

The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Voodoo lily



The view from Geoff's desk



Verbena polaris

Giant voodoo lily has flowers that smell of rotting meat

I HAVE decided to extend my openings until August 5 due to high demand. At the time of writing we have seen over 400 visitors but I'm hoping to top 500. In that time, we've sold almost the same number of cakes too. It's been a hard graft but well worth it.

If you are in the city on Thursday, July 25, why not support Stanford and Cleveland Community Garden when it holds an open garden raising funds for Martlets. Please go along and visit to make a difference for those facing terminal illness. The event takes place between 10am and midday. There will be refreshments with home-made cakes, plants and crafts for sale. For enquiries, call 07974 700442. The garden is on the corner of Stanford Avenue and Cleveland Road BN1 6FB.

A lovely small conifer I bought last year which has done really well in its container is a Japanese Umbrella pine. It is a rather slow-growing evergreen conifer, with dense whorls of dark green, linear leaves to 12cm in length and inconspicuous flowers followed by ovoid cones.

It is a compact tree of conical shape, with glossy dark green needle-like leaves with a narrow white underside and an excellent container tree for a number of years.

This weekend you could also visit a couple of new gardens open for the National Garden Scheme for the first time today, Saturday.

Springbourne, in Rectory Lane, Clapham Village in Worthing, opens from 10am to 4pm with entry £5.

This historic 300-year-old south-facing flint-walled garden is a developing plot, divided into different areas including a large pond with water lilies imported from France. Amble across the gently sloping lawns, through the small orchard and see curved borders with mixed herbaceous and rose planting.

Also new is Broad Street House in Broad Street, Icklesham, near Winchelsea, also open today from 9.30am to 4.30pm with entry £6. This is a big garden under constant development with wonderful views down the Brede

Valley. It features a wide variety of trees, a good number of flower beds, a natural pond much loved by wildlife, with a waterfall and viewing bridge. Full details on both gardens can be found at www.ngs.org.uk

We've had some lovely sunny days when I've been able to open up my office balcony window in the roof, giving me lovely views of the garden while writing. The view certainly provides me with endless inspiration for my writing work.

A really pretty plant in the beach garden is verbena polaris which can help transform your garden into a tranquil oasis.

Renowned for its captivating sky-blue flowers that bloom profusely from early summer until the first frosts, this verbena variety brings a refreshing burst of colour and a touch of elegance to any garden setting.

It's ideal for adding vibrancy to borders, embellishing patio containers, or creating a charming ground cover, as in the shingle at the front of the house. It offers a compact growth habit, perfect for filling spaces with its delightful hues.

A birthday gift a few years ago was a voodoo lily plant. They are grown for the gigantic size of the flowers and for the unusual foliage.

The flowers produce a strong, offensive odour similar to that of rotting meat. The smell attracts flies that pollinate the flowers. They are not as difficult to grow as their exotic appearance may suggest however and the subsequent care of voodoo lilies can actually be quite easy.

They are sensitive to sunburn, so partial to full shade is recommended for these woodland plants. It can grow in areas with more light, but direct rays from the sun should not be constant in the afternoon.

The blooms across the garden seem to have gone wild this year, with plants seeming to produce many more than usual.

I have a lovely combination growing in a border at the back of the house.

A really reliable bloomer is the alstroemeria Indian summer



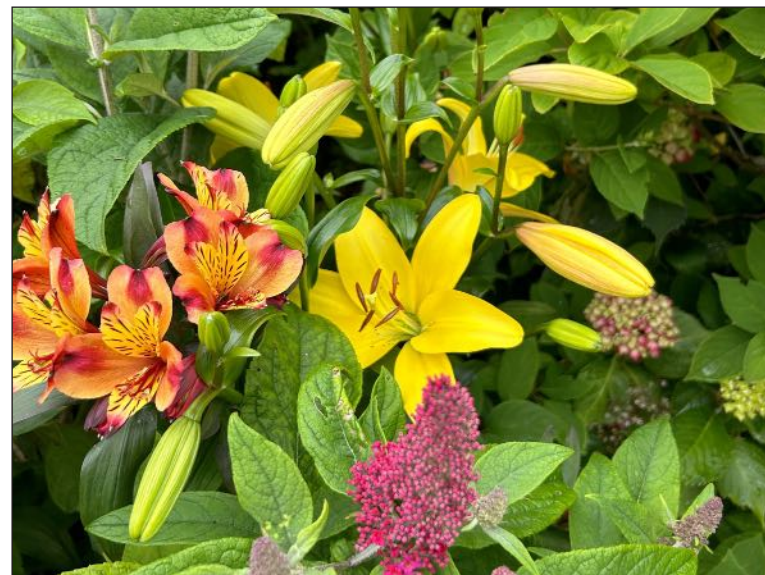
Geoff and the Japanese umbrella

which can keep going right up to the first frosts. In the centre are some really stunning yellow lilies. Asiatic lilies are the first lilies to flower in summer and enjoy a long blooming season which can be up to one month and are a fantastic way to add colour to your garden.

The third bloom is Buddleja Butterfly Candy Little Ruby which bears dense spikes of deep red flowers, a colour which is exceptional for buddlejas and which contrast beautifully with the grey foliage.

While mine is now planted in the ground, it is a dwarf variety suitable for small gardens and ideal for patio pots too and has a light honey sweet scent.

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or email visitdriftwood@gmail.com to arrange a visit before August 5.



Flower mix