

The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Why not think about opening up your own garden for charity?

HAVE you ever thought about opening your own garden to raise money for your favourite charity? If your plot is your passion, it's a very easy way to support local or national charities.

Be it large or small, it is a lovely thing to share it with others. You will find it extremely rewarding too, with many positive comments on what you have achieved and visitors saying they will try and recreate back in their own garden. We love to go and look around other people's gardens and it is the perfect way to spend a lovely summer day.

Maybe you are a good baker too, or have family and friends that could bake for you. Enjoying home-made tea and cake after looking around a lovely garden is the perfect end to enhance the garden visit. You don't have to do anything too fancy, just a nice slice of cake and a mug of tea would fit the bill. I like to serve mine in vintage china on a tray as you can see.

First, think about what charity you'd like to support, maybe one close to your heart or just one that others have told you about, maybe the local hospice! Make sure you get in touch with whomever you choose so that they too can help promote your upcoming opening as well.

If you enjoy sharing your love of gardens then maybe the perfect solution is to host a party for family and friends and do so as part of the National Garden Scheme's, Great British Garden Party, now in its third year! It is very simple to take part, as the scheme invites everyone and anyone to join them and Dame Mary Berry, president of the National Garden Scheme and undisputed Queen of Cakes to hold your own Great British Garden Party event to raise funds for some of the most important and best-loved nursing and health charities in the UK.

The important point is that it doesn't matter whether your garden is large or small, a horticultural delight or a children's playground, you can still get involved and have fun!

Your event can be anything - an informal barbecue, coffee morning or quintessential afternoon tea and cake, family bake-off, book swap or plant sale by your garden gate.

Every garden enjoyed, every piece of cake served and every cuppa poured will support the wonderful work of Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Hospice UK, Carer's Trust, Parkinson's UK and The Queen's Nursing Institute - all charities supported by the National Garden Scheme.

Joining the Great British Garden Party couldn't be simpler. Just sign up, invite your guests and start planning your perfect day. On their website you'll find colourful invitations to send to your guests, tips on how to boost your fundraising, mouth-watering recipes, and inspirational ideas for the perfect event to help you on your way. Their official garden party week is July 16-24, but you can choose any day across the summer that is best for you. Full details at www.ngs.org.uk

I've got quite a few lovely buddleja around the plot at the back which tend to grow quite tall. The butterfly heaven shrub on the left of the garden is already a couple of feet above the 6-foot fence, so really takes the brunt of the south west winds, which can tend to snap some of the stems. That said, the flowers are quite beautiful and are perfect magnets for both butterflies and bees and, touch wood, none broken so far. Around the pond I have a couple of different buddleja, a mauve and a magenta. They flower profusely from June to October and having been there for several years now are quite drought tolerant too. Both are from the buddleja 'Buzz' series and are garden friendly; staying compact and flowering for a long summer period without setting seed, meaning the flowers just keep on coming without risk of rogue plants popping up all over the garden, as is normal with standard varieties. So, if you don't have one, they are a perfect addition to your garden or patio.

If you want to get out and visit garden the week then why not try



Butterfly on buddleja buss majenta at Driftwood

Alpines, in the High Street in Maresfield, TN22 2EG. It opens both today and tomorrow for the National Garden Scheme from 11am to 4pm, entry is £5. The one-acre garden is packed with mixed and rampant borders, each loosely following a limited colour palette of unusual combinations. Dogs on leads are allowed too. Full details can be found at www.ngs.org.uk

You can read more of Geoff's garden in Seaford at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or go and visit. It is open by arrangement until 31st July, with monies raised going to Macmillan Cancer Support.

