

The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Mock orange



Love In A Mist



Indian Summer

Wander through the gardens and help hospice at same time

THIS past week has seen more visitors flock to my garden and enjoy my home-made tea and cakes, including a couple of larger groups. In most cases, the weather has played ball and there have been some wonderful comments made about their experiences on Trip Advisor. It never ceases to amaze me, listening to some of the feedback, as I see it as my own plot with all its weaknesses and they take what they see at face value and love it.

Next weekend, take a look at a few other private gardens when the annual Peacehaven Open Gardens event will take place. Eleven gardens are taking part this year including 17 The Ridings. This lovely, cash only, charity weekend is being held on June 29 and 30 between 1pm and 5pm. Entry costs £4 each and cover all the gardens on both days. Visitors will be able to see a variety of plots open up, including the Peacehaven Community Garden. Enjoy refreshments and pick up a plant from several of the gardens. All the proceeds from the event will be donated to Martlets Hospice, Hove, and has been sponsored by Paradise Park Garden centre, in conjunction with Martlets Hospice. All the garden openings are listed on their Facebook page Peacehaven Open Gardens and the horticultural clubs website www.peacehavenhorticultural.co.uk. Advance tickets, or maps only, can be purchased now from Alison Standing on 07805 857569 or the Information Office at Peacehaven Town Council in the Meridian Centre, Peacehaven. Over the weekend, tickets can be purchased at all gardens except the Community Garden.

This week I have got some great plants making a show in the garden at Driftwood. You can see me standing in the beach garden with a great view out to the ocean. I have some pretty Nigella, or Love In A Mist, growing profusely in the gravel, this is a pretty and very easy to grow hardy annual flower that originates from the Mediterranean and North Africa. It grows quickly and easily from

seed. Its flowers are borne in summer on slender, upright stems clothed in feathery green leaves, and are followed by decorative, large, inflated seed pods. It is often called a "sow and forget" annual as the seeds can be sown direct into the soil and germinate reliably. It makes an excellent and long-lasting cut flower and the seed heads can also be dried and used in flower arrangements. Well-drained soil is essential for it to thrive, hence it being rather prolific in my beach garden at the moment.

Also looking good is alstromeira Indian Summer, you'll love their beautifully coloured flowers, set against unique rich, bronze foliage. These hardy Peruvian lilies are compact with an upright habit, ensuring that stems are still a good length for cutting. They are perfect perennials for borders and patio containers where they will flower continuously, from June to November and are naturally hardy to about -7C. The trick to extending flowering time is not to deadhead, but remove tired blooms by pulling the stem, the resulting wound then initiates further flowers. I have several clumps in the back garden with one flowering through a rusty metal sphere.

A plant my mother bought me many years ago is mock orange or Philadelphia, an elegant, classic flowering shrub. It's long been a garden favourite for its pure white blooms, which are deliciously scented and reminiscent of orange blossom. They appear in late spring and summer against a smart backdrop of dark green, often arching foliage, sometimes considered to be a one-hit wonder, as it fades into insignificance once the flowers have gone over. But, if you have room, it's worth including in the garden as its flowers are so abundant and their scent so intoxicating, especially early in the morning and in the evening. The single-flowered varieties also attract bees and butterflies. They look good at the back of a mixed border but also do well in a large container, near a seating area or doorway where you can make the most of the fragrant flowers. Some compact



Geoff in the beach garden

varieties are available for smaller gardens, and plants grow well in pots.

You can hear all the gardens open for the National Garden Scheme across Sussex next week in my broadcast on BBC Radio Sussex, at about 11.40am tomorrow (June 23) on the gardening programme with Pat Marsh. Meanwhile, this weekend you could visit two plots making up the Balcombe Gardens across both days, open between midday and 5pm, sadly 46 West Up Cottages is no longer able to open. On Sunday there are also trails to be visited in both Hassocks and Herstmonceux. Please check all the details at www.ngs.org.uk

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or email visitdriftwood@gmail.com to arrange a visit before July 31.



The Ridings