

GEOFF STONEBANKS

The Driftwood Garden Diary



Driftwood Garden opens for summer

THE moment is here! My garden begins its nine weeks of openings to pre-booked visitors only, from Monday, 1st June.

We already have almost 200 people pre-booked through until 2nd August, so still plenty of time to make your booking as well!

I was especially proud last month to receive confirmation that the garden had been awarded a 2026 Tripadvisor 'Travellers' Choice award.

Based on the feedback the garden received on their site through the previous 12 months, this places Driftwood in the top 10 per cent of attractions worldwide.

Here's hoping we get lots of five-star reviews again this season.

Additionally, at the beginning of the month, The English Garden Magazine published a feature online entitled, 11 of Britain's most extraordinary coastal gardens every garden lover should visit.

My garden was included in the list at number nine, pretty amazing.

In the garden this week, the tiny red, wild plums are looking good on the tree.

The tree was a beautifully wrapped, boxed gift from my mother for Christmas a few years ago.

A Wild Plum tree looks stunning in any garden and is treasured for its abundance of pale pink flowers which blossom in early spring.

In autumn, the deep-red, sweet plums can be eaten straight from the tree!

This deciduous tree naturally sheds its leaves every autumn and will remain in its dormant phase all winter.

Fresh, new leaves will grow in spring and it's well worth the wait.

This Wild Plum tree is quite happy to be lightly pruned in early spring and may reach a height of 3 metres in 10 years, if allowed to grow naturally.

Mine is in a large container on the patio so has been kept well pruned.

Dandelions are an excellent, highly nutritious, and safe food for tortoises, offering a great source of calcium, fibre, vitamins A and C, and iron to support healthy shell growth and digestion.

Both leaves and flowers can be fed as a staple part of a varied diet, though they should be balanced



Geoff Stonebanks with the 2026 Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice award

with other greens, our tortoise, Hector, enjoys nibbling on them too.

For that reason, not many flower heads make it to the stunning seed head you can see pictured in the garden.

There have been many Rose chaffer beetles in the garden in recent weeks. With striking, iridescent bodies that shimmer like oil slicks in the sunshine, rose chafers are easy to spot as they crawl among the flowers on summer days.

The adults have iridescent emerald green and purple-bronze in colour, and are covered in fine hairs.

They are large beetles, measuring around 20mm in length, and have a V-shape on the back, where the wing cases meet.

These beetles love the sun, so keep an eye out for them crawling along

flowers on warm, sunny days.

In my garden, they seem to favour the white bottlebrush, pictured and the stunning iris in the beach garden.

The blue irises growing in the gravel garden at the front of the house have multiplied significantly since a local friend gave me some about 10 years ago. You can see how stunning they are.

This summer, the National Garden Scheme is inviting us all to be part of their Big British Garden Survey.

The aim is to help them map the biodiversity in gardens across Britain.

With 2.5 million acres of garden, their role is vital in supporting the wider biodiversity of plants and animals in the UK.

By taking part, you can reveal the

hidden wildlife in your garden.

Gardens are an extraordinary place for wildlife and the scheme is excited to invite you to take part in this new collaboration between the National Garden Scheme and the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (UKCEH).

This project aims to celebrate the role that gardens play in providing space and resources for wildlife and the survey runs until 30 September 2026. Check out the details at ngs.org.uk to take part.

This weekend, why not visit Skyscape through the scheme, at 46 Ainsworth Avenue, Ovingdean, BN2 7BG.

This is an amazing 250ft south-facing rear garden on a sloping site which has developed over the past 13 years and features an orchard,

flower beds, wildlife ponds, and planting with bees and wildlife in mind.

What's more, owner Lorna has some great plants for sale including succulents that are not readily available in garden centres, e.g. Delosperma and the Jelly bean succulent Sedum Rubrotinctum plants.

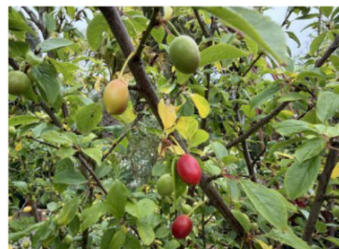
She also has Echinium Candicans, grown from seed and Geranium Maderense growing in the garden for people to see and purchase.

The garden will be open both Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st from 1pm to 5pm with entry £5.

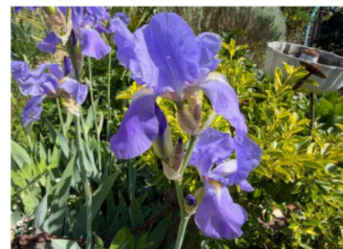
Full details at ngs.org.uk.

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

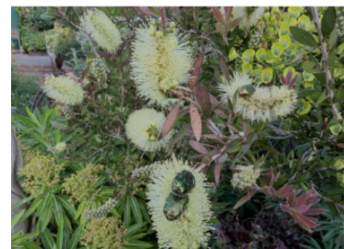
Book a visit to the garden by emailing visitdriftwood@gmail.com.



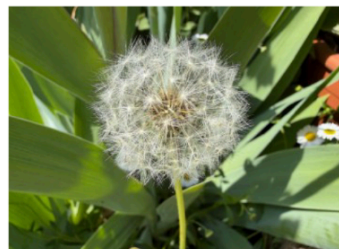
Wild plums



An iris in the beach garden



Chaffer beetles on the white bottlebrush



A dandelion seed head