

GEOFF STONEBANKS

The Driftwood Garden Diary



Geums, fuchsias and open gardens in the heatwave

As we approach the end of the month, the garden has seen almost 200 visitors come and enjoy the plot and eat my home-made cakes. Pictured are a trio who have been this month.

Paul and wife Claire from Rottingdean regularly read this column and so decided to come and see the garden for themselves, along with their son Neil. They spent a pleasant time wandering around the garden, which they had to themselves, and enjoyed a pot of coffee along with two slices of cake too.

There have been many nice comments made too, along with travellers from afar and those more local. We still have quite a few bookings going through until the 2nd of August. That said, there is still plenty of opportunity for those who have not seen the garden, to book a slot before we close.

Merriments Gardens in Hawkhurst Road, Hurst Green is having a complimentary admission day on 28th June. The gates will be open from 0930 through until 1630. This is a vibrant four-acre haven celebrated for its rich seasonal colour and imaginative planting schemes. Designed with artistic flair, the garden unfolds as a series of interlinked spaces, each with its own character, from sweeping herbaceous borders to the structured elegance of a medicinal garden. Every path invites exploration, leading visitors past ponds, secluded seating areas, and thoughtfully composed vistas that showcase the best of English garden design. Why not pop along?

Looking good in my garden at the moment are the Geum 'Totally Tangerine' flowers on the Geum 'To-

tally Tangerine'. This is a truly vibrant perennial prized for its dazzling tangerine-orange blooms and long flowering season. From May right through to September, this eye-catching variety produces cheerful, cup-shaped flowers that brighten borders and container plantings with effortless charm. Not only visually striking but also hardy and low maintenance. Its compact, clumping growth habit makes it perfect for adding structure and colour to mixed perennial borders, while its bright blooms attract bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. Thriving in full sun to partial shade and well-drained soil, it is drought-tolerant once established and offers reliable performance year after year. It truly combines vibrancy, resilience, and versatility.

Also looking great is the small area planted with Euphorbia polychroma. This stunning plant will flower from April through until July and produce a profusion of acid yellow blooms in neat domes, bearing elegant surrounding bracts followed by purple alliums. It boasts mounds of fresh green foliage that contrast perfectly, adding later garden interest, as its leaflets transform to a warm shade of plum. They are perfect for incorporating into exotic, alpine and cottage gardening schemes, this Euphorbia will no doubt make a bold impact, add texture and powerful vibrancy. They are best planted in full sun. Mine are growing along the central path up the garden.

This weekend is one of the busiest for gardens opening for the National Garden Scheme. Here is a list of venues you could visit across the two days. On



Paul, Claire and Neil. Image: Geoff Stonebanks



Geoff ready for visitors. Image: Geoff Stonebanks

Saturday you could visit King John's Nursery in Etchingham. On Sunday, pop along and see a pair of gardens in Eastbourne, 36 Jellicoe Close and 16 Hardy Drive. Over in Seaford, there is a trail of six gardens to entice you, all signposted north and south of the A259. Town Place in Ketches Lane, Freshfield is also open in the afternoon. Herstmonceux Parish Trail has

five gardens to visit and finally there is the wonderful Holymount in High Hurstwood. Meanwhile, open both days over the weekend is a trail of three gardens in Balcombe, plus Lucutons and The Priest House in West Hoathly. This week garden lovers are truly spoilt for choice. Check out all the details and prices at www.ngs.org.uk before travelling.

A rather unusual fuchsia is the delicate *arborescens*. It is an evergreen species that forms a large, woody bush covered with big panicles of bright pink flowers almost all year. The blooms are exciting, even in the bud stage, starting out lilac-pink before bursting open to a softer pink. Even though it can grow huge, you may prune the plant to any size you wish. After flowering, it makes dark blue, grape-like berries that are edible, hence its common name Mexican Blueberry. They are mildly sweet, tasting sort of like kiwi fruit, but not as sweet. They are supposedly not hardy but I have grown them by the coast successfully. I do put them undercover for the winter.

They enjoy full sun or part shade and can grow to over six feet tall, my three are in containers and are cut back to keep them about a metre tall.

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or follow both him and the garden on social media. Alternatively, book a visit to see the garden, before the 2nd of August, by emailing visitdriftwood@gmail.com.



Arborescens. Image: Geoff Stonebanks



Geum Totally Tangerine. Image: Geoff Stonebanks



Polychroma. Image: Geoff Stonebanks