



Green and pleasant

SEPTEMBER is here and there's still plenty to be done while you're outside in the garden, assuming we have seen the end of this years' changeable weather. Let's all hope we can be enjoying the last of the year's warmth. If you grow fruit and vegetables then there will be all your crops to harvest which will keep you busy this month. There's plenty of work to do tidying and maintaining plants and equipment as well.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

This year we have had very mixed weather throughout the summer, we have had so many downpours, then the hosepipe ban, the garden has started to give up. So, maybe we are set for an Indian Summer through September, we can but hope. We will certainly see the nights start to draw in before the dreaded clocks go back next month, so make the most of the month!

Garden tidy up

While tidying up, it is well worth remembering that your camellias and rhododendrons are well watered at this time of year to ensure that next year's buds develop well. Lots of people complain that their buds are dry and fall off in the spring, watering now will help prevent that. Part of

your tidy up routine might include picking off rotting fruits from pear and apple trees, they will spread disease if left on the tree.

Some plants look good as they fade, such as sedum where the flower heads hold their own for weeks and look good with a dusting of frost. Others, such as Hosta look a mess. There is no hard and fast rule about what to do with herbaceous and perennial plants once summer is over.

Some gardeners cut everything back, clearing out the borders, and others leave plants uncut to encourage wildlife and cultivate a less formal look. Still looking good in my garden, before being cut back, are the pretty Fuschia Magelanica pictured in the header.

National Garden Scheme

This month, here are three gardens you could visit with the *National Garden Scheme*.

High Beeches Woodland and Water Garden in High Beeches Lane, Handcross, near Haywards Heath opens on the 28th of the month from 1pm to 5pm with entry £11 and children £4. Wander through 25 acres of enchanting, landscaped woodland and water gardens with many rare and beautiful plants, an ancient wildflower meadow and absolutely glorious autumn colours.

A brand-new garden this year has been *Kotamaki* in *Tottingworth Park*, Broad Oak, near Heathfield, which opens again on Saturday 6th from 10am to midday with entry £12 and children £6 but pre booked visitors only. Tea, coffee & biscuits included and there will be a talk about the garden at 10:30am. It is large creatively planted gardens featuring a long double border within yew hedging, rockery, shade garden, exotic garden, pot garden, wildflower meadows, and kitchen garden.

In Forest Row there is *Wych Warren House* in Wych Warren, which opens its garden gate on Friday 12th from 2pm to 5pm with entry £6. Enjoy a walk through the six acre garden set in the Ashdown Forest, AONB, much of it mixed woodland. A delightful and tranquil setting with plenty of space to roam, and various aspects of interest providing sensory and a relaxing visit. Lovely stonework, specimen trees, three ponds, herbaceous borders, exotic bed, greenhouse and always something new on the go!

Full details on all the gardens at www.ngs.org.uk

Houseplant holiday is over

A good idea this month is to bring any houseplants that you moved outside over the summer months, back indoors, before the temperatures start to drop. I have a large collection of aeoniums, a few cacti and succulents that don't really like the cold, especially the frost. It's a pretty big job in my garden to lift them all and carry the containers back to their winter homes. I've probably got over 70 containers with aeoniums and I try and place as many as I can in the front and back porches of the house. They are such beautiful plants to look at, it always seems a shame to shut them away in the greenhouse! However, any that I can't find room for, have to spend the winter in the heated greenhouse.

As far as your indoor plants go, now is the time to start watering them less as they prepare for the colder months too.

Forward planning

September is a great time to look forward to 2026. Maybe sit down and think about spring bulbs you'd like to have in your plot next year. Spend time looking through catalogues or searching online. It's not too early to even start planting some you may already have. Some easy examples are the good old favourites, like crocus, hyacinth and daffodils. Make the most of the remaining warmth while you can!

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.