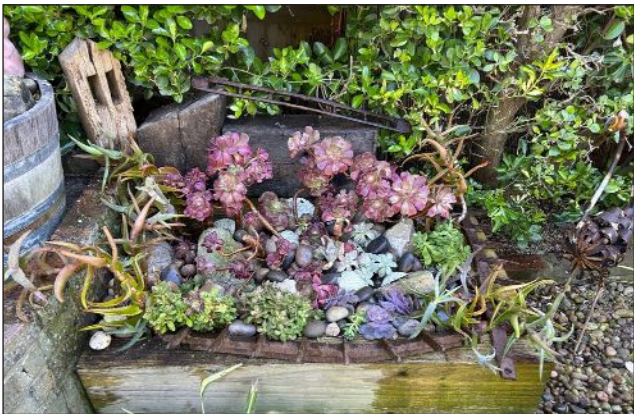


The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Succulent bed



Pear Blossom



A garden aid

Beautiful blossoms and the National Gardening Week

I'VE been very lucky to have two professional photographers visit the garden this month and take a series of images that hopefully will find their way into the media this summer. You can see Jon Santa Cruz shooting me taking the fleece of a plant in the garden as part of the photo shoot. John Glover visited and shot the beach garden at the front of the house! Fingers crossed!

It's the time of year when we see beautiful blossoms appearing on fruit trees and both my Cox's Orange Pippin and the pear tree are looking glorious at the moment. You can see the pear blossom pictured. Once it starts to fall, or the wind blows it all away it looks like confetti spread across the ground!

This weekend there are a few beautiful gardens opening for the National Garden Scheme in the county. Here are four you might like to visit, the last two, brand new for 2025. Banks Farm in Boast Lane, Barcombe, Lewes, BN8 5DY opens today and tomorrow from 11am to 4pm with entry £5. Enjoy a wander around this nine-acre garden, set in rural countryside with extensive lawns and shrub beds which merge with the more naturalistic woodland garden set around the lake. The Oast in Fletching Street, Mayfield, TN20 6TN opens today and tomorrow too from 11am to 5pm with entry £5. This is a 1 acre garden in an idyllic High Weald setting with a beautiful view. Containing year-round interest, with highlights in spring of over 4000 tulips and other spring bulbs in bloom.

Last week, I mentioned the two new gardens opening, Duckyls in Selsfield Road, East Grinstead, RH19 4LP and Kotamaki in Tottingworth Park, Broad Oak, Heathfield, TN21 8UH. Both need to be pre-booked, so you will need to check the web site, www.ngs.org.uk to see if there are any tickets still available.

As regular readers will be aware, this year has and continues to be, a bit of a challenge in terms of my being able to garden. Next week, I go into the Horder Centre in Crowborough for knee replacement surgery, something I am not really looking forward to. Knowing I won't be able to garden for several weeks after surgery, I've been very busy

getting as much done in the garden as I can in readiness. This week, I've reinstated the two orange bistro sets to the back patio providing a real pop of colour as you can see.

In anticipation of some additional support needed this summer, I've just bought the practical little seat on wheels pictured, which I hope will aid me, when I'm no longer able to bend my knees too well! It certainly won't help initially but I'm hoping I'll find it useful further down the line.

The biggest job by far, that I have been trying to leave to the very last minute, is the transfer of my succulent collection from the greenhouse out into the garden. Ordinarily I would do this in Mid to late May, in readiness for the garden opening in June. Sadly, with my knee recovery time, it will not be possible, so I've had to take a flyer and get them all out before my admission. Last week I carefully arranged some of the collection in the raised bed as you can see. These are quite easy to cover with a fleece, should the night time temperatures drop dramatically. All the remaining ones, in individual containers are more at risk, as there are just too many to keep covering and uncovering. I'll just have to take a chance and hope it does not get too cold.

Did you know? Next week is National Gardening Week, it runs from the 28th April to the 4th May 2025, and the RHS is inviting the gardening-curious, first-time and new gardeners to create and maintain their unique green spaces with individuality, confidence and success. The focus of National Gardening Week in 2025 is new and beginner gardeners. The RHS know that creating your first outdoor garden or starting out as an indoor 'plant parent' can be a daunting experience, so they are supporting new and curious gardeners as they start their growing journey. From beginner gardening tips, how-to guides and videos, to a series of easy gardening challenges to help all keen gardeners to develop a lifelong love of gardening the RHS is there to support you every step of the way. Ever since the first celebration in 2012, this annual event has grown in popularity. Each year National Gardening Week sees thousands of



Geoff in the garden

people sharing their love of gardening, hosting events and talking about what they're growing on social media. Why not join in by taking a look at their web site for all the details www.rhs.org.uk

Geoff's garden, Driftwood has appeared twice on BBC2 Gardeners' World, most recently in March 2024. Featured in The Sunday Times in August 2024 and was a finalist in Gardeners' World Magazine Best Small Space. Read over 240, 5-star reviews, on TripAdvisor. Read all about Geoff's trips to Buckingham Palace and Royal Garden Party in 2018 and his work for the community, plus being named a Coronation Champion and third visit to Buckingham Palace in 2023.

Pre book a 2025 garden visit or visit the garden website. Read all Geoff's published writing for various garden media.



Orange pop