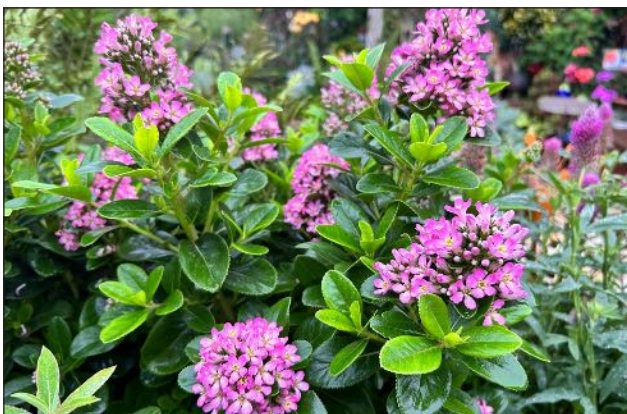


The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Curry plant



Escallonia Pink Elle



Fuchsia Prince George

Prince George is putting on a lovely show in my garden now

ONE of the plants in my garden that I'm sure I developed a liking for through both my late aunt and late father is the fuchsia.

I have several that belonged to them and many others that I have acquired since their passing in 2004 and 2007.

Two showing off in the garden this week are Lena and Prince George. The former is a medium-sized deciduous shrub of open habit. The flowers are semi-double, with pale pink tube, short, broad, green-tipped, pale pink sepals, and violet petals flushed pink at base. It has a vigorous, bushy, lax growth and reaches a height of 18 inches (45 cm). I tend to lift mine and store in a frost free area through the winter months.

The latter is a compact fuchsia with pendulous baby blue flowers. I bought mine several years ago along with another one called Princess Charlotte. The hanging blooms on these compact fuchsia plants are perfect for patio container displays boasting a contrasting, yet complementary pairing.

My Prince George is in a medium-sized container which I protect from frost each winter.

This next week there are a few gardens open across the county to visit with the National Garden Scheme. Travelling east there is South Grange in Quickbourne Lane, Northiam, near Rye, open on both Saturday and Sunday between 11am and 5pm.

It is a Hardy Plant Society members' garden with a wide variety of trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses and pots arranged into a complex garden display for year-round colour and interest.

An emphasis has been placed on planting for insects and they try to maintain nectar and pollen supplies and varied habitats for most of the creatures that they share the garden with.

New for 2023 is the opening of Marchant's Hardy Plants in aid of the scheme on Wednesday, July 26, between 10am and 5pm.

Located in Mill Lane Laughton, this two-acre garden and nursery has a striking backdrop of the South Downs.

It is imaginatively designed and sensitively planted with a tapestry of unusual herbaceous plants.

Full details on both gardens and many more can be found at www.ngs.org.uk

A plant I purchased a few years ago is Escallonia "Pink Elle". From early summer the stem tips are crowded with clusters of tubular pink flowers that are larger than most cultivars.

This neat, compact shrub has a pleasing rounded habit that makes a fine specimen for borders, and an attractive hedging plant.

The glossy green foliage tolerates salt-laden air making it an excellent choice for coastal gardens like mine.

They are hardy and undemanding plants and escallonia is a really fabulous low maintenance shrub. You can see how beautiful the flowers look, set against the striking green foliage. They are best grown in full sun. I have two in the garden, one located close to back of the house that can be viewed from the kitchen and the other in the centre of the garden beneath one of the rusty arches

Whenever I am waiting to welcome visitors to the garden, I tend to sit on the table and chairs beneath the tamarisk in the corner of the beach garden.

Tamarisk is an evergreen plant in warmer climates but in the UK it's deciduous and loses its leaves in the winter.

It's a relatively fast-growing plant and can reach its full size in just a few years. While tamarisk is not considered invasive in the UK, it can spread rapidly in some situations. It's important to plant it in a suitable location where it has enough space to grow and won't compete with other plants.

It is a great spot to view both the garden and the sea beyond.

There is also a second one at the front of the garden.

The table and chairs are set on a small area of decking, accessed by a small wooden bridge, creating the effect of crossing a jetty to gain entry to the back garden.

It is a great place for a little bit of shade too on a hot summer day.

Growing well in the beach garden is the lovely curry plant or *Helichrysum italicum*.



Geoff in the beach garden

It produces dark yellow flowerheads from summer to autumn and intensely aromatic silver-grey leaves.

The curry plant is grown in the herb garden for its ornamental value and intriguing, curry-like scent.

The silver-grey leaves contrast well with dark-leaved herbs and may be added dried to give a spicy aroma to pot-pourri.

My plant however has been growing very successfully in the gravel of the beach garden for many years now and looks perfectly at home.

The yellows blend beautifully with mauves and blues of other plants there too.

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or call 01323 899296 to arrange a visit before it closes on August 11.



Fuchsia Lena