showy purple flower spikes rise above the arching foliage in a spectacular architectural "bonfire" display.

Whilst not actually resembling a firework, the *Pyracantha Firethorn*, Flame Orange, pictured in the header gives it a good shot in name alone.

Possible frosts

The weather has started to turn a good deal colder at nights now, so I hope you have taken steps to protect your tender plants. If you are leaving any frost tender plants in the ground, it's a good idea to spread a thick mulch around the base to protect the crown from cold temperatures. That way, even if the top growth is killed off, the roots have a better chance of survival and may re-sprout fresh growth. If you have alpines or sempervivum clumps out in the garden try to ensure that they are not getting swamped by a topping of soggy leaves from trees above. Remove them before they smother the crowns of these delicate plants and cause them to rot.

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.