

# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Beetles



Blue hydrangeas



Valerian

## A glorious July garden - from blue hydrangeas to rose chafers

**T**HE garden is still looking really good, despite the intense heat we have been experiencing recently. The lilies, while almost finished now, have been quite spectacular, with a few of the white and red ones still flowering in the garden. Many of the peach coloured and black ones have past their best. Lilies are prized for their fragrant blooms and often giant, trumpet-shaped flowers. The bulbs are planted in containers and flower borders making the perfect summer flowers to add colour and cheer to your garden. There are two main types of lily to grow: Oriental lily and Asiatic lily. The former typically have large, fragrant pink flowers and thrive in acid soils and so should be grown in containers of ericaceous compost. The latter have a greater variety of colours including yellow, orange, red and almost-black, they too thrive in alkaline soil and are extremely hardy, so are easier to grow.

There are quite a few gardens to visit with the National Garden Scheme this weekend and here are three events taking place tomorrow, Sunday 6th July.

Four gardens comprise the East Grinstead gardens, opening between 1pm and 5pm with a combined entry of £7. Imberhorne Allotments features 80 plots hosting a diverse range of planting, including grapevines, various vegetables, fruits, and flowers. Also see a garden where contemporary design blends seamlessly with lush and colourful plantings, a garden showcasing beautifully landscaped gardens on two levels and a plot boasting a stunning array of roses and romantic flowerings that cascade down to a stream. Full location details on the website at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

Over in Eastbourne, Rose Cottage at 50 Wannock Lane, in Willingdon, opens tomorrow too, from 1pm to 5pm with entry £5. The 1930's cottage nestles at the foot of the South Downs. This beautiful west facing rear garden has a wide selection of shrubs, herbaceous and perennials, plus trees. There are two small fish ponds, vegetable plot and greenhouses. Little nooks

and seating areas provide interest and a sunny patio.

Moving now to Seaford, also on Sunday, there are 5 gardens making up the Seaford Gardens north trail. This is not a walking trail. The gardens open from midday to 5pm with a combined entry of £7, check web site for all the garden locations. See a garden on different levels with mature planting, a garden over several levels with agave and succulents and great views over the downs, a newly developing garden beautifully planted to attract wildlife and new in 2025, one including ponds, small woodland area.

One of the few original plants in the garden when we moved here 21 years ago are the stunning blue hydrangeas in the front garden. It produces rich blue flowers every year. You can see the early blooms tinted white and blue as they develop into full blue. The shrub can be relied upon to put on a great show by the front door each year!

This year we seem to have seen an invasion of rose chafer beetles in the garden. With striking, iridescent bodies that shimmer like oil slicks in the sunshine, rose chafers are easy to spot as they crawl among the flowers on summer days. They are large beetles, measuring around 20mm in length, and have a V-shape on the back, where the wing cases meet. These beetles love the sun, so keep an eye out for them crawling along flowers on warm, sunny days. Those in my garden seem to have made a beeline for the flower stems on the sorbaria sorbifolia. You can see them munching away and enjoying the flowers until nothing much remains. I left them to it as I didn't have the heart to destroy them, I just cut the flower head off once they had finished!

I have a great deal of red valerian, that have self-seeded in the beach garden at the front of the house, all pink and red. It is a drought-tolerant herbaceous perennial that blooms all summer long and makes a good cut flower. Their sprays of small crimson, pink or white nectar-rich flowers are scented and attract bees, butterflies and other pollinators.

Grow red valerian in full sun in



Geoff and hostas

an informal, dry or wildlife garden, on walls and banks. It will flower from early summer through until early autumn, and even later in milder areas. Fading flowers should be cut back to avoid self-seeding.

My three hostas, as you can see, have done well this year without suffering too much damage from slugs and snails! I make sure the compost is covered with gravel and set the containers on a small saucer, inverted on a larger saucer, thereby creating a moat of water around the base of the pot. It seems to work for me. Ideally though, the leaves should not touch anything else which mine are doing!

Read more of Geoff's garden at [www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk) or email [visitdriftwood@gmail.com](mailto:visitdriftwood@gmail.com) to book a visit before 3rd August.



Geoff's lilies