

# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Brugmansia



Hydrangea limelight and Tess of the D'urbervilles



King Charles Coronation Rose

## Looking good out on the patio!

I MENTIONED a photo shoot for the Sunday Times last week but a shoot also took place in the garden a couple of weeks before and the photographer, Jon Santa Cruz, has kindly allowed me to use a few of the images he took, for my personal use, on my website and these Argus pieces. Hence a better than usual image of me this week.

He took this image which I love, of me sitting on the patio at the back of the house, with all my succulents on show behind. Sadly, it won't be long before I have to start putting all the delicate plants away for the winter but still a few weeks to enjoy them before that happens.

This weekend, the National Garden Scheme still has a few lovely gardens to offer readers.

King John's Lodge in Sheepstreet Lane, Etchingham opens today, Saturday, from 10am to 5pm with entry £5. This 4-acre romantic garden looks good each season. From the eclectic shop, nursery and tearoom, stroll past the wildlife pond through the orchard, meadow, rose walk and see fruit according to the season.

Over in Hailsham, Limekiln Farm in Chalvington Road, Chalvington, opens both days from 2pm to 5pm with entry £7. The planting aims to reflect the age of the 17th century property and original garden design. Flint walls enclose the main lawn, herbaceous borders and rose garden. Don't miss the nepeta-lined courtyard, informal pond and specimen trees including a very ancient oak.

A special treat on Tuesday is the chance to visit Withypitts Dahlias which have become renowned countrywide as the grower of the highest quality farmed, cut flower dahlias in the UK. They are used by the UK's leading event florists to adorn prestigious venues throughout the country.

Withypitts Dahlias are in Pump Street, off Paddockhurst Road in Turners Hill and the pre-booked tours start at both 11am and 2pm with entry £15 when you will hear fun tips and techniques to help you get the very best from your dahlias as well as a background of the company. Learn the origins of dahlias and how they grow

beautiful premium quality blooms on a commercial scale. After the tour you can look around as the dahlias will be at their peak putting on a fantastic and colourful display. Full booking details online at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

A not so common plant looking good in my garden this week is the Sorbaria sorbifolia 'Sem' which is a little-used but very useful compact, deciduous shrub. It forms thickets of fern-like foliage, flushed pink-bronze in spring and turning green in summer.

From mid-summer the plants are topped with narrow panicles of small creamy flowers, and in autumn the leaves turn a vibrant shade of red before falling. It is best grown in full sun or partial shade in moist, well-drained soil. The shrub is known for attracting bees, beneficial insects and other pollinators and has nectar/pollen rich flowers.

It is a lovely slow growing, eye-catching shrub which can be grown well in a large container or pot and is also suitable for being planted as ornamental ground cover. Mine is in a large container.

The King Charles Coronation rose my mother bought for me last year has done really well, with several flowerings throughout the season. You can see it looks amazing again this week too. It produces wave upon wave of gorgeous clusters of medium-sized, double, baby pink blooms that contrast effortlessly against the bushy dark green, glossy foliage. This truly is one of the prettiest roses I've grown. Make sure you plant it somewhere you can enjoy its lovely light fragrance that will keep going all summer, and well into the short nights of autumn.

In the greenhouse, the brugmansia seems to have flowered more this summer than in previous years! With its large, scented, trumpet flowers, hanging in abundance from its branches all summer, this tropical shrub or small tree is a real showstopper. Best grown in a large container outdoors in summer or indoors all year, as it needs protecting from winter cold.

Another frequent flowering rose



Geoff Stonebanks in his small but overflowing Driftwood Gardens

is the pretty Tess of the D'Urbervilles which looks beautiful alongside the fabulous Hydrangea Limelight. The latter is a robust, upright, open deciduous shrub with dark green leaves and compact flower panicles. Limelight hydrangea is a shrub with intense colouring: the leaves are yellow-green, stems grey-green with pink flushes, and the large flowers are green, fading to creamy white before turning pink in autumn.

The plant is best grown in moist but well-drained soil in full sun to partial shade. I cut mine back hard in early spring, removing the previous season's shoots to a few buds of older wood. It soon recovers to dazzle again for summer visitors as you can see.

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



Sorbaria