

GEOFF STONEBANKS

The Driftwood Garden Diary



Roses stealing the show in gardens

THIS week, it's all about roses in the garden. I reckon it's been the best year by far for seeing their stunning blooms across the patch.

Most roses require full sun to give off their best. They thrive in rich, fertile and free-draining soil. If you are planting in a container, ensure there is adequate drainage at the bottom of the pot. The experts say water deeply and infrequently to encourage strong root development and aim to soak the soil rather than wetting the leaves, which helps prevent diseases like black spot. Roses are generally hungry feeders and it is best to apply a dedicated rose fertiliser in early spring and again in mid-summer to fuel repeat blooming. The shrubs are best pruned annually, ideally in late winter or early spring. Shape the bush to allow sunlight and fresh air into the centre of the plant. I have a mixture of those planted in the ground and several in containers too.

Now, if we are talking roses, you must visit Town Place on one of its open days for the National Garden Scheme. It is located in Ketches Lane, Freshfield, near Sheffield Park. It will open from 2pm to 5pm with entry £10 and children free. It is a stunning 3-acre garden with a growing international reputation for the quality of its design, planting and gardening. Set round a C17 Sussex farmhouse, the garden has over 400 roses, herbaceous borders, herb garden, white garden, topiary inspired by the sculptures of Henry Moore, an 800-year-old oak, potager and a unique ruined Priory Church and Cloisters in hornbeam. Sadly, no refreshments are available but you can take your own picnic. Full details at www.ngs.org.uk

Also, over in Seaford, there are 7 gardens open, forming the Seaford Gardens, all of which will be signed from the A259. The trail opens from midday to 5pm with entry £8. Each garden offers its own unique charm, with a huge range of different planting styles, making this an interesting group of gardens to visit. Enjoy tea, ice cream, plants and artwork for



Geoff and unknown Dad's Rose. Image: Geoff Stonebanks

sale at various gardens. Tickets and maps are available from any participating garden on the day. Check the website for details.

Back to the roses and you can see me pictured with a really pretty rose. Back in 2007 when my dad passed away, my mum bought this rose in his memory and planted it in her garden. When she moved to Seaford back in 2018 and we sold the house, I dug it up and planted it in my garden. Sadly, I don't know its proper name but to us, it's simply Dad's rose and this year has looked quite spectacular.

A new rose, I purchased from Peter Beale's while we were away in Norfolk, is the very pretty La Villa Cotta. Described as a mesmerising modern shrub rose, it

has bold, large blooms flaunting a captivating copper-orange hue complemented by striking pink edges, encapsulating a delightful old-world charm. It exhibits a bushy, upright growth habit, reaching an elegant height of approximately 120 cm and spreading to about 60 cm wide. One of its standout features is its extended flowering period. I'm expecting a continuous display of flourishing blooms throughout the growing season. Its commendable heat tolerance ensures that this rose retains its health and brilliance, even in warmer conditions. Mine is in a pot in the back garden.

Another favourite that I have had now for 23 years, is a vigorous rambling rose called Veilchen-

blau. It boasts large clusters of small, semi-double blooms that burst forth in a stunning display of colour and fragrance. The flowers open in a vibrant purple-magenta hue, their petals occasionally adorned with delicate white streaks that create a beautiful contrast. As the weeks pass, the blooms mature to a classy lilac-grey shade with a delicate violet. Nestled within each blossom is a playful array of bright yellow stamens that draw the eye and lend an air of whimsy. Mine looks perfect, rambling through the hedge.

The pretty delicate rose Susie is an absolute gem of a rose, it boasts a wonderful perfume and satisfying colour that make climbing roses such a welcome

addition to any garden. Go on a journey of colour with this rose, starting with a reddish bud, which opens up with yellow and golden shades in early summer, then taking on a pink and blush colour as they fade and the petals fall. The remarkable colours are even more eye-popping as they contrast so well against the dark green, healthy and glossy foliage. This repeat-flowering variety will continue to burst to life through summer and autumn.

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or follow both him and the garden on social media.

Alternatively, book a visit to see the garden, before 2nd August, by emailing visitdriftwood@gmail.com



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La villa cotta



Veilchenblau



Susie