

The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Peacehaven Open Gardens includes Shepherds Cottage



Aquilegia armeria



Mock orange

Garden trails to support hospice

I'VE had a couple of evening visits by groups to the garden this month. Although they have not been here in total darkness, I decided to set up some fairy lights I used on the Christmas tree in the garden, strung up around the old railway sleeper area and the many succulents. I have to say I have been very pleased with the results and feedback on those who have seen the images is incredibly positive. The whole patio area looks very pretty indeed as you can see in the picture. It's the perfect place to enjoy our evening meal too on these warm summer evenings.

This weekend, both Saturday, June 24 and Sunday, June 25, the annual Peacehaven Open Garden trail takes place along the coast between 1pm and 5pm, raising much needed funds for Martlets Hospice in Hove! There are 11 gardens opening the garden gate on both days this year and tickets cost £4 for the whole weekend, ie all gardens on both days. Full details can be found on the Peacehaven Horticultural Societies web page, under the Open Garden tab. www.peacehavenhorticultural.co.uk Pictured is garden 10, Shepherds Cottage. Refreshments and plants are available to purchase too. Tickets can be purchased in all gardens except 9 and 11, over the weekend.

Growing well in the large bed behind the turreted sleepers is a Mock orange or more correctly called Philadelphus. It is 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. Some consider it to be a one-hit wonder, as it fades into insignificance once the flowers have gone over. But, if you have room, I think it's worth including in the garden as its flowers are so intoxicating, especially early in the morning and in the evening. Mock oranges look good at the back of a mixed border, as mine is,

set against the old railway sleepers, but also do well in a large container, near a seating area or doorway where you can make the most of the fragrant flowers. Mine was bought for me by my mother several years ago.

The National Garden Scheme has 2 trails to offer this weekend too. Over in Hassocks there are 4 plots on offer, two of which are brand new for 2023. They open on Sunday 25th from 1pm to 5pm. Three contrasting gardens, to suit many interests, and the local allotments make up the 4 gardens. Combined admission is £6, starting at BN6 8EY.

A little further east of the county, the Herstmonceux Parish trail also takes place tomorrow when 7 gardens will open their gates. 4 miles NE of Hailsham, follow the yellow signs. Once again, 2 of the gardens are brand new this season. There is even a vintage car collection to see along the way and a BBQ lunch can be had at the historic Windmill. Full details on both gardens can be found at www.ngs.org.uk

The beach garden at Driftwood is an integral part of the overall plot and at this time of the year looks pretty amazing. You can see me, stood amidst the flowering plants and rusty metal sculptures. Reaching for the sky behind me are the beautiful flower heads of the acanthus. If you have a wild area that needs leafy ground cover, or a dramatic floral statement in a large border, look no further than acanthus. It loves sunshine and well-drained soil, although it would be equally happy at the edge of tree canopies in some shade. Some species are tall and spread indefinitely, but others are compact, better behaved and so suit a small garden. I have several clumps at the back too. In the foreground, there are dark yellow flowerheads of the curry plant, proper name *Helichrysum italicum*. The plant produces these flowers from summer to autumn along with intensely aromatic silver-grey leaves. 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-



Geoff Stonebanks in the garden

leaved herbs and may be added dried to give a spicy aroma to pot-pourri. Mine are grown because they look good in the gravel garden and are not impacted by the salt in the wind.

Alongside the clump of thrift or armeria, growing at the front of the beach garden, a single, maroon, aquilegia has self-seeded itself and sprung up. Sea thrift, as armeria is also known, 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.

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or book a visit this week to see it for yourself, call 01323 899296 to arrange.



Garden lights on display