



Green and pleasant

CAN you believe, its 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 your garden for Spring! You can plant tulip bulbs for a fabulous spring 2026 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.

Mahonia X media winter sun

Pictured in the header is one of my favourite plants in the garden at the moment. Mahonia x media winter

sun adds year-round structure and interest to my garden, this large Mahonia will grow to an eventual height and spread of 4m, so it is best placed near to the back of the border as an excellent backdrop to your other plants. This bushy evergreen shrub produces slender upright stems packed with sweetly scented blooms in winter and early spring. The flowers are bright yellow and resemble tiny Daffodils up close, their powerful perfume fills the air with a jasmine-like scent attracting early pollinators such as bumblebees who seek them out in the sunshine. The foliage is wonderfully architectural, glossy deep-green spiked leaves sit

on top of the main stem in rosette formations. You can plant lower growing shrubs and flowers in front of this large Mahonia to fill out the space in front of the main trunk. It will grow well in a shady spot in well-drained fertile soil. Mine is positioned behind some upright railway sleepers.

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 twice 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!

Blooming in November

Looking good in my garden at the moment is a beautiful coronilla glauca. They can really light up your garden in winter, producing an abundance of lemon-yellow pea-like blooms that really do just keep on coming. Whilst it tends to flower from December

onwards, mine has certainly dazzled through some of the summer too. So, this very easy to grow shrub is capable of flowering for 9 months or more, making it a worthy hard-working addition to any garden. It is hardy and shows off its sweet-scented blooms against unusual blue-green foliage. In my experience, it is certainly a very versatile shrub for almost any garden situation, performing particularly well in exposed locations and coastal areas. Its compact, rounded habit makes this tough little performer ideal for patio containers where you really get to appreciate the scent and pretty petite blooms. Alternatively, you can train it as a wall shrub for a spectacular upright display. I've actually got three shrubs, all are located in my beach garden, at the front of the house and take the full force of what the weather can throw at them. You can also cut the stems and brighten up the house during the winter months too.

Another hardy and resilient dazzler in the garden is Pyracantha or firethorn which are delightful, thorny, evergreen shrubs grown for their attractive displays of glossy autumn berries in fiery shades of oranges, reds and yellows.

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.