

GEOFF STONEBANKS

The Driftwood Garden Diary



Keep your garden full of colour as autumn arrives

IT'S not going to be that long before I start taking the garden apart and sorting things out for the winter.

I can't quite believe how quickly the year has flown by.

I'm already thinking about opening next year as the National Garden Scheme requires dates and details now in order to prepare the Garden Visitor's Handbook and County Booklets for next year! It is going to be a very special open garden season, as the scheme will be celebrating 100 years in 2027. I've already committed to opening by arrangement between June 7 and August 1 next summer.

Talking of the NGS, there is a wonderful garden open on Sunday Tidebrook Manor in Tidebrook, near Wadhurst, is opening between 11am and 4pm with entry at £8. This is a beautiful four acre country garden that has been developed over the last 20 years and has outstanding views of the Sussex countryside. In the Arts and Crafts tradition, the garden features large mixed borders, intimate courtyards, meadows, hydrangea walk, kitchen garden with raised beds, a willow plat and a wild woodland garden. A lively and stimulating garden throughout the year, with a real emphasis on autumn interest from annuals, grasses, meadow bulbs and late season perennials. You can find full details at www.ngs.org.uk

You can see me pictured with a pretty yellow trailing plant behind me, it is *dicentra scandens*. *Dicentra* thrives in a partially shaded, sheltered spot with humus-rich, moisture-retentive soil, so it's a good idea to add plenty of organic matter such as garden compost or leaf mould before planting. It will need support such as a trellis or wires attached to a fence or wall, for the tendrils to cling to as

it grows. Mine tumbles over the upright railway sleepers.

A rather pretty grass looking good in my garden is the *Miscanthus nepalensis* which is native to the Himalayas and Myanmar. It forms bold clumps of elegant green foliage. In summer airy plumes of yellowish drooping flower heads are held high above the foliage, as seen in the picture. They persist into autumn and develop into architectural seedheads. It's ideal for growing in sunny borders and gravel gardens. For best results grow *Miscanthus nepalensis* in a sheltered spot and protect from frost in winter, or grow in a container, as I do, which you can move in autumn to a safer spot. Remember to cut clumps back to ground level in spring to make way for new growth.

I mentioned a great wild plum crop last week. At present I have a really good crop of grapes too on both vines in the garden. I tend to leave them for the birds as the fruit has small pits and it's hard work doing anything with them. Grape vines are woody, perennial climbing plants grown globally for their sweet fruit, which is harvested for fresh eating, wine production and dried raisins. They are highly valued both for their agricultural yield and their ornamental appeal as they climb over garden structures, with mine being planted to primarily soften the shed and studio outlines in the garden. To get the best results, vines require at least six to eight hours of direct sunlight daily to ripen fruit and prevent disease.

Most gardens seem to grow buddleja, as they are such a recognised plant for attracting butterflies. One of my favourites by far is the dazzling buddleja buzz magenta, pictured. It is a new twist on a much-loved garden favourite,



Geoff and *dicentra scandens*. Images: Geoff Stonebanks



Buddleja buzz magenta

buzz is the world's first patio buddleja. These attractive, compact plants are loved by bees and butterflies, but won't take over your garden.

It is easy to grow and problem-free with a super long-flowering period. It is perfectly proportioned for patio pots and smaller gardens,

however I have mine planted in the ground so it grows a little larger.

I think one of my favourite plants in the garden this summer has been the stunning hydrangea groundbreaker blush.

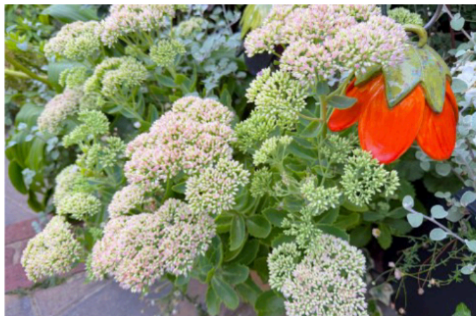
I have written about it earlier in the year too but at present it does

look stunning. It is ideal for those gardeners who love hydrangeas yet have smaller spaces for which the larger varieties are too overpowering.

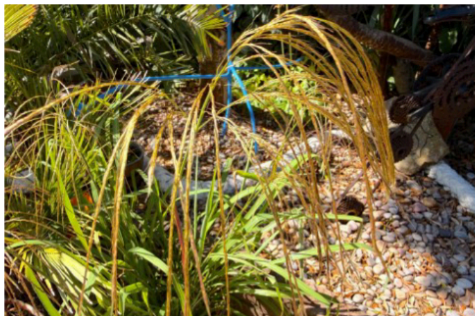
It is an astounding, dwarf shrub which reaches a more petite height and spread of around 40-50cm, perfect for containers on balconies or patios as well as open ground.

Coming into its own in the back garden is the reliable sedum herb-streude. This hardy, herbaceous perennial forms a tidy clump of fleshy, glaucous green leaves and grows to around 40-60cm with a similar spread. From July through August, its star-shaped flowers open as greenish-pink buds, then deepen to raspberry-pink and finally mature to a rich golden-bronze, creating a dramatic late-summer display in borders, rockeries or containers.

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



Sedum Herb-streude



Miscanthus nepalensis



Geoff's grape crop