

# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Pretty Santolina

Image: Geoff Stonebanks



Fabulous Brugmansia

Image: Geoff Stonebanks



Pink temptation fuchsia

Image: Geoff Stonebanks

## Hot weather drama yields beauty as Santolina and Brugmansia shine

**A** PART from last week's downpour, the weather has been extremely hot in recent weeks and it has been an ongoing drama to keep the plants looking fresh and happy for the visitors booked to see it.

One of the first they will see on entering the beach garden is the pretty santolina, or cotton lavender. It is a popular and easily grown small shrub that has attractive silvery foliage and masses of bright yellow flowers in summer. Despite its common name, this plant is not related to lavender or cotton.

Forming a compact, bushy mound of evergreen foliage, cotton lavender is ideal for border edges and raised beds, and also makes an excellent dwarf hedge. The leaves are finely divided to give a feathery appearance and are aromatic when bruised. Mine is planted in the gravel and overhangs the large rowing boat!

A fabulous plant growing in the greenhouse is a pretty Brugmansia. In some ways, it's hard to think of a more show stopping plant. In summer, this large shrub is covered with huge, trumpet-like flowers in shades of white, pink, orange, red or yellow that can reach 30cm long. Their shape gives the plant its common name, angel's trumpets.

The flowers are deliciously scented, especially in the evening and in the wild. In tropical south America, they are pollinated by moths. Tender plants they can be grown indoors all year round, or outside from late spring to autumn. They can be grown as a focal point in a border, but are best grown in pots on the patio. Mine has stunning orange flowers at present.

There are two lovely gardens opening this weekend for the National Garden Scheme in Woodingdean and Saltdean. Brand new for 2025 is 408 Falmer Road BN2 6LG in Woodingdean, opening today, Saturday, from 11am to 5pm with entry £4. This is a quirky quarter-acre garden that sits between the South Downs and the sea. It is jam packed with trees, a huge range of shrubs, a colourful palette of perennials and a

bountiful vegetable patch. An ever-increasing group of succulents has joined a sizeable collection of agapanthus. The use of Corten steel and a huge array of steel buckets, cans and baths all planted up add to the unique feel of this garden.

Also open today, not far away, is 33 Wivelsfield Road, BN2 8FP in Saltdean with entry £6. The garden was created in 2016, landscaped during 2017 and planting started later that year. Split over three levels, it is filled with colourful perennials, annuals, grasses, and succulents planted in the ground and containers. The formal garden leads onto a wildflower meadow extending onto the downs, giving spectacular views of both the ocean and South Downs National Park. Full details on both at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

A really pretty fuchsia I've had in the garden now for many years is "Pink Temptation". I keep them in a couple of large wall containers and they can be relied upon to flower well each summer. I over-winter the container in a covered side alley with a little fleece on and they come back year after year with the most tantalising, large ballerina flowers as you can see. Lots of visitors remark on how pretty they appear.

Another lovely flower in the garden at this time of the year are the gorgeous black calla lilies. Calla lily, also known as arum lily, is not a true lily. It belongs to the genus Zantedeschia which originates from South Africa. With huge, exotic looking flower-like spathes it is increasingly popular as both a house plant as well as a garden and patio plant. They flower from early to late summer on sturdy upright stems.

Handsome foliage adds to their ornamental value, its lush leaves are wide and bright green, often speckled with white or silver. Most calla lilies are frost tender and the rhizomes or fleshy roots can be stored over winter and then replanted the following spring. Mine are almost black as you can see and grow in a large container which I put in the heated greenhouse in the winter. I've had them now for about 10 years and



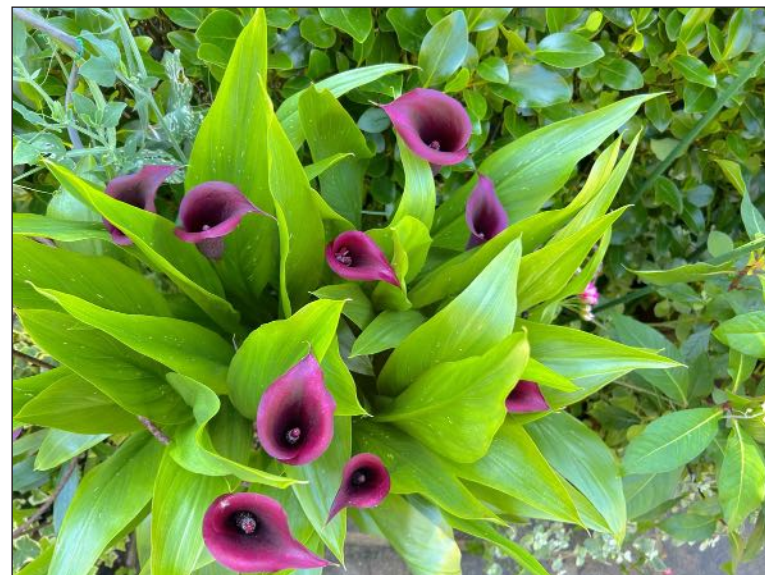
Gunnera in pot by water feature

Image: Geoff Stonebanks

they always look so pretty on the patio.

An interesting plant I've had in the garden now for over 10 years is the dramatic gunnera. I've actually got two, both planted in large containers. The one pictured, behind the corten steel pond, is buried in the ground and the other one sits in a large pot behind a corten steel wall. I love the drama that the wonderful leaves create in the garden. Their only problem, though, in hot weather is their leaves start to droop as the compost dries out, meaning a quick fix of a watering can of water is needed to remedy the situation.

Read more of Geoff's garden at [www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk) or get in quick and book a visit, before 3rd August, by emailing [visitdriftwood@gmail.com](mailto:visitdriftwood@gmail.com)



Gorgeous Cala Lily

Image: Geoff Stonebanks