

Over the FENCE...Continued

Tidying up and treasuring the blooms

The last few weeks have been all about getting the garden ready for winter. One of the many necessary tasks was trimming the hedges, especially those along the central path. The overview of the garden from the office now looks much neater and really sets off the layout.

Unfortunately, we've had our fair share of gales, which means more wind-damaged plants, especially the fronds on the taller palms. The poor 'Cox's Orange Pippin' apple tree took quite a bashing and is looking rather sorry for itself. Thankfully, I had already removed most of the fruit crop, so not too much has been lost.

While away in September at Chatsworth in Derbyshire, I picked up a couple of quirky additions for the garden. One was a garden sculpture in the form of a duck, made from a large boulder with two metal pieces for its head and tail. It fits right in among the beds and never fails to make me smile. The other find was a collection of small vintage



Geoff Stonebanks

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

terracotta pots, which I've already planted up with tiny succulents. They'll quietly grow on, ready to feature in the garden in 2026.

Bringing all the tender plants into the greenhouse for winter was another big job. Some precious cuttings - a few accidental, others deliberate - ended up joining the party. The greenhouse is now bursting, with just about enough room for me to squeeze in the door and do my checks. The heater is set up in the centre and has only just kicked in, as night temperatures have started to drop.

I've begun a new round of autumn and winter garden talks. I already have six booked up to March, plus another four for next autumn. This month sees the debut of my new talk, *My Succulent Obsession*, which I finished writing last winter and have been perfecting

ever since. I now offer three very different presentations for gardening clubs, WI groups and societies in Sussex and beyond.

Despite the wind, flowers were impressive. The dainty 'Cécile Brünner' rose was smothered in blooms, and hydrangea 'Groundbreaker' dazzled in white and dusty pink. Three face the garden room's French windows, so they're always in view. On the central steps, pots of eucomis and sedum have created a focal point.

The patio, bounded by railway sleepers, still looks good even with the succulents tucked up in

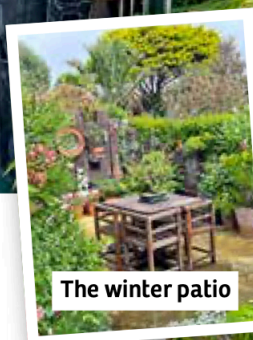
the greenhouse. Bonsai and hydrangeas, plus a few last geraniums, keep the area cheerful. A fading 'Vanille Fraise' hydrangea completes the picture.

True to form, the cotoneaster tree has erupted in bright red berries and is a magnet for blackbirds and thrushes, with a perfect view from the kitchen window. Even now, the central gravel garden looks lush and jungly, the chicken wire seagull surveying all, plus, it's blissfully low-maintenance.

Read more of Geoff's garden at driftwoodbysea.co.uk



There's barely room for me in the greenhouse now!



The winter patio



One of the new garden ornaments



Amazing aster



Cotoneaster bears its berries



A seagull keeps watch in the central gravel garden!

My highlight

Beautiful aster Island Series 'Barbados'.