

# The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Succulents



Geoff taking a mirror selfie



New planter

## A great summer of fundraising in spite of some challenges

**A** GAINST all odds this year, with my knee replacement and weather challenges, we've topped £182,000 raised for charity since 2009.

I have been very pleased to have raised £4902 for charity this summer, despite having had a knee replacement just before the open garden season began, coupled with all the difficulties experienced with excessive heat and heavy downpours. We welcomed 410 pre-booked visitors to the garden through June and July this summer, having had to delay my published opening date of 1st June by a couple of weeks, to allow me time to recover from surgery. Sadly, this meant visitor numbers and subsequent income was down a little on 2024, but nonetheless, I have been able to hand over £3521.95 to Macmillan Cancer Support and the Macmillan Horizon Centre in Brighton and £1381.00 to the National Garden Scheme.

This year has been tough, just being able to negotiate the multi-tiered garden, dispensing trays of tea and cake to visitors and keeping it looking its best. The garden was awarded a 2025 TripAdvisor 'Travellers' Choice Award again last month too, placing it in the top 10% of similar attractions worldwide! With many 5-star reviews posted this season, this was just one of the complimentary reviews: "An amazing private garden that I have been meaning to visit for a number of years so myself and a few others visited today and wow! I have never quite seen a garden like it, the love and work that has been poured into it is obvious; so small but so large at the same time, great planting and interesting objects take up all available space without it being chaotic. Thanks too to Geoff, our lovely host, the tea/coffee and great cakes added to the lovely afternoon - highly recommended and all the funds collected go to a great cause."

The garden has seen a range of foreign visitors as well, thanks to its listing on TripAdvisor. Back in June, Bev and family from Canada booked to visit while in

Sussex. 4 friends and family from Australia knocked on the door one day, asking to see the garden and thankfully I was in and could accommodate, including tea and cake too. Just before closing, David and his wife from Belgium booked a visit to see the garden as well.

The extremes of weather have meant some days were quiet, as potential visitors choose the beach in preference to wandering around a garden in the baking heat. On the other hand, the stormy weather at times has created its own challenges with trying to cater for visitors enjoying tea and cake in the wet weather. There were several days when visitors had to huddle under a large garden umbrella to enjoy their cake, despite the rain they all seemed to thoroughly enjoy their visit. The garden gate is now firmly closed for another year but Driftwood will open again in 2026 from 1st June to 2nd August.

A lovely trail of six pretty gardens all set within the South Downs National Park opening in the village of Ditching today, Saturday, from 11am to 430pm with a combined entry of £8. You can pick up a map at The Sandrock gardens in the High St. The love and passion for gardening is evident in the six gardens opening. Five are located in the village centre whilst White Rails Cottage is ½ mile walk away. Three of the gardens are mature, whilst the three new ones for 2025 are at various stages of 'work in progress'. Each garden has its own feel, united by a love of bees, birds, butterflies, and wildlife. Full details at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

My garden is still looking pretty good, despite the many heatwaves. All the succulents have really enjoyed the heat and have grown well, pictured are just three of the many varied examples throughout the back garden. Also shown is a lovely new planter of succulents to add to the garden.

It won't be too long before I have to start thinking about relocating them all to the heated greenhouse for the cold winter months. This is one of the really hard jobs now each year, taking them all out in



Bev and friends from Canada in June

the spring and returning them in the autumn. However, the bonus is that they need little attention throughout the summer months and are quite happy being left alone in the sunshine.

I mentioned the beautiful hydrangea Vanille Fraise a few weeks ago but have included another image of it again this week, as it completes its transition from pure white flower heads to these extremely pretty, strawberry shaped and coloured flowers. They really make a stunning impact in the garden every year and before long they will turn a dark pink as the autumn approaches.

The rusty old oil can mirror also makes a real statement against the railway sleepers too!

Read more of Geoff's garden at [www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk)



Vanille Fraise