

The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



The fireplace



Garden objects



The succulent stand

It's the perfect place for a selfie

THINGS are really starting to happen in the garden now and the gate has been open to pre-booked visitors now for nearly a week.

So far, more than 100 people have seen the garden and enjoyed tea and cakes, including the two groups from The States.

I'm extremely pleased to say that the feedback to date has been incredibly positive, especially about the corten steel features.

An area at the very top of the garden has received much encouraging comment too.

While we were away earlier in the year, I purchased an old metal fireplace, which now resides against the fence, behind the greenhouse.

At the same time, I purchased two old drainpipe tops that have now been fixed to the fence and filled with geraniums. There are two small standard trees either side in large containers, along with a rusty old grate filled with osteospermum and geraniums to complete the picture.

A small decorative metal bike with paniers, sits alongside too, filled with flowers. The mantle is topped with three small pots of succulents and the whole ensemble creates a great set piece.

There are quite a few gardens opening for the National Garden Scheme this weekend.

You could pop over to Spithurst, near Barcombe, and visit the Bradness Gallery, today or tomorrow.

Open between 11am and 5pm, it is a delightful and mature, wild, wildlife garden.

Open both days of the weekend too, are the five plots that make up Harlands Gardens in Haywards Heath, open between midday and 4.30pm, for an eclectic mix of ideas to borrow for your own plot.

Along the coast in Eastbourne is a new trail for 2023, comprising some old favourites and a couple of new gardens.

Two gardens are close to Eastbourne Station, one close to the Congress Theatre and the two new ones near the marina. This is not a walking trail. Plants for sale along the way and potter's studio, open for sales, at 36 Jellicoe Close.

If you fancied a trip to Hooe, near

Battle, a new garden opens on the June 4, Brickyard Farm Cottage. Full details on all the gardens can be found at www.ngs.org.uk

Anyone who has visited Driftwood will know that I have a very eclectic mix of containers and objets d'art littered about the plot.

As visitors enter the back garden, one of the first things they see is the orange half boat, this season planted with osteospermum and geraniums.

I bought it many years ago and it has done well, being brought out each summer and replanted. Beneath it are two vintage wire troughs on stands also planted up with red and white blooms.

In the patio area, bounded by the old railway sleepers, I recently installed a new metal unit that contains six small pots, which I've filled with succulents.

It was another gift for my birthday a few weeks ago. Both the stand and the plants certainly look at home there, as you can see, blending in well with the sleepers as a backdrop.

Another lovely feature is the old, orange, oil drum mirror hanging on the upended railway sleepers. I bought it at Chelsea Flower Show several years ago and it is a little bit rustier now but still looks great and is the perfect spot for a selfie.

One of the very first things I bought, just before I first opened the garden back in 2009, was an old farm implement, a red and white plough.

It never really seemed to look at home until I placed it behind the sleepers on the patio at the rear of the house.

Now, it is the perfect backdrop in which to place a selection of my aeoniums.

Perched behind the sleepers and in among the machinery frame, they stand out. It is a lovely sunny spot too, getting the early morning sun, right through until the early afternoon.

Strategically placed in among the plants and on the tops of the sleepers are a number of other interesting pieces.

I love them all, especially the large mosaic blackbird created out of different pieces of glass. Also visible is a lovely yellow metal sausage dog perched on the end of



Geoff's garden selfie

the sleeper. In addition to the blackbird, there are some pretty small blue birds on stakes popping out above the succulents adding a pop of colour.

The other item in the image is a blue and white ceramic butterfly which I have had for many years now too.

I've often said that I treat my garden as a film set and try to set up pretty snapshots across the plot, thereby providing more interest for visitors, as it tends to keep them focused on individual areas for longer.

Give it a go in your garden. Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk



The boat