

The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Hostas



Limelight and Butterfly Heaven



Sorbaira sorbifolia

It has been an amazing summer with hundreds of lovely visitors

WE'VE had an amazing summer here at Driftwood, with almost 500 visitors across the ten weeks we have been open.

Many new faces have appeared but equally, many old familiar faces, like those pictured with me, on their visit last month, Pam, Pete, Pauline and Bob.

They have been visiting the garden for almost ten years. Their usual haunt for tea and cakes is the summer house at the top of the garden, which always rings with laughter on each visit. Pam is a regular reader of this column too, so good morning Pam!

Looking wonderful in the garden this week are the stunning, almost black calla lilies. They produce incredibly beautiful deep purple, trumpet-like blooms each summer creating the perfect contrast alongside the striking green foliage. They work well, grown singly, or like mine, several in the same pot. I remove the pot to the heated greenhouse through the winter and bring them out again, when all risk of frost has passed.

This weekend why not pop out to Laughton and visit Rose Cottage, opening for the National Garden Scheme later today, Saturday, from 1pm to 5pm. This is a rare opportunity to access a nurseryman's private garden, packed with unusual examples of herbaceous perennials and grasses. It is an informally planted one-acre garden subdivided by strong structural shaped hedging and surrounding an old cottage. Multiple densely planted borders with new plantings are on show each year. Pelham Plants nursery forms part of the two-acre woodland edge site. Alternatively, take a trip to Penns in the Rocks in Groombridge, near Tunbridge Wells open between 2pm and 6pm and maybe take in a chat with Chris Sutton, who has been the head gardener there for 25 years. Full details on both gardens can be found at www.ngs.org.uk.

This year, my three pots of hostas have done really well, producing many pretty flowers. I have been extremely lucky that they have not been too damaged by slugs and snails. These shade-loving plants are primarily grown for their

beautiful foliage. There's a vast range of cultivars to choose from with leaves in all shades of green as well as dusky blues and acid yellows, sometimes variegated or flashed with cream or gold, ruffled, smooth or distinctively ribbed. Many also produce small trumpet-shaped mauve or white flowers in summer.

A pretty small shrub in my garden that I have kept in a large container, is sorbaria sorbifolia. This plant provides nectar and pollen for bees and the many other types of pollinating insects. It is a small, compact, thicket-forming shrub which has many upright stems and a distinctive leaf colouring. They are yellow-green and flushed with bright reddish-pink and bronze in spring. The leaves become greener in summer but redden in autumn with good light aiding its colouring. Flowers are borne in stiff, erect, rather narrow panicles of small white flowers in summer as you can see in the picture. It is very low maintenance and generally pest free, plus a perfect addition to a coastal garden.

A lovely combination on show at Driftwood at the moment is the border brimming with buddleia "Butterfly Heaven" and hydrangea paniculata "Limelight". The former, commonly called the butterfly bush, is a deciduous shrub that is native to thickets on mountain slopes, limestone outcrops, forest clearings and rocky stream banks in China. It typically grows to 6ft to 12 feet tall. It is noted for its bushy habit, arching stems, showy, fragrant flowers and vigorous growth. Spike-like terminal and axillary flower clusters bloom from early to late summer, sometimes to the first frost. Flowers are densely clustered in showy cone-shaped panicles from 6in to 18in long. As the common name suggests, they are very attractive to butterflies and bees. Mine has been in the ground for many years now and each summer weaves its way through the hydrangea and blends in beautifully. The only problem is it can get battered by strong winds as it stands so tall in that corner of the garden.

Limelight hydrangea is an



From left, Pam, Peter, Geoff, Pauline and Bob in the garden

upright shrub with intense colouring. Its leaves are yellow-green, stems grey-green with pink flushes and the large flowers are green, fading to creamy white before turning pink in autumn. It is an excellent shrub for a small garden and the large blooms make good cut flowers too. You can grow limelight hydrangea in moist but well-drained soil, in full sun to partial shade. I cut mine back hard in early spring, removing the previous season's shoots to a few buds of older wood. They have done really well for several years now and began life in the garden in a couple of large containers

Read more at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or get in quickly by booking a visit before the garden closes on Friday, August 11, by emailing visitdriftwood@gmail.com or calling 01323 899296.



Black calla lily