

# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Foliage - Chlorophytum starlight



New look - the donated boat



Seaside theme - fascicularia bicolor

## Out with the old boat, in with the new boat

Throughout the course of the summer, it became very clear that my trusty old wooden rowing boat in the beach garden was starting to break up.

It was really only held in place, supported and propped up by other marine objects surrounding it. I had purchased it, back in late 2011, as the centre piece of the front garden. Over time, it had become surrounded by plants and as it disintegrated, many of them started to grow up through it. I had mentioned this, in passing, to a couple from Eastbourne who had visited the garden this summer and they generously offered a replacement, that was currently residing in their garden, that they no longer required. The only problem was, it was slightly larger and constructed of fibreglass, not wood. After mulling it over, I decided to accept their very kind offer and I arranged for the boat to be collected and brought over to Seaford. I've just installed it in the garden and am so very pleased with the finished look! I've dressed it with many of the marine objects I already had around the garden and because it was a tight fit to get it in, it looks as if it's been there forever with the planting brushing up against it. It's even possible to sit in it as you can see.

One of the many plants, brushing up against it, is the beautiful Bromeliad 'Fascicularia bicolor' also known as "Chilean Hardy Pineapple". It is both an unusual and interesting plant that will be a talking feature in any garden. This fabulously attractive, exotic plant is hardy down to -5°C and very drought tolerant too! Originating in Chile, it is a rare and unusual plant that forms an impressive and tough mound of long, thin, grey-green foliage. In summer, the inner leaves turn bright red and a ball of electric blue and yellow flowers are formed at the centre of mature plants. This striking combination of colours will be an astonishing contrast to your autumn garden,

bringing an exotic twist right through to November! It grows to about 50cm so it is perfect for containers or pots, put it in a sunny spot on your patio and it will thrive for years to come. I have 3 of them and they are all planted in the beach garden, adjacent to the boat. Although 'Fascicularia Bicolor' is hardy, it will benefit from protection during the coldest winter weather, especially the wet.

We are getting towards the end of the open garden season but the National Garden Scheme does have just a few more gardens to offer readers. Tomorrow, 25th, The Old Vicarage in The Street, Washington will open its garden gates from 1030 through until 4pm. No need to book for this date. There are 3.5 acres of beautiful gardens to see with the front laid out with topiary and a magnificent water feature, while the back features new and mature trees, dating back to the 19th century. Don't miss the Japanese garden with waterfall and pond. Entrance is £7 and full details can be found at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk). I shall also be live on BBC Sussex tomorrow, talking with Joe Talbot on Dig it at about 1340 for the final time in 2022! I'll be updating listeners about the final gardens to open for the scheme in Sussex this year, why not listen in?

A plant looking good this week at the back, is Chlorophytum saundersiae 'Starlight'

Anthericum, a hardy perennial, better known to most of us as a hardy spider plant. It was shortlisted for Chelsea Plant of the Year back in 2019 too. It can be grown outdoors all year round, I have 2 of them in my back garden and love them. They have very elegant variegated foliage and starchy white flowers appear as the summer progresses. They are really ideal for planting in containers and mixed borders. Mine started life in a pot but now both reside in the ground. This elegant grass-like perennial forms a dense clump of slender, variegated foliage that shoot upwards before



Shipshape - lounging in new boat

arching gracefully at the tips. Unlike its better known, house plant relative, 'Starlight' is hardy to -5C, making it suitable for a sheltered spot outdoors. Throughout summer it produces starchy, white flowers that sparkle at the tips of its long stems. Simply beautiful and able to provide excellent structure and texture. It grows to a height of 100cm. They are best grown in any moist, fertile, well-drained soil in full sun or partial shade. They do dislike winter wet, so move container-grown plants into an unheated greenhouse, we're on chalk, so I find mine are ok in the ground through the winter months, where they have bene for the last 3 years.

Read more of Geoff's garden at [www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk)



Rotting - the remains of old boat