

The Driftwood Garden Diary

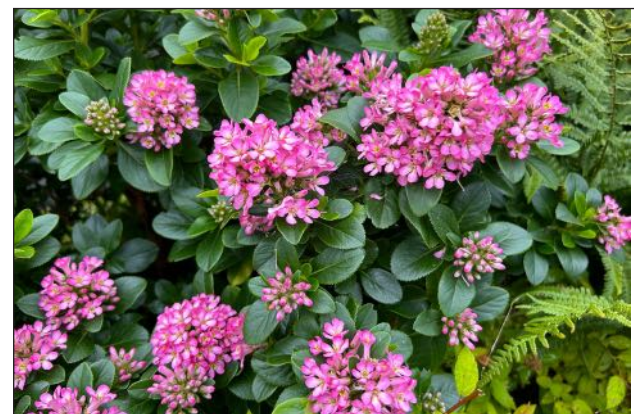
with Geoff Stonebanks



Hemp agrimony



Geraniums



Escalonia pink elle

The vintage rocking horse is still jumping hedges, eight years on

LOOKING stunning in the beach garden this weekend is an award-winning plant, sedum takesimense Atlantis. It was RHS Chelsea Flower Show Plant of the Year back in 2019. It will provide superb ground cover with its fleshy, moss green leaves and delicate serrated edges, with a contrasting creamy yellow border which stays vibrant from summer through to autumn. The pale yellow blooms emerge from pink flower buds, while new foliage bursts from cherry-red leaf buds and the plant creates a dazzling display. Its dense, low growing habit and excellent drought tolerance makes it great in gravel gardens like mine, where it positively thrives in hot, sunny conditions although it will happily tolerate partial shade. The plant attracts a constant buzz of pollinating insects and butterflies too.

Opening for the National Garden Scheme, today, Saturday, there is a trio of gardens open along the coast from Saltdean to Peacehaven. First up there is a pair that are opening with a combined entry of £5 between 11am and 5pm.

The Jungle Garden at 144 Rodmell Avenue in Saltdean is a fun jungle garden, created in 2012, but completely revamped in 2021. The plot measures just 65ft by 36ft but appears larger with winding paths that lead you through lush jungle and insect friendly planting.

Teamed with The Jungle Garden is Tor Cottage at 8 Tor Road in Peacehaven. This large, tranquil and mature garden surrounds a 100-year-old bungalow and has trees, shrubs, plants, bamboos and ornamental grasses. There is plenty of colour and different areas including a vegetable garden, rockeries and small woodland.

Making up this trio today, between 11am and 5pm, is 33 Wivelsfield Road in Saltdean which has its own entrance fee of £6. The interesting plot is split over three levels and filled with colourful perennials, annuals, grasses and succulents planted both in the ground and in containers. The formal garden leads on to a wildflower meadow, extending on to the downs, giving spectacular

views of both the ocean and South Downs National Park. Full details at www.ngs.org.uk

Over the last two years I have focused on using a lot of geraniums in lieu of a wide range of summer bedding. The main reason is that they are far more drought tolerant than conventional summer bedding. They look wonderful when in full bloom and produce so many flowers throughout the summer months. I've used mainly pinks and reds this year.

I can always guarantee that my visitors will all ask about two or three specific plants in the garden that they have, perhaps, not seen before. Two such specimens are Escalonia pink elle and hemp agrimony.

The former is a great, relatively new selection of reliable Escalonia, forming a lovely compact shrub. It produces larger than average heads of pink flowers, in great abundance at the ends of the branches in summer and is very easy to grow. It is a compact evergreen that often blooms again in early autumn.

Its rich glossy green foliage looks great all year and makes a lovely backdrop for the flowers. This recently introduced form is already winning awards and will make a fine specimen for pots too. Its naturally branching habit also makes it ideal for hedging or simply filling in gaps in beds and borders with its barrage of large pink flowers contrasting against the evergreen leaves.

The latter is a vigorous, upright perennial growing to about 1.5m tall, with reddish stems, dark green leaves, palmately divided into narrow leaflets, and dense terminal domed clusters of tiny light pink or purple flowers in late summer and early autumn.

It will grow in sun or part shade. It is a robust plant, so is good within grassland and it can spread quite easily as the seeds are wind dispersed. It looks great in a cottage garden, border or at the woodland edge. Mine is bursting forth above some fabulous ferns. The plant is a lovely versatile wildflower which also has the name of raspberries and cream.

I had planned to close the garden



Geoff at the central path

on July 31 but have now extended my openings to August 5.

You can see me standing in the central path of the back garden, which has garden art for sale, popping out of the hedges. The hedge down both sides of the path is the perfect coastal plant, *griselinia littoralis*, which does well when trimmed to shape and quickly establishes a mature hedge and it is easy to trim, so it's a great low maintenance evergreen hedging plant.

On the left is some bay and a spirea magic carpet. The vintage rocking horse is still looking good, vaulting the hedge, for the eighth year running.

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbsyea.co.uk and email visitdriftwood@gmail.com to arrange a visit next week



Sedum atlantis