

# I'm in the GARDEN

Take a peek at Geoff Stonebanks' feature-filled coastal plot in East Sussex



You can explore more of Christmas-lover Geoff's plot on Insta @geoff\_stonebanks

**\*I share my garden with...**

hundreds of paying visitors every summer, raising funds for both Macmillan Cancer Support and the National Garden Scheme – more than 23,000 have visited since we first opened in 2009. The rest of the year, it's shared with my partner of 24 years, Mark, our loveable rescue terrier, Chester, and our 100-year-old tortoise, Hector.

**\*My garden is...**

a coastal plot, with the ocean just a quarter of a mile away. We experience extreme weather conditions that require a careful choice of planting to cope with the salt-laden wind. The front beach garden contains a large rowing boat and marine-inspired objets d'art, interspersed with imaginative planting. The rear is an eclectic mix of coastal and cottage, across several levels, and varied garden rooms, all dressed with a large collection of art.

**\*My inspiration...**

has always been a personal desire, as a total garden novice when I began back in 2007, to create something unique and inspiring that looks good all year round, despite the challenging

impact of the seaside weather – that, along with a sprinkling of inspiration from both my late father, Ron, and his late sister, my auntie Margaret, who had lovely gardens. I read the hundreds of reviews written on Tripadvisor by my visitors, which in turn further inspire me, year on year, to keep going.

**\*I use my garden for...**

the benefit of others, inviting visitors in to enjoy its delights, then handing over the proceeds to charity, with more than £170,000 raised to date. Mark and Chester love sitting in it; something I rarely do, as I soon spot something that needs doing.

**\*My best garden moment was...**

without doubt, experiencing the sheer joy of it featuring on *BBC Gardeners' World* twice, in 2016 and 2024, appearing live on *Good Morning Britain* with weather girl Laura Tobin, delivering all her forecasts that morning from the garden, and the charity work I do, which has led me to be invited to two Royal Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace and an amazing Macmillan evening reception at the Palace with the then Prince Of Wales. And, back in October, a national TV channel used it

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas on the sleeper-bound patio



Come rain or shine, I do like a potter in the beach garden



This garden guest is as potty about gardening as me!



for some location shooting for an upcoming programme in the new year!

**\*My favourite area is...** the railway-sleeper-bounded patio behind the house. A previous downstairs bedroom has been turned into a garden room, looking out over the patio, which can now be appreciated all year round.

**\*My current obsession is...** succulents. I have hundreds of aeoniums and agaves, which I have to put away for the winter, but I dress the garden with them through the summer months.

**\*My best buy was...** a square wooden patio set from the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2002. It cost the earth, as I recall, but it has weathered well and looks

stunning on the patio behind the house, and blends well with the railway sleepers.

**\*My favourite plant is...** mangave, a fairly new innovation plant for the garden. I have a current collection of 10, with the newest bought this year called 'Praying Hands'.

**\*My latest project is...** an ongoing one, as I've recently spent a lot of time and money changing the back garden to cope with my ageing – I'm 72 in April – and to make life a little easier to cope with climate change.

**\*My top tip is...** always do what your heart and your instincts tell you to do. In my world, plants have two choices – they sink or swim – but, if you care for them, in my experience, they will thrive.

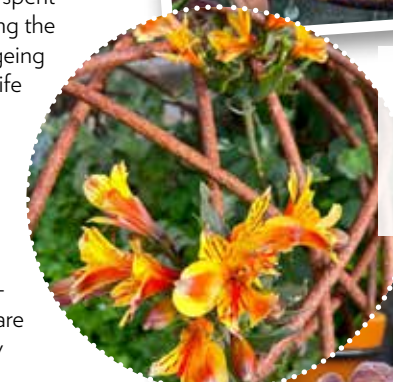
**\*What my garden means to me...** It's an extension of my very being and has brought me immense joy since we moved from London, back in 2004, when I got the chance to retire early at 51. It has generated many new friends, who visit year after year, but, more importantly, it has become a vehicle to raise much-needed funds for charity and has become well-known and received much media attention, which is equally satisfying.

\* The garden will open to the public from June 1-August 3, 2025. Find out more at [driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://driftwoodbysea.co.uk)

**GET IN TOUCH**

Tell us all about your garden by emailing [moderngardens@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:moderngardens@bauermedia.co.uk)

This Peruvian lily has taken quite a shine to a rusty sphere



Succulents are packed into every available spot!



Camellia 'Yuletide' adds festive feels



A corner of upcycling heaven



The succulents appreciate a bit of summerhouse shelter, and so do I!



Hector is a bit of a shell-ebrit around here



A sweet spot for tea & cake



I love the warmth and soothing sounds of the Corten water feature

