



Green and pleasant

IN April the weather tends to remain unpredictable and if previous years are anything to go by, we can experience anything from a possible heatwave to ground frosts and sleet, so, be prepared. The best protection for tender vegetables and bedding plants, if frost strikes, is a cloche or a horticultural fleece. Ensure you cover the tender plants until the frost or cold weather has passed.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

On the other hand, warmer days can see slugs and snails making an appearance and leaving their mark. They view the young shoots of Delphiniums, Hostas, lettuce and the like as the equivalent of caviar, so make sure you protect any new growth you see.

April at Driftwood

This is the month when I start to empty my garden shed, summer house along with my front and back porches, of their carefully stored treasures. Plants and sculpture that have been carefully protected in their winter homes, start to spill out, back into the garden. This year it is going to be interesting finding new homes, as the garden landscape has changed significantly since last summer, with the creation of the sunken garden and newly paved area

at the back of the house. Pictured in the header are some fabulous blue birds and large blue metal railings that adorn the gravel beds at the top part of the garden.

It is all going to be a bit of a tight fit this season but I'm confident it will all find a home. Come and see for yourselves when we open in June and July, full details on my website.

National Garden Scheme

Easter falls later this month and the scheme has lots of gardens beginning to open for visitors. Saturday the 16th sees six secret gardens open in Winchelsea. On show will be many different styles, large and small, secret walled gardens, spring bulbs, tulips, roses and herbaceous borders. The gardens will be open from 1:00pm through until 5:30pm and refreshments will be available in *Winchelsea New Hall*. Entry cost is £8 for all gardens with children free.

In Seaford, *Cupani Garden*, 8 Sandgate Close, opens on the 20th and 24th of the month from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. It is a small tranquil heaven with a delightful mix of trees, shrubs and perennial borders. The garden has undergone a major renovation through 2020 and 2021. Entry will be £5 with children free and home-made teas served. If you book ahead, you can have lunch too.

Full details on all gardens opening can be found at www.ngs.org.uk

Queens Green Canopy and Platinum Jubilee

Some readers may have heard of the *Queen's Green Canopy*, a unique tree planting initiative created to mark Her Majesty's *Platinum Jubilee* this year, which invites people from across the United Kingdom to "Plant a Tree for the Jubilee". I rose to the challenge and planted a small olive tree at the top of the garden which is now marked with a bronze plaque commemorating the event. The tree has also been plotted on the *Queen's Green Canopy* map.

I plan to open my garden, by appointment, throughout the *Platinum Jubilee* long weekend, 2nd to 5th June. Full details are on my web site but visitors can expect Jubilee decorated cakes, all served on vintage china with beverages in vintage cups and saucers by volunteers in the garden. Who knows, you may well have an unexpected encounter and photo opportunity with Her Majesty too!

Houseplants

Many houseplants are easy to grow, are long lived and can be very rewarding. Whether you are a fan of large architectural plants to use as focal points in a room, miniature plants for growing in terraria, or fascinated by collecting and growing a particular group of

plants like orchids or cacti, there are houseplants available to suit everyone's tastes. I've got over 90. Assorted plants in my house, increased to over 150 when I add in those stored in the porches, through the winter months, from the garden.

Most houseplants are tolerant of many conditions, choose from those suitable for sunny or shady areas. They can be ideal for gardeners with homes lacking in outdoor space and there is a wide choice for rooms with high humidity such as bathrooms and many large-leaved architectural forms for a modern look. What's more many are addictive and very collectable.

The key factor in looking after your collection is to know when to water. This should be done when the surface of the compost becomes dry, drier pots feel lighter than wet ones. Don't just water routinely, check that the pot needs water first. I tend to use a meter to insert in the compost telling me how damp the compost is. Remember, pots dry out faster in winter when the atmospheric humidity is lowered by central heating. Plants in a cool room will need watering less often than plants in a warm room.

It is always good to bring water to room temperature before use, particularly in winter, as cold water can kill. Water the pot thoroughly so that water escapes from the drainage hole.

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

Geoff's garden, Driftwood has appeared on BBC2 *Gardeners' World*, was a finalist in *Gardeners' World Magazine Best Small Space* and a finalist in *Lewes District Business Awards 2018* as 'The Tourist Destination of the Year'. Read the amazing 5-star reviews on TripAdvisor. Amazing feature in *Coast Magazine* and an American magazine, *Flea Market Garden Style*. Read all about Geoff's trips to Buckingham Palace and Royal Garden Party in 2018 and his work for the community.