

# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Peace lily



Ferns



Angelica

## Beautiful bank holiday blooms and wonderful open gardens

IT'S A bank holiday weekend providing plenty of opportunity for those not going away to get out in the garden. Let's hope the weather is in our favour, as we have a great track record of disappointing weather over bank holidays! I've been busy in the garden trying to ensure it looks its very best for a large group from Winchelsea, visiting on Thursday. The booking was made much earlier in the year, before I knew I was having my knee replacement surgery in April! It is part of a combined visit with another garden in Seaford so I decided to go ahead with the visit. It will be relatively easy, as the group are having tea and cake in the other garden so I just have to let them in and talk about Driftwood. You can see I've tried pruning using a seat to rest my knee in the process. It was quite a successful approach!

Garden openings with the National Garden Scheme are beginning to increase in number as we approach June, historically the busiest open garden month of the year! There are 11 different openings to choose from across the county this bank holiday weekend.

Here are a couple you might like to visit. Hollymount in Burnt Oak Road, High Hurstwood, near Uckfield, opens tomorrow, Sunday, from midday to 5pm with entry £8. This beautiful, seven-acre garden is centred around water. Streams run down the hill through waterfalls into ponds flanked by luscious planting. A huge variety of plants create interest from May right through until October. Thick jungle borders flank the top garden while the beds further down are full of rhododendrons, acers, irises, day lilies and roses. There are pigs, alpacas, chickens and ducks to see too and the secret garden is a must.

96 Ashford Road in Hastings opens today, Saturday, from 1pm to 4.30pm with entry £4. This is a small (100ft x 52ft) Japanese-inspired front and back garden which is full of interesting planting with many acer, azaleas and bamboos. Over 100 different hosta, many miniature ones. Don't miss the attractive Japanese

Tea House and courtyard with fish pond along with the new Japanese bridge and pond in the lower garden too. You can find all the details at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

In a corner of the garden, I have an ornamental angelica which produces large domed umbelliferous flowerheads followed by delicate seed pods. Its ribbed, hollow stems are flushed pink and are traditionally candied for use in baking. As a plant, angelica makes a strong architectural statement, and works at the back of a border or in a wild part of the garden, alongside grasses and flowering perennials. All parts of angelica are highly aromatic and it has traditionally been used for medicinal as well as culinary purposes. It's good for including in wildlife planting as the flowers are attractive to pollinators and the seeds are eaten by birds. Mine was a gift from a visitor several years ago now.

One of my all-time favourite plants in the garden is the fern. They are luxuriant foliage plants that come in diverse forms, leaf shapes and textures. There are evergreen and deciduous types (which lose their leaves in winter), ferns for damp soils or for dry soils such as those found under trees. In fact, there are so many different types that collecting them can become addictive. Many of those in my garden, like those pictured growing in a terracotta trough, came from my garden in North London, over 20 years ago now. They are so dramatic, dying away in the autumn and then producing fabulous new fronds each spring that seem to not to be there one minute and next, sprung up in height.

A lovely rose my mother bought me a couple of years ago is the King Charles Coronation rose. It is a truly regal looking bloom to celebrate his Coronation and is a fitting choice to represent King Charles's rise to the British throne. Its pink double blooms with ruffled petals create a beautiful effect and will last all summer long. Better still, it is repeat flowering, vigorous, very easy to grow and low



Seated pruning

maintenance. As a floribunda rose, it produces wave upon wave of gorgeous clusters of medium-sized, double, baby pink blooms that contrast effortlessly against the bushy dark-green, glossy foliage. Mine is in a large container at the back of the house.

In the front porch is a good houseplant, also named one of the most popular of all houseplants. It is the peace lily which has elegant white flower-like spathes that stand on tall stems above the glossy tropical foliage. Easy to grow, serene and calming, they even help to purify the air, so no home should be without one.

Read more of Geoff's garden at [www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk) or book a visit between 16th June and 3rd August by emailing [visitdriftwood@gmail.com](mailto:visitdriftwood@gmail.com)



King Charles Coronation Rose