



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**

Friday 31st October is Halloween and Sunday 26th is the day the clocks go back, giving everyone an extra hour in bed! 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. 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.

Asters

Part of the Island Series, Aster 'Barbados' (pictured in the header at Driftwood) is a neat, compact

Michaelmas Daisy. The mauve-purple flowers are a tonic for fading borders from late summer to autumn. This cheery perennial is free-flowering, attracting attention from pollinating insects which are drawn to the nectar-rich flowers. The upright stems and colourful blooms make this a lovely cut flower too. A useful perennial for providing late summer colour at the front of perennial borders. I've had mine in the garden for about 15 years now and they never fail to impress.

Asters are in the daisy family, and most of the varieties grown in the UK are perennial, meaning they come back every year. They generally flower in late summer and autumn, which gives them their common name Michaelmas daisy. Asters are ideal for growing in mixed borders,

with grasses and other prairie-type perennials. They are a great transition plant, bridging the seasons from summer to autumn. Their bright, daisy-like aster flowers make a colourful splash.

National Garden Scheme

October is the final month of 2025 that we can visit gardens opening for the *National Garden Scheme*. *Bates Green Garden* in Tye Hill Road, Arlington opens the garden gate on Sunday 5th from 10:30am to 3:30pm with entry £7 and children £3.50. There will be home-made soup, cakes & scones plus light lunches available in the large insulated *Bluebell Barn*. This plantswoman's tranquil garden provides interest through the seasons. See the woodland garden created around a majestic oak tree, the colour themed middle garden and the courtyard gardens with seasonal container displays. The front garden is an autumn joy with coloured stems and leaves of cornus and salix. Check out the wildlife pond and wildflower meadow. The whole plot is gardened for nature and wildlife. Autumn visitors can enjoy spotting the abundant fungi too.

Also, on Saturday 4th in Heathfield, *Kotamaki* in Tottingworth Park, Broad Oak opens from 10am to midday with entry £12 and children £6 but pre-booking is essential at www.ngs.org.uk The owners will provide a Talk about the garden at 10:30am. Refreshments are included.

Autumnal plants

There are a couple of nice autumn plants you might want to add to your garden. The first is a cotoneaster, they give beautiful displays of red berries in autumn. *Cotoneaster horizontalis* is popular for the characteristic herringbone pattern of its stems, which makes it useful trained across

the ground or on a wall. The second, another really good plant is the chrysanthemum, it flowers well into autumn. They will flower right up to Christmas if you are lucky and make great flower stems to cut for vases in the house too. One of my favourites in the beach garden at the moment is the stunning verberna "polaris", it has stunning lilac flowers and is a prostrate variety that comes back like mad every year. I planted it back in 2012 when I first created the beach garden and it looks very pretty set against the shingle.

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. This year will be more challenging for me, having had my knee replacement earlier in the year, kneeling is not as easy as it used to be.

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.