



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! Open garden events are trailing off with no local *National Garden Scheme* events around the town now until 2025.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

The clocks go back on Sunday 27th, giving everyone an extra hour in bed and Thursday 31st October is Halloween. If you have children, you may have a go at 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.

The past Summer at Driftwood

This year, despite the changeable weather, I have been able to hand over £5,288 to *Macmillan Cancer Support* along with a further £976 to the *National Garden Scheme*

and £40 for *Children with Cancer*. A grand total of £6,244 for 2024.

We've seen over 500 visitors, many of whom purchased my infamous tea and cakes when visiting, which helped boost the fundraising. I have baked over 500 portions of cake to sell in the garden with coffee and walnut cake and apricot polenta cake being the two firm favourites. Thank you to all those who visited and supported our charity fundraising.

Latest TV Brighton made a 20-minute film about the garden and I, which you can view on the media page of my website and *The Sunday Times* featured a wonderful piece about age-proofing your garden, both in the Home section and online on Sunday 18th August. There is a link to read on the home page of my website too.

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. 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.

Winter preparations

Traditionally, October is the month to lift tender summer bulbs such as gladioli and dahlias and store in a cool, dry place. 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. Some apples have been ready to pick since August but there will be others perfect for picking right up to the end of this month too. I began picking the Cox's Orange Pippin's in my garden, pictured in the header, at the beginning of last month.

Falling leaves

Autumn is a beautiful season in the garden, with many perennials, shrubs and trees providing some stunning colour. But once the leaves have fallen, they will need clearing

up, especially from lawns, where they will smother the grass, and from paths and patios, where they may become slippery. It's also a good idea to remove leaves from gravel, otherwise it will become messy. You can make the sweeping and collection process a lot easier by using a combination of different tools and methods, but I favour doing it all by hand in my garden, due to its size and layout. I have to confess getting the debris out of gravel is not one of my favourite tasks.

Trimming ivy

A job that I've been doing recently is to tidy the side entrance to the back garden. The fence is covered with ivy, a plant which I love. I'd rather see the ivy than a bare fence. However, it can be very vigorous, so needs cutting back a couple of times a year to make it more manageable and avoid fall outs with my neighbours, who are not so keen on it. This Summer it seems to have grown more than ever and is almost ready for its annual trim. For the last few years, I have decided it's no longer a task I feel safe doing so employ a local contractor to come in and do the job for me.

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.