

# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Cox's Orange Pippins at Driftwood



Drone shot of the rear of the garden



Flower head on butia capitata

## Apples are ripe for the picking

IT'S the time of year to start checking your fruit crop. I've got two apple trees and a pear tree in the back garden and the Cox's Orange Pippin is loaded with large pieces of fruit that are almost ripe for picking.

They are usually ready for picking in mid-September and can be stored well into the new year. Generally regarded as the finest flavoured of all English apples, the flesh is firm, creamy yellow, crisp and juicy and the flavour is superb, rich and very aromatic.

I planted the tree in 2013 and this has to be the best harvest on it, let's hope they taste as good as they look.

There are quite a few pieces of fruit on the pear tree too, but not quite ready for picking yet.

The tree is one of only four original items remaining from the garden when we moved in, so I'm not sure of the type but believe them to be Conference pears.

Likewise, I'm unsure of the other apple tree, as it was also in the original garden, it has quite a bit of fruit to pick as well.

Once picked, I will poach most of it and store in the freezer to use in desserts through the winter months.

We recently had a couple of days away and en route we stopped off for the first time to see Leonardslee gardens.

I was not really prepared for the stunning landscapes we found ourselves in on such a beautiful, if very hot day. The vistas around the lakes are quite magnificent and it is the perfect place to walk your dog on a lead too.

We were extremely lucky to be visiting while the Surrey Sculpture Society held its third show in the grounds.

There were some gorgeous objects on sale and after much deliberation, I opted to purchase a magnificent piece entitled Busy Life.

It was recently delivered to the garden by the artist, after the exhibition had finished.

The artist wrote after seeing images of it: "It looks like Busy Life has arrived in paradise. The area you have placed her is amazing."

It is in pride of place so visitors

will see it clearly when we open next summer.

The perfect choice for my seaside garden.

In the centre of my garden, behind the sculpture, is a 20ft tall butia capitata or Jelly Palm.

It is one of the hardiest feather palms, tolerating temperatures down to minus 10C.

Its curving, silvery-blue, pinnate leaves give it a stunning, graceful look and its stout trunk has prominent leaf scars.

Mine has produced four impressive flower heads this year, the most it has ever produced. They look very elegant, not to mention dramatic.

Once its firm pod has begun to open you can see small yellow flowers appear in long spikes, up to 91cm long which bloom in summer.

They really do make a statement in the garden and what's more, the palm is very easy to grow. It is the perfect seaside palm as it is salt, heat and drought tolerant and will definitely add a lovely tropical look to the garden or landscape, perfect at Driftwood.

This weekend, there is a new garden opening for the National Garden Scheme in Felbridge, near East Grinstead.

The garden is at The Bourne, Chesterfield Close, Furnace Wood and is open between 11am and 5pm today, Saturday, September 2. Pre booking however is essential via the scheme's website, [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk).

This garden is a lush setting of huge bananas jostling alongside gunnera and arid beds of agave, yucca and cacti.

It has a diverse tropical look with a wildlife pond and stream including bog beds of carnivorous plants. Palms, tree ferns, tetrapanax and many unusual plants and quirky touches all set in an acre of woodland.

Open tomorrow in West Sussex is Parsonage Farm in Kirdford, near Billingshurst, north east of Midhurst, check details on the website before you visit.

A few weeks ago, I spotted some drone shots on social media of Bishopstone and the local area, taken by Heli's Pix.

I decided it would be an idea to have some updated images taken of



Geoff and the Busy Life sculpture and, right, Leonardslee

the garden. The last drone pictures were taken by ITV, when they filmed here in 2020 and the garden has changed so much over the last three years.

I contacted Helen and she came and took some shots of both the front and the back garden.

This week I've included one of the back, which captures the changes behind the house of the railway sleeper patio and the corten steel pond area by the shed.

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

