

GEOFF STONEBANKS

The Driftwood Garden Diary



Storms, sore knees and small triumphs

THE first two months of the year have been so wet and miserable that I've not really been able to spend time in the garden.

That said, there have been a few dry days, enabling me to make a start on the big spring clean-up to get ready for visitors through June and July. There is so much leaf debris around from the many storms we have had this year, so it's a case of hand-picking it all up from the many nooks and crannies behind the railway sleepers and elsewhere. Before we know it, the clocks will be going forward and we can hope for some better weather.

If you listen to Sunday Gardening with Pat Marsh on BBC Sussex tomorrow, you'll catch me talking about all the fabulous gardens opening for the National Garden Scheme next month. The slot will be broadcast at about 11:40am. There are no gardens open for the scheme this weekend, but you could check for ticket availability to either Pembury House in Clayton on its final two days for 2026 (5th or 6th) or the Old Vicarage in Washington (5th) next week with all the details at www.ngs.org.uk.

An integral part of preparing the garden for the summer is the inevitable power wash of all the hard surfaces throughout. This time last year, in the run-up to my knee operation last April, I didn't feel able to do the job myself, so I paid someone to come in and do it for me. Whilst they did a good job, I'm afraid it wasn't the same as doing it yourself. This year I am back to doing it and have made a start at the top of the garden, power washing the area in front of the studio and greenhouse, and the two patios around the summer house. You can see a picture of the area during the messy process and it certainly looks much improved once finished. Just the rest of the garden and a small area at the front to go!

I'm sure we have all come across the adverts on social media for all things we never realised we needed. In recent weeks I've had some pop up extolling



Tidying behind the sleepers. Image: Geoff Stonebanks

the virtues of a terrarium. I can remember years ago as a child when they were very fashionable. They seemed to disappear and now they are everywhere! You've probably guessed it! I succumbed to not one but two from a company online.

The first was purchased as a kit, with detailed instructions and access to videos, clearly showing you how to create your own wonderful display.

The second was a ready-made terrarium with a miniature bonsai inside! In the case of the former, the pack arrived beautifully presented and securely packed.

You can see all the individual packets of soil, sand, gravel, charcoal, a small fern and a clump of moss etc. in the image,

not to mention the lovely glass container in which to create your own garden.

I carefully followed the given instructions and watched a video enabling me to spend an hour or so creating my masterpiece! You can see it pictured. Back in the 1960s I had acquired some Japanese figures to decorate a moss garden I had then, and they have been hidden away now for many years. The male water carrier and the geisha woman with a parasol now look resplendent inside the display.

I've read that the birth of the terrarium began in the early 19th century, at a time when botanical enthusiasts were obsessed with discovering new plant species from all corners of

the globe. In 1827, an English botanist named Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward made an accidental discovery. He created a small glass container which he filled with soil and plants which he discovered thrived in this little glass house, despite being sealed off.

As the 19th century progressed, terrariums became more than just a tool for botanical study, they became a fashionable hobby among the upper class.

Wealthy Victorians would show off their impressive glass containers filled with lush greenery as both a status symbol and a conversation starter.

Much like today's indoor plant trend, they were a sign of refined taste and sophistication. Over the years terrariums be-

came places of creativity, where owners could arrange their plants into beautiful, intricate landscapes. The influence of the Victorians is still felt today, as modern terrariums often feature whimsical designs and a mix of plants, decorative rocks and tiny sculptures.

Today, terrariums come in all shapes and sizes, from geometric glass boxes to hanging globe designs, and are back in a big way. The modern terrarium craze embraces these miniature ecosystems as a way to bring nature into homes, offices, and apartments. Why not give it a go?

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or follow both him and the garden on social media.



Assemble your own terrarium



The new terrarium



Patio cleaning



A bonsai terrarium