

The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Fatsia camouflagée



Golden rod



Hydrangea groundbreaker

A great crop of apples and plenty of colour in the garden

THERE is certainly a great crop of apples on the Cox's orange Pippin tree in the garden this year! I've already picked and peeled quite a few and then poached them to put in the freezer to use through the winter but there are still many more to gather!

I reckon I shall be giving a lot away to friends. I don't remember there ever being such a great crop to date!

There are a few gardens still opening for the National Garden Scheme this weekend too. Why not venture over to Heathfield and see a brand-new garden this year, Kotamaki in Tottingworth Park, Broad Oak which opens today from 10am to midday with entry £12 and children £6 for pre-booked visitors only. Tea, coffee and biscuits are included and there will be a talk about the garden at 10:30am. This is a large creatively planted garden featuring a long double border within yew hedging, rockery, shade garden, exotic garden, pot garden, wildflower meadows, and kitchen garden. There is an emphasis on continuity of interest via imaginative mixed plantings of shrubs, climbers, perennials, bulbs, annuals and self-sowers; plus, a varied collection of wisterias trained as shrubs, on trellis work, and on a pergola.

Alternatively, you could visit Pulborough and see The Cottage in Potts Lane, also opening today from 10am to 4pm with entry £6 and pre-booking essential, there will be two hour timed slots to pick from. This is a quintessential English cottage garden, packed with a mix of perennials and bulbs on a potentially challenging multi layered site. Comprising four distinct rooms including a small roof terrace, top terrace sitting above the house garden and a vegetable garden built in what was a small swimming pool. Every square inch has been used. All the details can be found at www.ngs.org.uk

There is still a great deal of colour on show at Driftwood. Goldenrod, or solidago, are herbaceous perennials that are mostly native to North America, where they're found growing in sunny, open areas such as meadows and prairies. They're members of the daisy family and

have vivid yellow, often conical flower heads that are made up of many, small, daisy-like flowers. They were introduced to UK gardens from North America in the 19th century and were popular plants in herbaceous borders until they fell out of favour, probably due to the plants' thuggish tendencies. It is now coming back into fashion, however. They look great in a herbaceous border or in a naturalistic or prairie planting scheme. The flowers are extremely attractive to butterflies, bees and other pollinators, too. You can see mine doing really well.

Another great favourite at this time of the year is Pyracantha, or firethorn. It is a handsome evergreen shrub with spring flowers and brilliantly colourful autumn berries. Dazzling white flowerheads are borne in early summer, contrasting with the small bright green leaves. In autumn, flowerheads mature to clusters of showy scarlet, orange, or yellow berries. They're easy to grow on most soils and aspects, making them a great choice for problem spots that are otherwise hard to plant up. Pyracantha can be grown in different ways – either as a shrub, trained on a support – or as a wide pyracantha hedge. Most varieties grow to several metres high but there are some bushy and compact growing varieties too. Pyracantha is superb for wildlife with flowers that attract pollinating insects – the dense thorny growth makes excellent nesting sites for birds, which also feast on the berries. Red and orange berries are most favoured by birds, yellow is less popular, so it can be worth growing at least a couple of different pyracanthas – one for you to enjoy into the winter and another to feed the birds.

Sporting bold, almost tropical looks, Fatsia 'Camouflagée' bears large, deeply dissected leaves splashed with green gold. Clusters of globular white flowers appear in autumn which are followed by black berries. This tough and reliable evergreen shrub provides all year-round interest and will lighten dry, shady corners or can be used as a feature plant in a container. Combine it with more finely textured plants such as ferns for an



Pyracantha

effective foliage display. Mie is sitting in a container on a north facing wall and does very well.

A brand new plant I purchased last autumn was a fabulous new hydrangea! Hydrangea paniculata 'Groundbreaker Blush' which stands out for its compact, low-growing habit and riotous branching, making it an excellent choice for ground cover or container planting. This unique deciduous plant is covered with petite white flowers that transition to soft pink hues as the season progresses, offering a floral display that lasts from summer through autumn. Its manageable size makes this diminutive shrub ideal for small gardens, borders, and mass plantings, as well as for brightening up patios and balconies. Why not give it a go?

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk



Geoff Stonebanks with a crop of apples