



Green and pleasant

OCTOBER is definitely the time for clearing up – greenhouses, ponds, gutters and water butts may all need cleaning out. Wooden garden furniture will need covering or storing for the winter and terracotta pots may need bringing inside, so that they don't freeze and crack. If you don't already have a compost heap or bin, October is a great time to start one, with all the leaves and cuttings to be disposed of!

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

Sunday 31st October is Halloween and that is also the day the clocks go back, giving everyone an extra hour in bed to prepare for the event! If you have children, you may have a go and creating lanterns from pumpkins purchased at the supermarket or perhaps you've grown some yourself! They look great displayed in the garden or by the front door.

Chrysanthemums

A very common plant to have in the garden at this time of year is the ever-popular chrysanthemum or "pot mum". They are perfect to be placed in containers and bloom well into autumn and beyond. You can find

them for sale everywhere in a large variety of colours, in the header are some lemon ones in the garden at *Driftwood*. Care of container grown mums is relatively easy. You may want to repot it as soon as you get it home to give it room to grow. If you are careful and keep it well watered, you should be able to enjoy their blooms throughout the autumn months and possibly even the next spring.

Charity fundraising at *Driftwood*

This year, despite the weather and the impact of the pandemic, I have been able to hand over £12,868 to *Macmillan Cancer Support*, £8,281 from the garden trail I single-handedly organise and £4,857 from events in my own garden, along with a further £1,864 to the *National Garden Scheme*. A grand total of £14,722 raised in 2021.

We've seen almost 700 visitors, some as a direct result of the whole page feature on the garden in the June issue of this magazine. The money has been raised through charging an entrance fee which, includes a talk by me about the garden's creation, needless to say, many purchased my infamous tea and cakes when visiting which helped boost the fundraising. I have baked almost 600 portions of cake to sell in the garden with cappuccino cake being the firm favourite.

The main highlight this year has been, almost hitting, a running total of £100K fundraising for *Macmillan* since 2012. Whilst I'll claim full credit as the person creating the means by which the money can be raised, it is always a great team effort from all the many garden owners on the trail, the many supporters, visitors and volunteers. I have been blown away by several large donations made to me at *Driftwood* this summer too, totalling almost £1,000. Thank you all, we'll do it all again in 2022. The grand total of all monies now raised for all charities since 2009, has now topped £152,400.

Winter preparations

Traditionally, October is the month to lift tender summer bulbs such as gladioli and dahlias and store in a cool, dry place. I've carefully lifted mine and will store in the covered side alley. It is also the month to cut back perennials, but I've recently read, a new school of thought says leaving the dead stems is good for wildlife and may also provide protection for the roots. Traditionalists will claim the stems harbour pests and diseases. Horticulturally, it makes little difference when they're cut back as long as it's done before new growth starts next spring.

New beginnings

This month sees a mini-digger arrive in my back garden! The last few weeks have been spent preparing the

area to be radically changed. Plants have been dug up and safely retained in containers until the work has been completed. My garden slopes upwards away from the house and I'm having a large patio dug out, all held back by old railway sleepers. It is going to dramatically change the plot and my style of planting. In recent years, I've found the watering of my containers has become more of a chore than I would like and the older I get the harder it becomes. The new patio area will be home to succulents and drought hardy plants with many fewer containers and I'm confident will look very striking, watch this space!

If you only do one thing this month!

Do make sure you cover anything that might be damaged by frost. Most herbaceous perennials will be wintering underground and can be protected with a layer of bark compost. It is vital however to bring small succulents indoors or place them in a heated greenhouse. I'm certainly going to be kept busy as I have over 50 containers of aeoniums and other succulents to find winter homes for. Many will find their way into front and back porches of the house and the remainder will go in the greenhouse. You can protect larger plants, such as tree ferns and delicate palms, where they stand by tying horticultural fleece around their tops to keep them warm and cosy through the winter months.

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.