

The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Bluebell wood, Arlington



Blossom and bluebells at Arlington



Pear blossom at Driftwood

It's rather like dressing a film set, combining plants and art in one

THIS coming week sees the Bluebell Walk in Arlington open for its 50th anniversary.

The walk is managed by John McCutchan with the support of The Bluebell Walk Advisory Group, comprising members of his family and others committed to ensuring that the Arlington Bluebell Walk continues to raise money for local charities.

It could not operate without the participation of the many local charities, who welcome their visitors and offer them delicious refreshments every day they are open. It has been opening since 1972 and over time has developed into seven interesting walks across three working farms.

A circular walk of three quarters of a mile in Beatons Wood has been made suitable for wheelchair users. This is where visitors will see white anemones followed by the vistas of bluebells, established over centuries.

On this walk there are seats for visitors to enjoy the peace and tranquility of this oak and hornbeam, ancient wood.

Along the walks there are signs illustrating the flora and fauna of the countryside for information.

At neighbouring Parkwood Farm (two and three quarters of a mile walk there and back), milking of the large dairy herd can be seen from a special viewing gallery every afternoon between 3pm and 5pm.

I visited the woods a few years ago and you can see me among the bluebells with our late Jack Russell, Albert, along with a couple of the photos I took during the visit.

The event begins on April 11 from 10am to 5pm each day and continues until May 10.

Entrance is £6 for adults and £3 for children and to date, it has raised an incredible £890,000. Full details can be found at www.bluebellwalk.co.uk

Meanwhile, back at Driftwood the spring garden is really starting to come alive.

There is much blossom forming on both the pear and apple trees.

It looks so pretty until the wind blows and then the garden looks as though it has a fine layer of confetti sprinkled across it.

The pear tree was already in the garden when we arrived, back in 2004, and I believe it to be a conference pear.

There was also one unknown apple tree at the top of the plot and I subsequently planted a Cox's Orange Pippin along the central path. The crop was not great last year so let's hope it is more successful in 2023.

I love this time of the year starting to pull out all the stored sculpture and garden art from both the summer house and shed as I tend to forget what has been stored.

It is always a treat to rediscover pieces, clean them up and find them a home outdoors for the summer months.

I try to relocate them in different places each year, as it really helps to give a different feel or vibe to the garden, really important in the case of returning visitors, who don't want to see the same vistas each year.

It never ceases to amaze me what I have, much of which has been curated over the last 25 to 30 years. This stage of my garden preparations always seems to me like dressing a film set, creating little set pieces, combining plants, shrubs and art into one.

I shall soon be transferring my collection of succulents from the greenhouse into the garden for the summer and will then need to give it a thorough clean.

Each year I seem to amass more and more of these interesting plants.

The house certainly breathes a sigh of relief as many are also stored in both the front and back porches too.

Making a lovely statement around the garden are many tulips. I have some planted in the ground and quite a few in large containers.

After a cold and grey winter, what is better than the sight of spring flowers pushing up through the soil?

Tulips are perfect for brightening up beds and borders, or in pots dotted around your garden and patio. They are always a spring favourite thanks to the huge variety of colours, shapes and sizes.

If you want to see huge and varied displays of tulips, you could arrange a visit to the tulip festival



Geoff and the late Albert at Arlington

in the gardens of Arundel Castle which opened for the season on 1st April and is regarded as one of the top tulip displays in Europe, set against the breathtaking backdrop of the castle's gardens.

A sea of colour awaits as the festival showcases over 120 different named tulips planted by the castle's team.

This year's festival is set to feature over 100,000 tulips, creating a stunning display of colour and beauty as the bulbs, which have been dormant underground throughout the winter, burst into bloom.

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



Tulips at Driftwood