March

March has given us daffodils. Soft, bright and acid yellows and blues and the Kitchen Drive. The last cold morning and the first sweep.

The garden reopens for the year tomorrow, which I am finding bittersweet. I am happy to share it with the public again, and to share in their excitement; mindful that I will not experience it in the same way again, the way I have this winter.

The Kitchen Drive really took off this month, its shades of yellow – seen in *Narcissus* 'Jetfire', *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii* and *E. amygdaloides* var. *robbiae*, *Ulex europaeus* 'Flore Pleno' and in the primroses – complemented beautifully by the rich blue-purple of the aubretia. Giant fennel next, as ox-eye daisies and Olympian mullein stir into new growth. Succession from this point on will be swift, with each emergent layer determinedly seeking its moment in the sun.

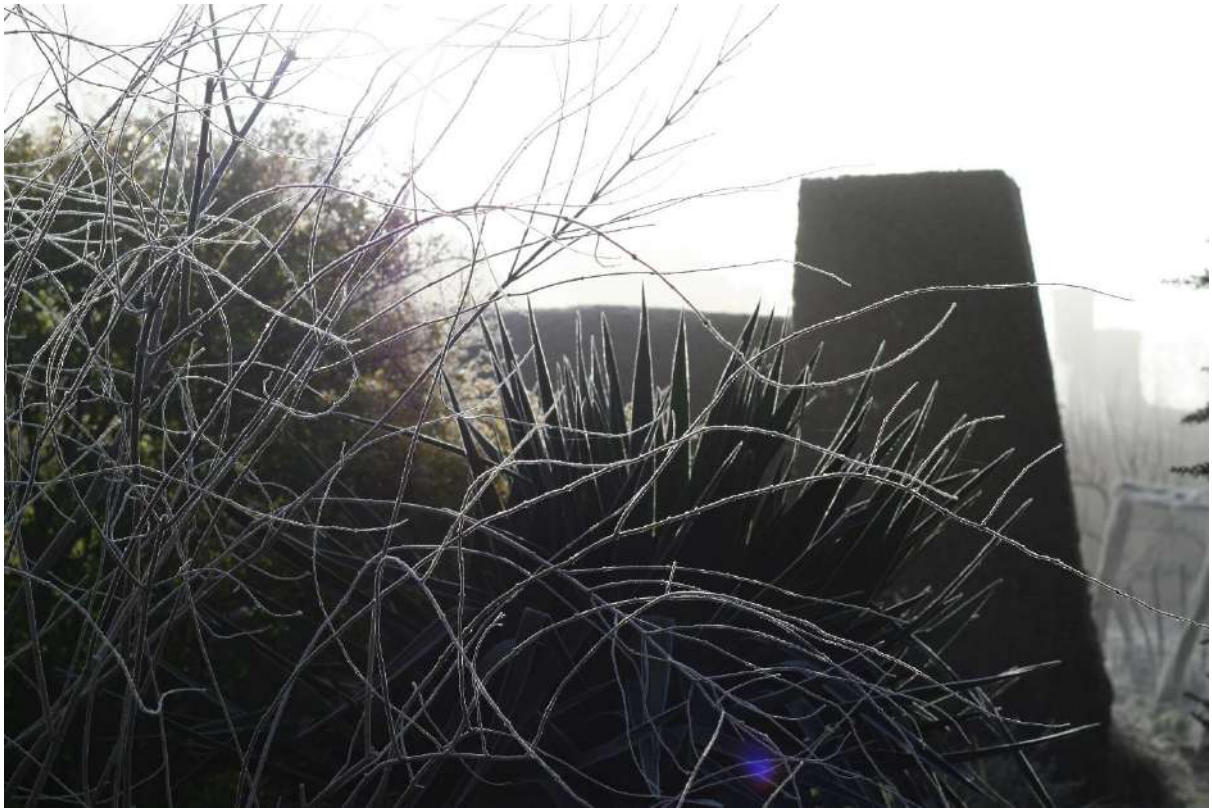
We have finished pruning, and this month I was grateful to be given a series of smaller tasks: kerrias, acers, fuchsias, salvias, buddlejas, hydrangeas, sarcoccas, shrub roses, clematis, cornus, salix, sambucus and rubus. After the fig and the Kiftsgate, these less sizable assignments gave me the chance to practise a range of techniques, and gain confidence in areas that I find less intuitive.

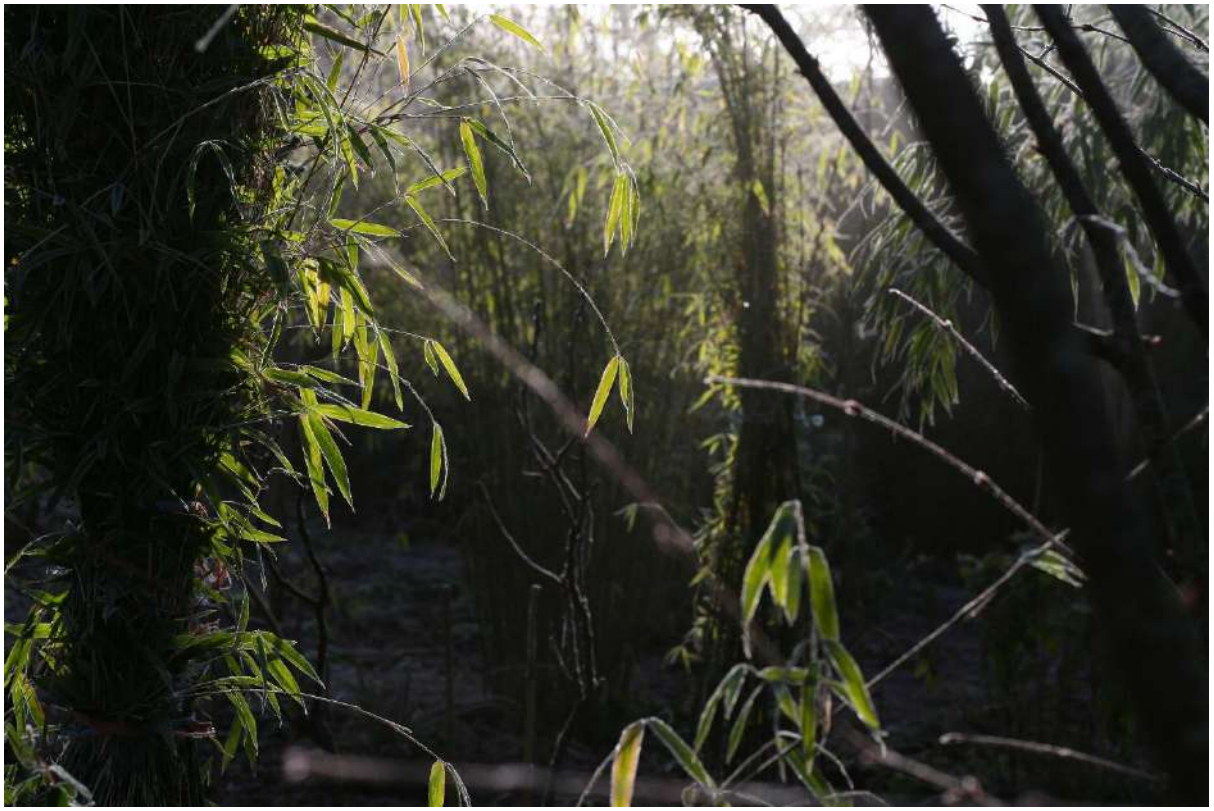
Annuals continue to fly out of the frames – much to my relief! Ladybird poppies and *Centaurea cyanus* 'Red Boy' in the Barn Garden, eastern woodruff *Asperula orientalis* in the Walled Garden and 'Blue Boy' and dyer's woad *Isatis tinctoria* in the Orchard Garden. We also took the opportunity to replenish some of the perennials that had not overwintered, with *Achillea* 'Terracotta' apparently a repeat-offender.

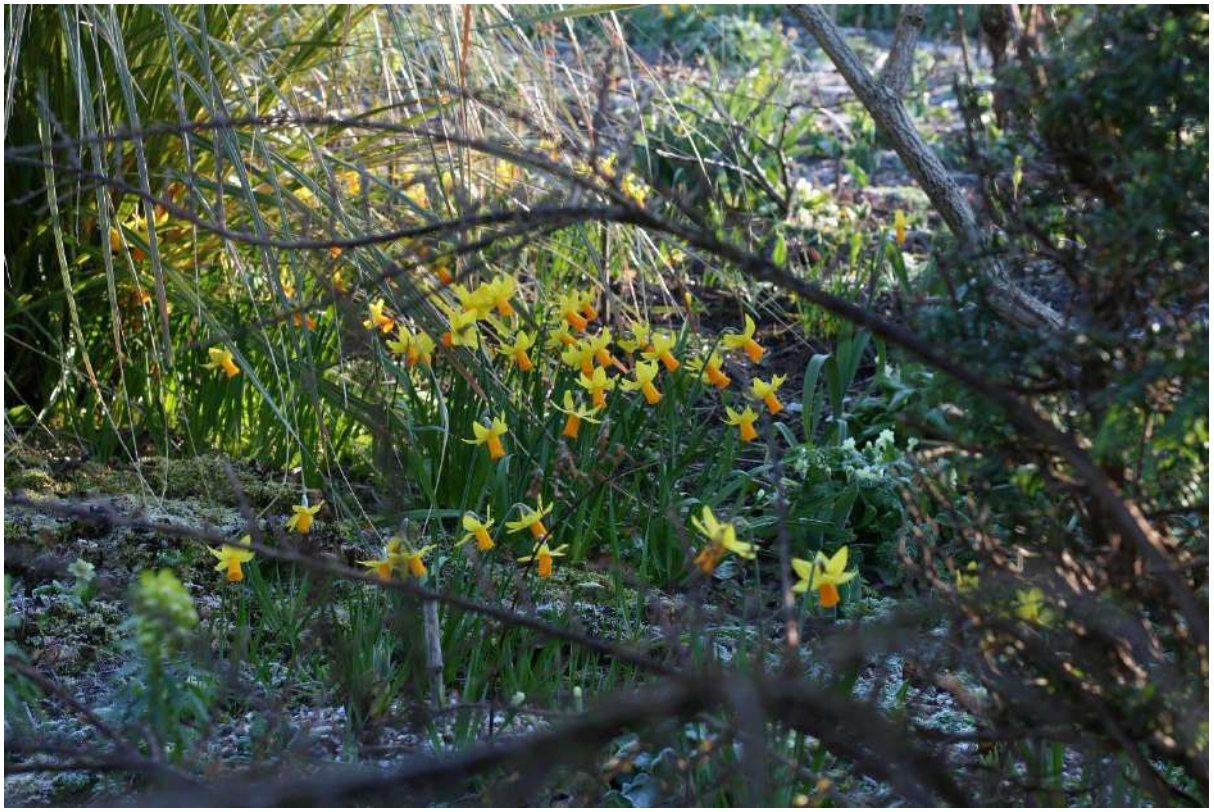
The 1st and 2nd of this month, we had the working weekend. A group of 50 volunteers, many at Dixter for the first time, saw the Garden Team swell to number 60. Fergus gave a short talk before we went to work and I took a small group to Christo's Terrace. We worked carefully, selectively weeding the cracks in the paving and cutting back the Mexican fleabane *Erigeron karvinskianus* and the

periwinkle. The weather we had that weekend, there can be few finer places to be than Christo's Terrace. The work took us into Sunday – alongside really excellent food, conversation and (more) talks – and eventually saw the weekend out.

The 2023 working weekend, my first experience of Dixter other than visiting, filled me with enthusiasm and new ideas, and marked the beginning of a new chapter for me in the (still) short time I had been gardening. I hope this weekend has done the same for someone else.







1:

Horse Pond hybrid witch-hazel *Hamamelis* x *intermedia*

2:

On the compost heap

3:

High Garden shapes

4:

Candy cane bamboo *Himalayacalamus falconeri* in the Orchard Garden

5:

Hedera helix ‘Erecta’ Front of House

6-8:

Cotoneaster windows

9:

Narcissus ‘Jet Fire’ Kitchen Drive

10:

N. ‘Jet Fire’ in the gunnera