

The day before the storm

Eileen Grassby

I received this lovely email fro Ellen on 27th October, the day before the first of the big storms was forecast. I hope her lovely garden was not damaged! Ed.

Today is my eighty-fourth birthday. How fortunate I am to be alive, happy and well, to appreciate this sunny autumnal morning. Storms are forecast but at this moment my garden is a riot of colour. A joy to behold.

Eight years ago, when I moved here, there was a lawn, an old magnolia tree in the far corner and nothing else. Now the magnolia is surrounded with various ferns, and the lawn has a *Catalpa speciosa* tree (a birthday present five years ago) at the back on the opposite side. So far its flowers, but not its leaves, have fallen.

Close to the house is a *Prunus* 'Kiku-shidare-zakura' (a weeping cherry), covered in red fruits and a *Callicarpa bodinieri* smothered in tiny purple berries. Nearby a *Euonymus japonicus* still holds its pink and orange spindle fruits. I also have a *Cercis canadensis* which catches the sun's rays and shimmers with reds, golds and bronze colours and, not far away, a *Nandina domestica*, with lance shaped reddish purple leaves, still holds one stem of star-shaped white flowers. To the left the *Sambucus* still has its berries, and to the right a *Malus* 'Butterball' is a mass of yellow fruits.

All of this is at the front of my house, where in the centre there is a yellow-berried holly. This I purchased after visiting Dulwich park in London five years ago. At this time of year these unusual hollies are a sight to remember! To the right and left of my door are two *Pittisporum* - the bronze 'Tom Thumb', and 'Deborah' with its small leaves with a creamy white margin. I am very popular with my flower arranging friends!

So the day will unfold and then another year, but come what may, I will remember this morning's joy.

Eileen gardens in Chepstow, Monmouthshire.

