

# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Aloe striatula



Fatsia 'Camouflage'



A Jersey tiger moth in Geoff's garden

## That's a wrap... it's been a great summer in the coastal garden

**W**ELL, it's a wrap. The final visitors came to see the garden this week. What a great summer; I never imagined so many would pre book to see my coastal garden.

One of my favorite comments made by visitors on TripAdvisor this year was: "The brilliant use of bric a brac, ceramics and other objects trouvé with inspired plants and planting. Glorious afternoon tea setting with delectable cappuccino cake and an entertaining, enthusiastic and knowledgeable owner."

We'll be doing it all again in 2024, probably just in June and July. More on that next year.

The main task now is to get all the unsold art returned to the artists and then get the garden picture perfect ready for the film shoot with BBC Gardeners' World, hopefully, taking place on August 24.

A lovely new plant in the garden is fatsia Camouflage, a hardy plant sporting bold, almost tropical looks.

It bears large, deeply dissected leaves splashed with green gold and clusters of globular white flowers in autumn 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 as I have done.

It can be combined with more finely textured plants such as ferns for an effective foliage display.

This weekend, you could drive over to Battle and visit Kitchenham Farm in Ashburnham, which will open the garden gate for the National Garden Scheme between 2pm and 5pm this afternoon.

Entry is £5, with children free and dogs on leads are allowed too.

This is a one-acre country house garden set among traditional farm buildings with stunning views over the Sussex countryside.

There is a series of borders around the main house and the east house.

See lawns and mixed herbaceous borders including roses and delphiniums.

A ha-ha separates the garden, which adjoins a working farm, from the fields and sheep beyond.

Opening tomorrow, in Cuckfield Lane in Warninglid, is Colwood House. It opens between 1pm and 5pm, with entry £7.

See 12 acres of garden with mature and specimen trees from the late 1800s, lawns and woodland edge.

There is a formal parterre plus rose and herb gardens. Don't miss the 100ft terrace and herbaceous border overlooking the flower rimmed croquet lawn and view the lake with island and temple.

Full details on both gardens at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk).

I have a great number of hedges in the garden, some over 6ft tall, which get cut by others, once per year, in the late autumn, but all the smaller hedges, like the *griselinia littoralis* are trimmed by me.

I use a hedge trimmer in the spring and autumn but when the garden is open, trim carefully with secateurs.

I have quite a few hydrangeas dotted about the plot, one of which is the pretty Red Baron shown.

It produces rosy red flowers in mophead form, in abundance on this easy to grow hydrangea.

The blooms slowly fade to a deeper, more subtle shade of red as they mature during the season, extending this hardy shrub's interest through into autumn.

Its compact growing habit means that Red Baron can also be grown in containers on the patio as well as being included in a shrub border like mine.

An interesting plant in the front and back garden is aloe striatula.

It is native to the mountains of South Africa, where summers are hot and dry and winters are very cold. It's therefore an incredibly hardy plant, which can be grown outside all year round in most parts of the UK.

I have several which have done well over the last seven years. It has a sprawling, scrambling habit and may even climb if given support.

Its fleshy leaves are striped in different shades of green. In summer it bears tall, dramatic flower spikes not dissimilar to those of *kniphofia*, and it eventually forms a branching, woody trunk.

It's perfect for growing in a dry, gravel garden where you don't have to worry about getting it through winter. In very cold winters the foliage may shrivel but it quickly puts on new growth in spring.

A recent visitor to the garden remarked that they had seen a Jersey tiger moth while walking around.

I did some checking up and



Geoff hedge trimming and, right, the Red Baron

discovered that they are mainly found in the south of England, particularly in Devon and Dorset.

They have also been recorded in Sussex, Kent, the Isle of Wight and around London which clearly explains how I was able to come across the one pictured in my garden, set off beautifully against the pink of the *sanguisorba*.

The Jersey tiger moth is a beautiful moth with creamy white strips on its forewing and bold orange underwings.

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

