

Over the FENCE

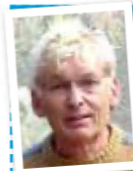
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Sunrises and succulents!

It's been so cold in recent weeks I really haven't felt like getting out in the garden to do anything. That said, there have been some lovely sunrises over the beach garden and the hint of frost makes it even more magical.

I've found myself sitting and writing in my office, overlooking the back garden instead. I've put together a new garden talk for local horticultural societies and clubs about my obsession with succulents! One of the many varieties mentioned is the fabulous *Aloe striatula*, which is a really reliable plant and also extremely hardy. It forms such a wonderfully dense clump, which can easily be trimmed back when needed. I have four large plants in the garden, two smaller ones at the front and two at the back. The real bonus, however, are the pretty yellow flower stems that appear each summer, looking a bit like poker.

I decided to invest in a few more tillandsia to add to my small collection on the desk where I can appreciate them every day. They're so easy to look after.



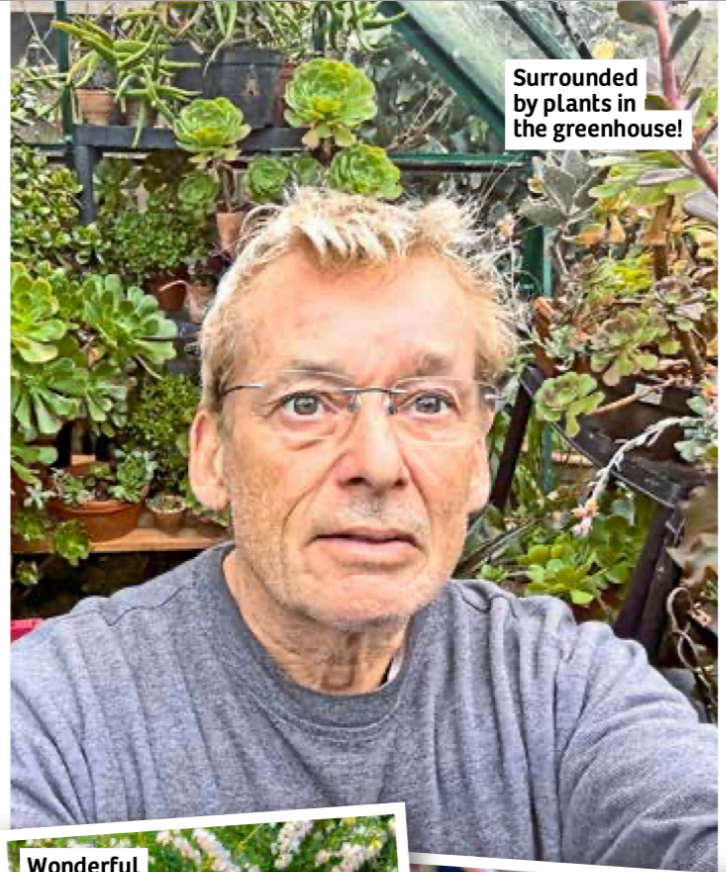
Geoff Stonebanks

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

Camellias take centre stage at this time of the year and become the highlight of the garden. The pretty 'William Bartlett' is looking really stunning at the moment, with several gorgeous blooms on show.

In the heated greenhouse, both the echeveria 'Red Sea Monster' and the *Justicia floribunda*, or Brazilian fuchsia, are really dazzling. The two flower stems on the former are almost 60cm high, with many pretty flowers dangling from them, and the pretty, delicate yellow and orange flowers on the latter create a summer vibe in the depths of winter.

On the patio behind the house I have a trio of plants in the corner of the railway sleepers that have worked well together through autumn and winter. At the back is the pretty *Loropetalum chinense* 'Pipa's Red', to



Surrounded by plants in the greenhouse!



Wonderful white heather



Echeveria 'Red Sea Monster'

the left a lovely *Sciadopitys verticillata*, or umbrella pine, and to the right a pot-grown mini Christmas tree I bought three years ago. I had to repot the pine this month as it was in need of some additional space.

A few years ago there was a disaster when the large *Agave americana* plants I put into the garden rotted away. Thankfully a couple of the smaller ones

planted at the front survived and are still going strong, having more than doubled in size now. The potted hardy *Agave ovatifolia* has been left out all winter again and is doing well despite what the weather has thrown at it.

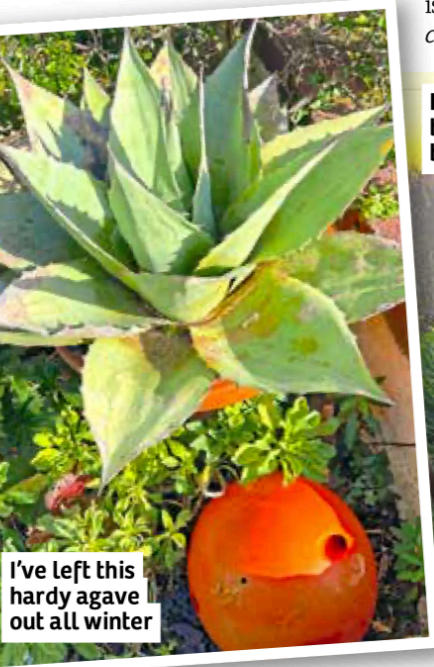
A pretty plant growing along the path into the back garden is a lovely white heather. I planted it about 15 years ago and it never fails to dazzle at this time of year. Let's hope the weather begins to warm up so I can actually get outside and do some work next month!

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



Camellia 'William Bartlett'

Frosty mornings are beautiful when joined by a lovely sunrise



I've left this hardy agave out all winter

My highlight

Beautiful camellias on show behind the house.