

The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



There has been a good apple harvest



The Cecile Brunner rose



A pile of deadheads

It seems a shame to start cutting everything back but it's time

WE have now passed the equinox and are officially in autumn. Lots to do in the garden to make it ready for the upcoming winter. I have been spending quite a bit of time in mine, as the weather has been so good. It almost seems a shame to start cutting it back but needs must. As the weather has warmed up through September many flowers have been blooming again, requiring dead heading to be undertaken quite late in the year. The massed blooms removed make quite a good image.

Opening tomorrow for the National Garden Scheme is Bates Green Garden in Tye Hill Road, Arlington, opening from 10.30am to 4pm with entry £7 and children £3. Pre-booking is essential at www.ngs.org.uk.

There will be home-made soup, cakes and scones, plus light lunches will be available in the large insulated barn. This plant woman's tranquil garden provides interest through the seasons. A woodland garden has been created around a majestic oak tree and the middle garden is beautifully colour themed. The courtyard gardens have seasonal container displays and the front garden is crammed with coloured stems and leaves of cornus and salix. In addition, there is a wildlife pond and wildflower meadow and the whole plot is gardened for nature and wildlife. Well worth a visit.

If you want to see some great autumn colour. High Beeches Woodland and Water Garden is also open for the scheme tomorrow. It's in High Beeches Lane, Handcross, near Haywards Heath, opening from 1pm to 5pm with entry £10 and children £4. The garden has 25 acres of enchanting, landscaped woodland and water gardens with many rare and beautiful plants, an ancient wildflower meadow and glorious autumn colours.

Flowering well at the top of the garden beneath the pear tree, is a pretty passiflora. These are climbing plants commonly

known as passion flowers. Much admired for their exotic looking flowers that are produced freely during the summer months. Some are happy growing in the garden border, while others need the warmth of a heated greenhouse or conservatory.

Passion flowers generally fall into two groups. The first are the hardy types that are able to grow outside in a sunny, sheltered location in the garden, like mine. The second group are tender and you will grow them in a conservatory or warm greenhouse.

So the first decision you'll need to make is whether to grow border passion flowers or conservatory passion flowers, if you have a suitable indoor space. You can try them as houseplants too, but they need a light position and lots of space to grow, as these climbers are usually at least 3m tall.

A pretty rose growing at the very top of my garden is Rosa Climbing Cécile Brunner, which produces tiny, hybrid T-shaped buds that appear in clusters and open to sweetly scented, fully double, light pink flowers for a long period throughout summer. Well known for its prolific flowers, this vigorous climbing rose has good disease resistance and is perfect for an open, sunny wall or large pergola, with mine doing well in my exposed plot.

If you have fruit trees in the garden, hopefully you have a good crop to harvest. I picked quite a haul from my Cox's Orange Pippin a few weeks ago but there are still more to be had. This is the classic English apple, often regarded as the finest of all dessert apples and certainly my favourite. It arose in England in the 19th century as a chance seedling and has inspired apple lovers ever since. It remains unsurpassed for its richness and complexity of flavour. It is the range and complexity of flavours which makes Cox's Orange Pippin so appealing to enthusiasts of the "English" style of apple.

Although Cox is often considered a variety to keep for a few months, it is suspected that

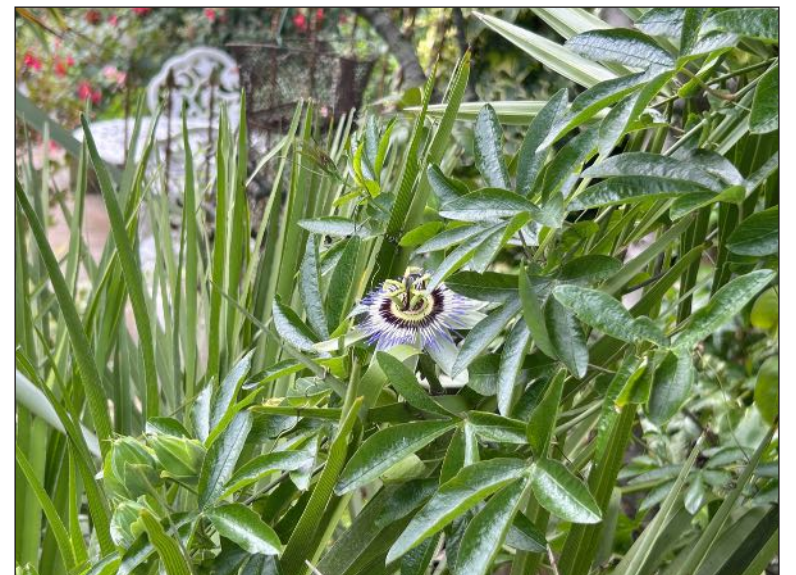


Geoff tidying up the garden

this is a hangover from Victorian tradition, before the invention of modern controlled atmosphere storage techniques, because it does not really keep that long. I have so many that I tend to cook them and freeze to pull out and use through the winter months for pies and crumbles.

In addition to the plants that have to be tended and prepared for the winter, the garden also has a tremendous amount of sculpture and objets d'art, some of which remain in the garden throughout the year and some which I prefer to store in the shed or summer house until next spring. The daunting task of putting all those away has been under way now for the last few weeks and is almost complete.

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk



Passion flower