

Over the FENCE

...Continued

Preparations for winter are keeping me busy

Earlier this month I was kept busy in the house setting up my collection of Christmas decorations. The garden too has its token tree, bedecked with baubles and lights that can be viewed from the new garden room. It looks particularly nice at night.

When the weather has been less stormy, I've been out preparing the plot for winter - well, until I slipped and gashed my hand on a rusty metal fence and required stitches.

The standard bay trees are prone to being blown over, which can break the terracotta pole, so I tie the two together to make sure they stay upright. I've also put up temporary greenhouses to keep plants safe: a small upright one with large potted fuchsias inside and a larger walk-in conical one that houses larger containers, saving me struggling to transport them up the garden to the purpose-built greenhouse.

Lots of echium seedlings were growing in gravel at the front of the house so I decided it was safer to lift and plant them into pots for protection from frost. I must have over 20 now tucked away to plant



Geoff Stonebanks

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

out again in spring. I made the mistake of not protecting a few larger plants last winter and the frost killed them.

Looking good in the beach garden are the large *Fascicularia bicolor*, which are planted into the ground around the boat at the front. They look even better when a splash of sunshine highlights their beauty. The dogwoods are also coming into their own and looking quite spectacular.

I was pleasantly surprised at the pear crop on a lone tree in the garden this year. I've carefully picked them all and decided to peel, poach and freeze them to use in desserts.



The outdoor Christmas tree



Fantastic Fascicularia bicolor

Echium seedlings lifted and potted up for winter



Bright dogwoods stand out from the crowd

A few new additions for the garden include a fabulous cork oak bonsai tree. I've had three Chinese elms for over 30 years, which have done really well, and a bonsai olive for about seven years, so this new addition will fit in nicely. Also bought last month on a garden visit in Sussex were three cute pot ducklings, which were just too adorable to leave behind. They'll look great around the pond next year.

Another newbie is *Miscanthus nepalensis*. They're very distinctive and beautiful, having delicate-looking golden flower plumes held high above basal mounds of bright green foliage. They're just gorgeous and I decided I had to have some for myself. I'll be planting mine up in a large container.

I began my season of garden talks last month with a couple of events locally at gardening clubs in Slingdon and Ringmer. I've another five booked in for the early months of 2024.

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



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My new cork oak bonsai

My highlight
The gorgeous red dogwood stems.