

GEOFF STONEBANKS

The Driftwood Garden Diary



Plants that are thriving despite the heatwaves

YOU can see me pictured amongst the planting in the back garden, which, as you can see, is still looking quite respectable despite the drought.

Considering all that the weather has thrown at the plants this summer it is truly amazing they are still alive and kicking. That said, it has been no mean feat to keep them looking their best but this is not quite so important now that there will be no more visitors until next summer. The hosepipe ban has not helped either.

A wonderful comment posted to TripAdvisor last month showed that, despite the drought and heat, the garden still came across as a magical space. Paul Richards from East Dean posted: "What Geoff has created in a relatively modest space is nothing short of extraordinary. This isn't just a beautiful garden; it's the work of a true plantsman with an exceptional eye for design, colour, texture and plant combinations. Every corner is thoughtfully composed, yet the garden never feels contrived. Instead, it feels natural, relaxed and full of character."

A couple of really stand-out plants this summer are amazing eucomis, commonly called pineapple lily and the stunning rose, la villa cotta.

Eucomis have strange, tufted blooms that appear on top of strong, upright stems and look remarkably similar to a pineapple which gives the plant its common name. It's an easy to grow bulb, flowering from late summer to early autumn and is perfect for adding an exotic touch to sunny borders or sheltered gardens. Pineapple lilies also make a great feature plant in containers, like my three pots. They are easy to grow in the right conditions, by

planting the large bulbs in pots in spring then moving outside once all danger of frost has passed. That said, I have managed to leave my large pots outdoors, all winter, over the last eight years, with no protection and they have flowered beautifully each summer, as you can see. It is important to keep them well-watered during summer but dry in winter as they don't like the wet. It is recommended to either dig up your bulbs or move pots indoors in autumn and keep dry until the following spring but as I said I have left mine out. Remember to remove dead leaves and spent flowers.

The other, a stunning rose called La Villa Cotta has bloomed repeatedly through the summer. It is a Peter Beale rose I bought this year and they describe it as a mesmerising modern shrub rose with its bold, large blooms, flaunting a captivating copper-orange hue complemented by striking pink edges, it encapsulates a delightful old-world charm. The flowers, featuring an almost single form, form impressive clusters that create a breathtaking focal point in any garden landscape. This enchanting rose exhibits a bushy, upright growth habit, reaching an elegant height of approximately 120 cm and spreading about 60 cm wide. It is a valuable addition to flower beds, borders, or even as a standout specimen plant like mine is, in a container.

It has an extended flowering period so expect a continuous display of flourishing blooms throughout the growing season. Its commendable heat tolerance ensures that this rose retains its health and brilliance, even in the warmer conditions we've experienced this year. It has lightly scented blooms providing a sub-



Geoff surrounded by plants. Images: Geoff Stonebanks



The fig crop

tle fragrance that can be enjoyed when wandering through your garden. Moreover, this rose boasts excellent disease resistance, which allows for a low-maintenance experience while still delivering stunning results. La villa cotta thrives across various growing conditions. Its ability to

flourish in pots, less fertile soils, and even partial shade makes it suitable for an array of settings. A wonderful addition.

I have a large fig tree in the centre of the back garden and this year it has produced a wonderful crop of big fat juicy figs, some pictured. We have enjoyed

them roasted with some honey and then served with vanilla ice cream, which has gone down really well for a dessert. I bought the tree as a small sapling in a pot from an open garden about 15 years ago and it has been in the ground not for quite a few years.

A rather pretty plant lots of visitors comment on is the delicate sea lavender I have growing in the gravel beds at the back of the house. From a low, dense rosette of broad, leathery leaves, tall stems of small purple flowers rise and wave in the wind in spring and early summer. This tough plant thrives in gardens, including coastal areas. It does best in well-drained soil and is very drought-tolerant when established. Both the waxy green leaves and the flower stems make excellent cutting material for displays.

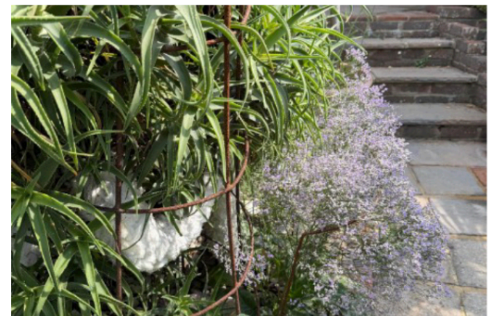
Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or follow both home and the garden on social media.



La villa cotta



Pineapple lily



Sea lavender