

# Over the FENCE

...Continued

## Winter plants show off in style to see in the new year

I had some lovely Christmas gifts that are garden bound. A favourite is a rustic and dishevelled wooden bear that will be strategically placed among the planting. I just love it.

I can't believe the range of weather we have had. It was incredibly mild pre-Christmas with some magnificent sunrises. The sky was on fire and set off the beach garden a treat. The large tamarisk looks wonderful with its shadow set against the orange.

When I changed the garden in 2021, I had to find a new home for a potted mahonia. It had become tall and lanky, but I knew it would look great planted in the ground, behind the upright railway sleepers. It has impressive yellow flowers on it at present and smells good, too.

My garden relies heavily on sculpture and art to complement the planting, never more so than through winter. Two significant pieces in the centre of the plot are a rusted metal sphere and a tall



**Geoff Stonebanks**

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

wooden sculpture. The head of a stainless steel fish also stands out.

Spectacular in the garden through winter is miscanthus. Mine produce fountains of foliage in early summer and bears plumes of white or pink flowers in late summer. Then, in the depths of winter these bleach into shades of a pretty biscuity brown.

Flowering profusely in the back porch are several aeoniums. They are rather large plants so once flowered, I'll probably cut the stem back and wait for new growth in summer.

It seems to be the yellows that are drawing attention to themselves now. The beautiful flowers on *Helleborus argutifolius* are just coming into their own too. I have two large patches of them in the beach garden,



**Garden sculptures are an important feature at Driftwood**

**I just love this new wooden bear**



**Beautiful hellebores**



close to the old rowing boat. Not a plant you'd necessarily expect to see growing in an exposed beach garden, but they've been there for more than 10 years and look magnificent through the winter months.

A lovely gift from my mother for Christmas 2022 was a boxed kit to grow five different bonsai trees. Sadly, only the seeds from the pine were successful, but three of them now look well and are growing in small containers. I'm pleased because I'm not really a gardener who grows anything from seed, certainly not with any

success! This summer I'm going to do my best to turn them into mini bonsai pines by carefully wiring and trimming. Wish me luck!

I've spent some time tidying up the ferns growing behind the corten steel wall. The recent winds had badly damaged them and they had become very brown. It's nice to see the wall again from the house but it won't be long before new fronds start to appear again.

This will be my 16th year opening the garden to the public. Like last year, I'll only be open by arrangement through June and July. I'm also looking forward to the garden featuring, for the second time, on *Gardeners' World*, when filming done last August will be broadcast this summer.

■ **Read more of Geoff's garden at [driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://driftwoodbysea.co.uk).**

**Pine seedlings are doing well**



**Mahonia in all its glory**



**I caught this spectacular sunrise on camera**



*My highlight*  
**Stunning mahonia 'Winter Sun'.**