

# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Aubretia



Poppy at Driftwood



Sedum pulchella Sea Star

## It's a riot of gorgeous colour

**T**HERE is certainly a lot going on in the garden at the moment with many splashes of gorgeous colour throughout. I have two stunning gunnera growing in the garden. My recent redesign included placing one in a container behind the steel wall and a second one in a large plastic container buried in the ground.

They are quite amazing plants but generally grow much bigger. With the largest leaves of any hardy perennial and the appearance of a giant rhubarb, *Gunnera manicata* makes an impressive statement. When I purchased mine, several years ago I was advised to plant in a container thereby ensuring it did not grow to its usual size.

Tomorrow, Sunday, June 18, is the inaugural Hastings Garden Festival taking place on the disused bowling green above Falaise Hall, at White Rock Gardens. The event will be showcasing charities and community groups benefiting the local area with green space, gardening, growing and natural wellbeing initiatives. Why not pop along and see what is happening. Acting as a location beacon, the Hastings Garden Festival sculptural feature The Shoot, standing at five metres, will be in position. This natural material structure promises to be quite a sight. Entry to the event from noon to 5pm is free, with donations welcome.

There are gardens to visit for the National Garden Scheme this weekend too. You can drive up to Balcombe on both days of the weekend and see three quite different gardens that are full of variety and interest, which will appeal to plant lovers. Set amid the countryside of the High Weald, see a classic cottage garden with unique and traditional features linked by intimate paths through lush and subtle planting with pollinators and wildlife in abundance, a country garden packed with uncommon shrubs and trees, herbaceous borders, a summerhouse, pond and wildlife area and a restful plot, with places to sit and enjoy a little peace, scent and colour. They open from midday to 5pm.

Holford Manor and Chailey Iris garden in North Chailey is also open over the weekend from 11am to 4pm. The manor house gardens feature herbaceous borders, iris beds and formal parterre rose garden. See a secret Chinese garden, tropical beds, cutting garden and a wildflower meadow. In the Chailey Iris Gardens, walk among thousands of iris in full bloom, showcasing 700 varieties of bearded iris, as well as Japanese *ensata* iris, *siberica* iris and many rare species iris. Many iris available to buy on the day and experts are on hand for help and advice. Full details on both gardens can be found at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

Looking good in my garden this week are the stunning poppies growing at the bottom of the drive. I planted them several years ago now and they flower religiously with stunning large red blooms.

Another beauty is pretty aubretia, a low-growing, evergreen perennial which forms a mat of flowers and is good for the front of a border or better still, tumbling down a wall.

It is fully hardy and flowers best in a sunny spot but it will also grow in semi-shade too. Aubretia prefers well-drained soil and will tolerate dry growing conditions, which is why it is so well suited to being planted in walls and rockeries. It requires just a little maintenance and is trouble free, a great drought-tolerant plant too and although not scented, it is attractive to bees and long flowering to boot.

Mine is growing on the edge of a border on the central path. Aubretia flowers are in shades of light blue, mauve and pink and some varieties have variegated foliage, all are low-growing, small plants.

Growing like mad in the beach garden, I have much *Love in a mist*, proper name *Nigella*.

It is a pretty and easy to grow, hardy annual flower that originates from the Mediterranean and North Africa.

It grows quickly and easily from seed. I have much growing, after scattering seeds a few years ago. The flowers are borne in summer on slender, upright stems clothed in feathery green leaves, and are followed by decorative, large,



Geoff and the gunnera

inflated seed pods.

They make an excellent and long-lasting cut flower, and the seed heads can also be dried and used in flower arrangements.

A lovely new succulent in the corten steel planters has really taken off, *Sedum pulchellum* Sea Star is a low growing, tough perennial plant that produces a mound of glossy green leaves that are covered in pale pink star-shaped flowers that blossom from May through to August.

Stonecrop Sea Star is a hardy variety that reaches a height of between 10-20cm, they are an excellent choice for adding texture and character to rockeries or can be used in general ground cover along pathways and the front of borders.

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



Love in a mist