

Over the FENCE

REAL
readers'
gardens!

I'm keeping the colour coming



Geoff Stonebanks

A seaside garden in East Sussex that opens for charity, featuring sculpture and reclaimed objects.

Well, let's hope 2026 is better than 2025 from my personal perspective. Gardening before and after knee replacement was a struggle. You can see in the picture of me with the osteospermums that I can kneel on the non-operated knee and am more flexible with the new one; I can fully kneel on a cushion but it's not that comfortable. I might need a proper outdoor kneeling cushion.

In the run-up to Christmas there were some pretty stunning early morning sunsets to be seen as a backdrop to the beach garden, where some wonderful colour prevailed all winter, from plants like the *Helleborus argutifolius*, and the *Coronilla glauca*, whose dazzling

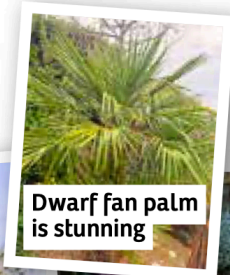


The first camellia flower

yellow flowers have been wowing passers-by since late November.

At the back of the house, the largest of my five *Chamaerops humilis*, or dwarf fan palm, looks pretty amazing. It's now about 2.5m tall and dominates the corner of the gravel bed behind the shed. The central palm, *Butia capitata*, also planted back in 2008, although a slow grower, is now over 6m tall. There is lots of varied colour with the different foliage around the plot too.

I was recently taken by the art created by the fallen petals of the yellow mahonia flowers.



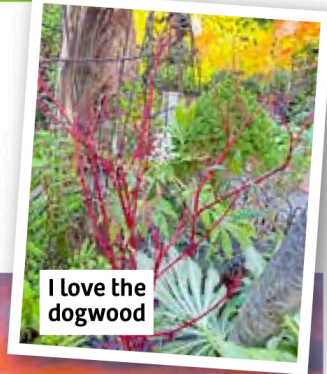
Dwarf fan palm is stunning



Japanese aralia flowers look so intricate



Me with the osteospermums



I love the dogwood



A glowing winter sunrise

A cobweb had appeared across the corner of the old railway sleepers and it acted as a net for the falling petals. Beautiful.

The dramatic flowerheads on several of my Japanese aralia seem much larger than previous years. The first of the beautiful camellia blooms appeared just before Christmas; one lone flower before they come in profusion over the coming weeks.

We recently had a visit to Leonardslee Gardens on a beautiful morning - though we had to give up after an hour or so as Chester the terrier was feeling the cold! There's a great walk around the lake there.

■ **Read more of Geoff's garden at driftwoodbysea.co.uk or follow both him and the garden on social media.**

my highlight

Stems of red dogwood against the remaining fern fronds and the Japanese aralia.