

GEOFF STONEBANKS

The Driftwood Garden Diary



Make history by opening your garden

HOW about becoming part of history in 2027? The National Garden Scheme is calling for more exceptional gardens to open in their 100th year, 2027.

Dr Richard Claxton, Chief Executive of the scheme, says: "If your garden is packed with quality, character and interest and is admired by friends and family, we would love to hear from you." The charity is inviting garden owners across the country to open their gates in 2027 to celebrate its landmark centenary year.

Founded in 1927 to support district nurses, the scheme has spent a century transforming private passion into public good. Dr Richard Claxton adds: "Whether you have an historic estate with rolling acres, a country cottage, an enthusiastic village of gardeners, a tiny urban sanctuary or community allotments, we're asking garden owners across the country to help raise vital funds for some of the UK's leading health and nursing charities and to make 2027 a record-breaking year."

So, why consider opening in 2027? Well, you'd be joining a legacy by becoming a part of a uniquely British tradition that began with King George V opening the gardens at Sandringham in the inaugural 1927 season. Additionally, you'd be supporting essential health charities across the UK too. Whether your space is a wildlife haven, a productive veg plot, or a country idyll, the primary criteria are quality, character and interest.

If you think this might be you, prospective garden owners should contact their local County Organiser as soon as possible to arrange a time to visit during the current growing season. In East Sussex, email Irene.willson@btinternet.com and in West Sussex, maggi.hooper@ngs.org.uk. All gardens must complete their official registration by mid-September to be included in the centenary publications.

"Our centenary is a celebration of the generosity of garden owners over the last 100 years," adds the Chief Executive. "By opening your garden in 2027, you aren't just sharing a beautiful space - you are providing a lifeline for nurs-



Geoff opening for the National Garden Scheme. Image: Geoff Stonebanks

ing and health charities that need our support more than ever."

I have been opening my own garden for the scheme since 2011 and have loved every minute of it. You will soon get a passion for sharing your plot with others. For more information on how to open your garden, visit the dedicated page on their website www.ngs.org.uk.

This weekend, you could visit a number of gardens across the county through the scheme. Over in Bexhill, there are 7 pretty gardens opening from 11am to 4pm on Saturday, with a combined entry of £7. Farleys Sculpture Garden in Muddles Green opens especially for the NGS on Saturday too, from 10am to 4:30pm with entry £6. There are two more trails in West Sussex, a new one in Nutbourne

Village with 4 gardens, open on Saturday from 11am to 5pm with combined entry of £10, and 3 gardens opening as Steyning gardens on Saturday and Sunday, from 10:30am to 5pm with a combined entry of £10. In East Grinstead on Sunday, you can see four very pretty gardens for a combined entry of £6 open from 1pm to 5pm. Full details on all the gardens can be found at www.ngs.org.uk.

Looking good in my garden this week are the pretty pink flowers on the sea thrift, *Armeria maritima*. It is typically found growing on cliffs and seashores, but also makes a pretty garden flower. A compact, evergreen perennial, it forms low clumps from which long stems of soft pink blooms emerge in summer. It's easy to

grow and makes a good rockery plant. Its blooms are attractive to bees and make a pretty cut flower. Grow *Armeria maritima* in poor, well-drained soil in full sun but remember to deadhead spent blooms to prolong flowering. Mine are growing in the gravel at the front of the south-facing beach garden.

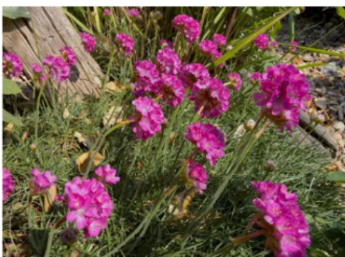
Also looking good, and in the pink, are the pretty flowers of the *Erigeron 'Sea Breeze'*. This is a low-growing, spreading perennial with blue-grey leaves and striking, lavender pink, semi-double, daisy-like flowers with yellow discs at their centre.

Erigeron glaucus 'Sea Breeze' loves sun and sea air; and is a familiar sight around the coasts of southern Britain. Let it flow over

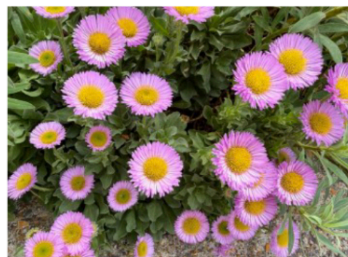
a raised wall, creep through a rock garden or tuck it in the front of a border and let it run. I have several clumps growing in gravel beds in both the front and back garden, where it looks very at home. It produces an abundance of bright pink flowers, each featuring a vibrant lemon-coloured centre. They cloak a spherical growing habit of fresh green foliage and attract lots of pollinating insects. Perfect for growing in a pretty patio pot too.

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

Alternatively, book a visit to see the garden before 2nd August by emailing visitdriftwood@gmail.com.



Armeria maritima



Erigeron



National Garden Scheme tea and cake



Look out for open gardens