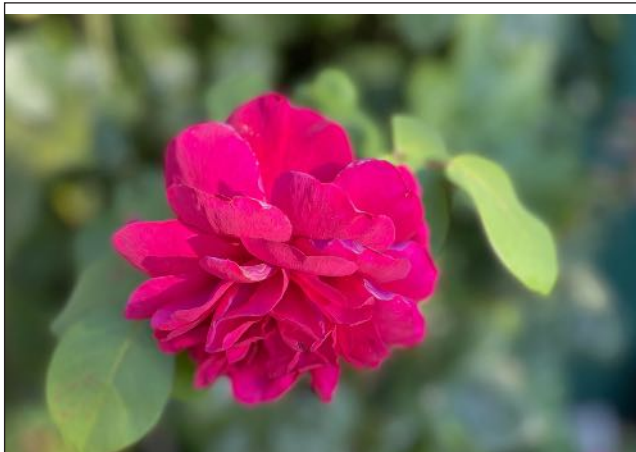


# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



## End of an era... but my own garden fundraising will go on

**A** COUPLE of weeks ago I made a tough decision that I've been mulling over for a while now. I've been, single-handedly, organising the Macmillan Coastal Garden Trail since 2012. Next year I'll be 70 and with a pair of dodgy knees, I decided it's time for a change and to quit while I'm ahead. I invited some of the many garden owners and volunteers who have supported us over that period for tea and cake at Driftwood.

Emma Tingley, far left in the picture, head of partnerships, London and South East Region at Macmillan Cancer Support, joined us and said after: "It was fantastic to meet you and hear about the incredible work you've done to support Macmillan over so many years, not only through your own personal efforts, but by being such an incredible catalyst in your community and beyond. Such a successful decade of opening your garden and creating a garden trail with others, for so many people to enjoy. A huge thank you for allowing Macmillan to be the beneficiary of that success."

I shall continue to raise money for the charity through my own garden in 2023 as usual.

This weekend, there are still a few gardens opening for the National Garden Scheme. Today, Saturday, there is Knightsbridge House, Grove Hill in Hellingly and Limekiln Farm, Chalvington Road in Hailsham, also open tomorrow too. Both open 2pm to 5pm with entry £6. The former has five acres of tranquil countryside to explore with several garden rooms. Lots of late season colour with grasses and magnificent specimen trees. The latter was designed in the 1930s and has not changed in basic layout since then. The planting aims to reflect the age of the 17th century property and original garden design. There is a talk in the physic garden at 3pm about medicinal plants too. Full details on both gardens can be found at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

As we head, all too quickly, towards autumn, the garden at Driftwood is still offering many stunning plants. Here are four of

the best. First, beautiful brugmansia which I have in a large container in the greenhouse. Its common name is Angel's Trumpet and with its large, scented, trumpet flowers, hanging in abundance from its branches all summer, this tropical shrub or small tree is a real showstopper. You can choose to grow it in a large container outdoors in summer or indoors all year. It will need protecting from winter cold and watering liberally and daily throughout the growing season. I've got mine in a large container that alternates between greenhouse and garden, depending on the weather conditions.

Growing by the shed I have a large clump of hemp agrimony, a vigorous upright perennial with reddish stems, leaves palmately divided into narrow leaflets and dense terminal domed clusters of tiny light pink or purple flowers. It will grow in any moist soil either in full sun or partial shade and can spread quickly, but is very attractive to butterflies and other insects. Its name comes from its resemblance to hemp but it is not related.

A beautiful rose that keeps giving across the summer months is Tess of the d'Urbervilles. It is a striking climber bearing large, deeply cupped, bright crimson-red blooms, with a pleasing old rose fragrance. It is a relatively compact climber clothed in large, dark green leaves and prefers full sun. Mine is growing on one side of an arch over a folly door and as a repeat flowering shrub has just started to produce more dazzling blooms. It is an excellent shrub as it is resistant to disease and fairly easy to grow. It is a great choice of rose if space is somewhat limited and the blooms make great cut flowers too.

On the left side of the garden, I have two shrubs of hydrangea paniculata Limelight. They have been established for several years now and never fail to amaze. The beautiful and eye-catching cones of pale green/white really do delight the senses. I've found it to be a magnificent feature plant in garden or on the patio. Mine started life in patio pots and were



Top row from left: Tess of the d'Urbervilles; hemp agrimony; hydrangea Limelight. Above, the end of Macmillan trail. Right, brugmansia

then transferred into the ground several years ago. They will grow stronger each year with flowers, which emerge from mid-summer and last well into the autumn. Something I never do, but if you can bear to lose them from the garden, the fresh blooms are very imposing in a vase and the dried flowerheads can be used as a permanent decoration too. A truly versatile plant. It likes neutral to acid, free-draining soil and a sunny or part-shaded spot. For maximum flower power prune back in early spring to two or three buds as the blooms appear on new growth each summer.

Read more of Geoff's garden at [www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk)

