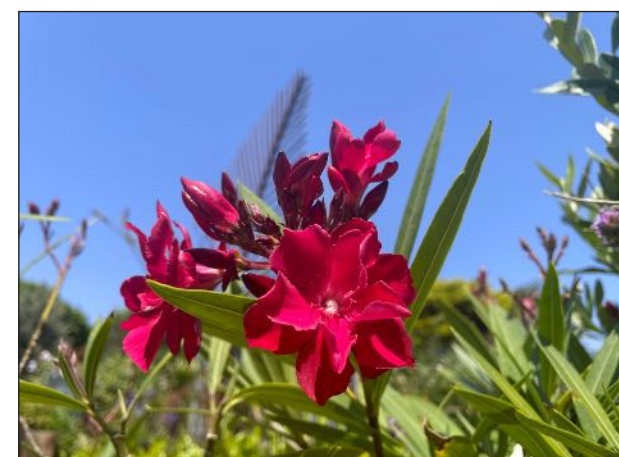


# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



## Luckily I have chosen plenty of drought-tolerant plants this year

**F**ROM midnight yesterday, South East Water imposed a hosepipe ban across Sussex, creating challenging times ahead for gardeners.

As you can see, my garden has been looking pretty amazing in recent weeks and seen over 450 visitors, helping me raise money for charity. I have to confess to using the hosepipe to water up until Thursday, in order to ensure the garden looks its best for them.

It's going to be pretty difficult throughout the ban to keep it looking its best. Fortunately, I don't have any lawn, so that really helps. I consciously tried to use more drought-tolerant plants this year, like geraniums, instead of conventional annuals and I already had a large collection of succulents.

Those shrubs that are in desperate need will have to be watered, by hand, sparingly, with a watering can, until we get some much-needed rain and the ban is lifted.

Openings for the National Garden Scheme begin to slow down now, with the final few in the first week of October. That said there are still some to see. There are two open locally this weekend, if you want to get out and enjoy them. The first is Camberlot Hall in Lower Dicker, which opens both today and tomorrow from 2pm to 5pm with entry £6. This is a three-acre country garden with a lovely view across fields to the South Downs. The owners have created it from scratch over the last nine years fulfilling all the design and planting themselves.

There is a new, part-walled garden this year too and you will find plants for sale as well.

Tomorrow, Colwood House in Warninglid will open from 12.30pm through until 4.30pm. Entrance here is £7 and dogs on leads are allowed as well. There are 12 acres of garden, with mature and specimen trees from the late 1800s.

A wonderful 100ft terrace and herbaceous border overlook the flower-rimmed croquet lawn. Full details on both gardens can be found at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

Looking really good in my garden this weekend is a pretty fuchsia,

planted in several wall pots, on the north facing wall at the rear of the house. I've had them for many years now and cut back and store them through the winter months in the heated greenhouse. "Lena" is a medium-sized deciduous shrub of open habit.

The flowers are semi-double, with pale pink tube, short, broad, green-tipped, pale pink sepals, and violet petals flushed pink at base.

Fuchsias are much-loved for their hanging, bell-shaped, bi-coloured flowers that look like colourful, dancing skirts, sometimes called ballerinas. The flowers last all summer long and there are thousands of varieties available, in shades of white, candy pink, magenta, purple and red. Some varieties have golden or variegated foliage, or purple or red-tinged leaves, too. Most hail from Central and South America.

The aforementioned wall pots always hold a special memory for me, as they belonged to a favourite aunt, who sadly passed away back in 2004. I inherited the containers from her, along with a number of plants from her garden too.

Another lovely fuchsia is one called Empress of Prussia, it is a compact, upright medium-sized deciduous shrub with rather broad dark leaves. The flowers are single, with spreading scarlet sepals and tube, petals magenta flushed red at base. This equally has memories for me as the original plant in my garden is the one my father, who passed away in 2007, gave my mother for their ruby wedding anniversary, many moons ago.

I have three red nerium oleanders, which up until last autumn, were kept in containers, they are now growing happily in the ground and continuing to produce stunning red flowers at this time of the year. Once established, they can thrive without too much care. They are native to Mediterranean regions but are perfect shrubs for seaside gardens, tolerating salt spray and wind. They are drought tolerant but you'll get much better floral displays if you opt to keep them watering through the summer.

Growing in a bed on the left of the garden are two hydrangea paniculata Limelight. It is a robust,



Top row from left, Empress of Prussia; fuchsia Lena; oleander. Aboe, Geoff in the garden pre hosepipe ban and, right, paniculata Limelight

upright and spreading variety with very distinctive colouring. Leaves are yellow-green, stems pale grey-green, slightly blushed pink in places, pale brown below. Panicles form a very dense, broad cone, entirely green at first. Sterile florets open pale lime green, later grading through to white. A slight pink flush in places gradually deepens a little to give a pink and green colour mix at maturity. It can make a real statement in the garden in both a container and planted in the ground.

Read more about my garden in Seaford at [www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk) or come and visit. It is open by arrangement until August 31, with money raised going to Macmillan Cancer Support.

