



Green and pleasant

I REALLY can't believe we are already in October. This year just seems to have flown by, with my many garden visitors long gone and now I'm starting to get ready to put the garden to bed. October is a beautiful month of stunning autumnal colours and possibly the first frosts. Its crisp, blue-sky days are the perfect time to get outside and tidy up and cut back where necessary in the garden. Meanwhile, if you grow fruit and vegetables, there's probably still plenty to harvest and store for the cold winter months ahead.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

At the end of the month, 30th October, the clocks go back, meaning even less daylight hours to spend outdoors. It is the month to think about protecting half-hardy plants with fleece or move them into a frost-free greenhouse. Make sure you sweep up any fallen leaves that harbour fungal spores and provide ideal hiding places for slugs and snails.

Driftwood in 2022

I've been raising money for charity, notably, *Macmillan Cancer Support* and the *National Garden Scheme*, since 2009. The bulk of the money has been raised through the *Macmillan Coastal Garden Trail*, which I have single-handedly, organised from 2012. I have now made the very difficult decision

that this year's trail was the final one. I celebrate my 70th birthday next year and with my failing knees, feel I need to relinquish some of my commitments in order to ease the workload and to focus more on my own plot.

This summer I have seen over 700 visitors to *Driftwood* through June, July and August, 84 from the *National Garden Scheme*, 234 during the final trail weekend and over 400 who either saw the garden through the *BBC Gardeners' World 2for1* scheme or booked having read the amazing reviews on *Trip Advisor*.

The net effect of so many people ringing to arrange to see *Driftwood* has meant another record year of charity fundraising. Last year we raised £14,900 with several public days included and have still managed £12,231 this year, having relied solely on private visits.

Those who visited the garden this summer will have seen the new sunken garden, which has gone down a storm with new and returning guests. Don't miss a visit in 2023 to see what I'm doing with the pond area over the winter months. The aim is to create an easier environment to look after and more importantly, incorporate plants that are more drought tolerant. In 2023 the garden will open from 1st June through until 11th August, raising money for both the *National Garden Scheme* and *Macmillan Cancer support* again. Follow the work being undertaken this winter on Geoff's website.

National Garden Scheme

This month see the last of the gardens opening for the scheme until 2023, with the majority across in West Sussex. *The Old Vicarage* in Washington opens on the first two Thursdays, 6th and 13th, from 1030 to 430pm with entrance £7, here visitors can wander around three and a half acres of beautiful garden. *Peelers Retreat* at 70 Ford Road in Arundel opens from 2-5pm on two Tuesdays, 4th and 11th with entry £5. This is a stunning garden with gift shop and imaginative woodland sculptures. *Denmans Garden*, in Denman's Lane, Fontwell, opens on the 29th October from 10am to 4pm with entry £9 and children £7. Enjoy year-round colour and unusual plants. The next NGS update will be for snowdrop and hellebore gardens in early 2023. Full details on all gardens at www.ngs.org.uk

October jobs in the garden

There is certainly lots to be getting on with in the garden this month, I've been lifting my dahlia tubers, but now is the time to lift begonia tubers and gladioli corms too and to store them over the winter months. Remember to remove any dead foliage before putting them away.

This time of the year is perfect, as the soil is still warm, to lift and divide any overcrowded herbaceous perennials you might have around the garden. I've certainly got plans to split some persicaria, which seems to be taking over. If you have any, prune rambling and climbing roses, once they've finished flowering, and tie in the stems before autumn winds cause potential damage.

After tidying borders, mulch with bark chips, well-rotted manure, leaf mould or spent mushroom compost, this will help to insulate the plant roots for the winter and also keep weed growth in check.

I've got quite a few apples growing in my garden, as seen in the header photo. I have two trees, the one pictured and a small Cox's Orange Pippin too. An easy way of testing when they are ripe is to gently lift them in the palm of your hand or give them a gentle pull, if you do this, they should come away easily. I've got quite a good crop again, so will be busy peeling them and cooking to store in the freezer through the winter to use in crumbles and pies. I also have a pear tree but the fruit crop has not been good this year.

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.