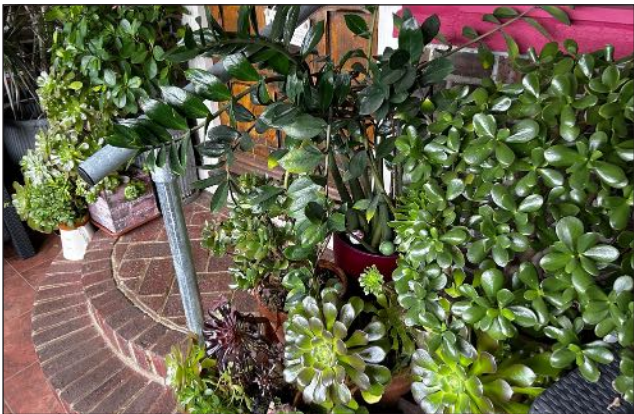


The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Succulents in front porch



Succulents in a metal frame



Agave parviflora

I will be working hard to get ready for visitors from America

THE next few weeks see me working really hard to get the garden ready for its first early visitors from the States on both May 20 and 27, the first from San Francisco and the latter from Philadelphia. Fingers crossed for good weather as they have both booked to enjoy tea and cake as well.

Readers will recall it was my 70th birthday last week and what an amazing time it was. It was announced on April 25, although I knew on the 19th, that I have been named as one of the 500 "Coronation Champions", a wonderful birthday gift. I will receive a specially designed official Coronation Champions pin and a signed certificate from the Queen Consort. I have also been invited to a Royal Garden Party on May 9, almost five years since my last palace visit.

This week I shall be moving all my succulent collection out of the greenhouse plus the front and back porches into their summer homes in the garden. I always feel that the plants look so beautiful all year round that it is a shame to hide them away in the greenhouse where they are seldom seen in the winter months. By placing them in the house I am able to enjoy them all year round. You can see a selection of those in the south-facing front porch, all looking in really good condition. Each one will be carefully transported to the back garden and be tidied with all dead leaves removed into their new homes for the summer. I shall be creating a display around the old railway sleepers and adjacent to the summer house. It will take some time to get them all in place.

A few years ago, I found an old wire frame in a flower shop, which I have used to display smaller pots of succulents. This year I have placed it on the side of the garden shed and placed a variety of small plants in there for display.

They just soften the overall look of the shed which dominates that corner of the garden now I have removed the ivy and vine growing along the

lower half in the patio redesign last autumn. This area gets the afternoon sun and they look resplendent in the sunlight.

Over by the old railway sleepers I have an old garden table with a vintage typewriter perched on top.

A friend donated it to the garden several years ago, other friends donated the old telephone on the bench.

Some of the baby agaves have been potted up in an eclectic mix of differing containers and placed around it as you can see. Many visitors love this corner and the fact it resembles a mini office in the garden.

If like me you love collecting plants then next weekend you could visit the specialist spring plant fair at Borde Hill between 10am and 3pm on May 7. This ever-popular fair takes place when the garden will be looking fabulous with spring and early summer displays in full bloom.

They have an exciting line-up of independent UK nurseries from across five counties in the South East (including several RHS exhibitors) who will be exhibiting on the azalea ring and the plant fair roadshow's own plant doctor will answer questions and help visitors find the right plant for the right place.

The azalea ring will be a kaleidoscope of colour with the deciduous Kurume and Knapp Hill azaleas, while flowering rhododendrons dotted around the garden and woodland will help to inspire keen gardeners. Why not pop along? You will find full details at www.bordehill.co.uk.

If you are up for a garden visit either day this weekend you could pop over to Boast Lane in Barcombe to see Banks Farm, which opens for the National Garden Scheme from 11am to 4pm with entry £5. This is a nine-acre plot set in rural countryside with extensive lawns and shrub beds merging with more naturalistic woodland gardens. Dogs on leads are allowed too. Full details are available at www.ngs.org.uk.



Geoff sorting small succulents

I have been setting out some of the smaller succulents in an old wooden stand that will go by the summer house.

There are many large pots of succulents displayed in the beach garden at the front of the house. One is a fine specimen of agave parviflora which I purchased from a market stall in small pot, back in 2012. Over the course of the last ten years, it has produced many small pups, which has enabled me to create 15 new plants, all of which are on display in the garden this summer. They are so easy to propagate – carefully remove the new growth from the side of the plant and pot up, ensuring good drainage.

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



Geoff's vintage typewriter