

The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Gunnera



Figs galore



Amazing gardens with some fantastic plants for all to enjoy

THIS year I seem to have many more figs growing on the tree in the garden than in previous years!

Sweet, succulent figs may sound like exotic treats for warmer climes, but if you choose the right variety, you can enjoy home-grown figs in the UK, in a mild, sunny site. In cooler locations, figs can be grown in containers and brought indoors over winter to protect the young fruitlets, or outdoor plants can be covered or wrapped. That said, I'm not sure what variety mine is, I bought a small tree at an open garden many years ago and planted it in the centre of the back garden. It is quite an exposed but sunny site and is a great feature! Fruit is a definite bonus!

Starting on the 25th June, look out for Botanical Wonderland Blooms in Seaford as SCIP Transforms the Historic Crypt Gallery for The Garden Show. It will run from Wednesday to Sunday for the period 25th June to 13th July 2025. Full details at The Crypt Gallery, 23 Church Street, Seaford or www.wearescip.co.uk

Prepare to be immersed in a vibrant celebration of nature and art as the Arts Charity SCIP transforms The Crypt Gallery into a captivating botanical arts festival, "The Garden Show," this summer. Known for their bold and insightful exhibitions, SCIP returns with a three-week exploration celebrating all things floral.

Visitors will be treated to a diverse collection of artworks, including the whimsical fine art of Hello Marine, the delicate ceramic creations of Frances Doherty, the intricate prints of Kit Boyd and Lisa Stubbs, and the captivating illustrations of award-winning Graham Carter, each offering a unique perspective on the floral world.

Throughout the exhibition, visitors can also enjoy a selection of films, including SCIP's co-founder Alice Carter's film exploring the local community's relationship with gardens. Indeed, Alice visited Driftwood recently and an interview with me is an integral part of the film she has produced about the community's relationship with gardens.

With live demonstrations and a dedicated creative kids' corner, "The Garden Show" offers a delightful blend of art, hands-on activities, and cultural heritage, making it the perfect destination for all ages to learn, create, and appreciate the vital ecosystems that surround us, all within the atmospheric setting of The Crypt Gallery.

This weekend in Seaford, 5 Coastguard Cottages was scheduled to open for the National Garden Scheme, across both days, at Cuckmere Haven, sadly the venue is now no longer able to open. Please do not go along. For those who have already purchased tickets, refunds will be made by the scheme's Head Office.

There are a number of other gardens open for the scheme too, one of which is Hoopers Farm in Vale Road in Mayfield, open both days this weekend from 11am to 5pm with entry £6. This large south facing garden has an informal flowing layout with colour themed island beds containing mixed herbaceous and seasonal annual planting. See mature trees, flowering shrubs, rose beds and rose arbour.

Another two are Wadhurst Park and Oaklands Farm in Horsham. Full details on all these and more can be found at www.ngs.org.uk

Two fabulous plants in my garden at this time of the year are the dramatic gunnera and perfect coastal plant, *Crambe maritima*. I have 2 of the former, both planted in large containers to keep them under control. The one pictured is in a large container buried in the ground and a second is in a large ceramic container sitting behind a corten steel wall. The leaves are very dramatic and make a real statement in the garden as you can see.

The latter, on top of being a robust and lovely plant for the garden, is edible, too. To be honest mine is there for purely decorative purposes, I've not actually eaten any. Glaucous mounds of this herbaceous perennial can often be spotted growing on shingle beaches, we have masses growing on Tide Mills opposite the house. In early summer clusters of white honey-scented flowers appear that attract



Making a short film for the Graden Show

a range of pollinating insects. You can see they look really pretty and grow quite tall. I have several clumps of it growing in gravel, both in the back garden and the beach garden at the front of the house. The very young leaves and stems can be eaten raw or steamed, but the best flavour is thought to come from plants that have been forced, as you would with rhubarb. It's also a great addition to gravel and coastal gardens, where it'll combine beautifully with plants like sea thrift and kniphofia. For best results, grow *Crambe maritima* in full sun or partial shade in deep, fertile, well-drained soil and cut back in the autumn.

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or book a visit, before 3rd August, by emailing visitdriftwood@gmail.com



The Garden Show