

# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Aster Island Barbados



Ceratostigma plumbaginoides



The view from the top of the garden

## I had to retrieve furniture and plants from their winter homes

I MENTIONED last week the proposed location filming in the garden by a production company on behalf of C4. To be honest, my initial reaction was to decline, as I felt the garden was looking far from its best and all the summer décor and tender plants had already been put away for the winter. That said, the production company was very persistent and asked me to send over a short film of the garden as it looked at present.

I agreed to shoot and send over a three-minute film, which ended up sealing the deal as the team thought it still looked magnificent. More importantly, I was advised that they were offering a generous location filming fee too, which I decided to donate to my 2024 fundraising for Macmillan Cancer Support.

In the run up to filming, I did retrieve some of the garden furniture and plants from their winter homes to dress the garden, so it looked the very best it could and then had to pack them all away again straight after filming.

So on October 11 the film crew of Scott and Tony arrived along with a presenter, Luke. We were extremely fortunate as the weather was amazing, although quite chilly, it was a beautiful autumnal day with the sun shining through out. The crew were very impressed with the plot, as it generated some fabulous ideas for them to introduce into the seaside garden being designed as part of the programme. You can see the presenter, Luke, doing his stuff and a photo with me taken at the end of filming. They spent three hours across both the back and front gardens taking away plenty of footage and many ideas.

The four-part property series is scheduled to air early next year on C4, so keep an eye out for the episode on a seaside garden.

Tomorrow sees the final National Garden Scheme Garden opening in Sussex for 2024, it's Denmans Garden in Denmans Lane, Fontwell, from 11am to 4pm with entry £9 and children £7. Pre-booking is essential, please phone 01243 278950, email office@

denmans.org or visit [www.denmans.org](http://www.denmans.org) for information and booking.

Denmans was created by Joyce Robinson, a brilliant pioneer in gravel gardening and is the former home of influential landscape designer, John Brookes MBE. It is a Grade II registered post-war garden, renowned for its curvilinear layout and complex plantings. Enjoy year-round colour, unusual plants, structure and fragrance in the gravel gardens, faux riverbeds, intimate walled garden, ponds and conservatory. On site there is a plant centre with unusual plants for sale, a gift shop and Midpines Café offering breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and a selection of sweet treats.

Looking good in my garden this week is a large clump of Aster Series, part of the Island Series, it is a neat, compact Michaelmas daisy. The mauve-purple flowers are a tonic for fading borders from late summer to autumn. This cheery perennial is free-flowering, attracting attention from pollinating insects which are drawn to the nectar-rich flowers. The upright stems and colourful blooms make this a lovely cut flower too. A useful perennial for providing late summer colour at the front of perennial borders. It thrives in fertile, moist but well drained soil in sun or partial shade. The plants will benefit from mulching in autumn, and division every few years to maintain vigour. They will not tolerate waterlogging in winter. It is a perfect plant for cottage and informal gardens, patio and container plants, wildlife gardens, coastal and city and courtyard gardens. I've had my plant for probably 15 years now and it never fails to dazzle in the autumn.

One of my favourite views down the garden at this time of the year is a shot taken from the green garden gate by the greenhouse, looking down the plot towards the sea in the distance. It's just a mass of various green colours and always looks very verdant as you can see.

Another plant doing well this week is Ceratostigma plumbaginoides, a hardy blue-flowered leadwort. The plant is a



Geoff and presenter Luke Millard

low-growing, mat-forming herbaceous perennial with spreading roots, bearing oval-shaped green leaves turning red or purple in the autumn. As you can see, blue flowers appear from late summer. It is grown mainly for these vivid blue flowers, which appear in small clusters and it makes a great ground cover plant and is perfect for adding late colour to the front of the border. It develops tolerance to drought when established too which is a great bonus. It is best grown in a sheltered, sunny border in well-drained soil, mine is actually growing in a large container in a pot on the patio behind the house and was a gift from a friend a couple of years ago. Remember to cut back dead flowers in the spring.

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



Filming under way