



Green and pleasant

DARE I say it? The cold chill of winter has passed, spring is finally in evidence, there are daffodils and flowering trees beginning to bloom, however we can expect the inevitable April showers this month, I'm sure, with hopefully, a few sunny days as well but do keep an eye out for frosts. April also brings with it longer days and occasionally milder weather. Now is the perfect time of the year to undertake outdoor painting jobs such as exterior walls, garden fences and to give your garden furniture a new lease of life with a coat of varnish, paint or a good scrub down.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

Other April jobs might involve giving your greenhouse a thorough scrub with hot soapy water to get rid of pests and diseases and let in more light. If you have hard landscaping then drag out the pressure cleaner and refresh your patios, drive and path. This month sees the Easter weekend too, from the 7th to the 10th, giving us all a long weekend to spend in the garden. Let's hope the weather is kind to us so we can get on with the jobs in hand.

National Garden Scheme

There are a few gardens opening for the scheme throughout April, notably *Butlers Farmhouse* in Herstmonceux on 1st and 2nd, *The Garden House* in Brighton on the 21st and 22nd, *The Oast* in Mayfield on the 22nd and 23rd, *Fairlight End* in Pett on 26th, *Banks Farm* in Barcombe and *King Johns Lodge* in Etchingham both on the 29th and 30th, to name but a few. Check out all the details at: www.ngs.org.uk. For regular garden visitors, remember that there are many additional gardens that only open for the scheme by arrangement only. Check those, local to you, on the website.

My to do list at Driftwood

Last month, I completed the dreaded task of pressure cleaning all the hard surfaces in the front and back garden, in preparation for dressing the plot with my vast collection of garden art and sculpture, much of which is put away in the garden shed and summer house to protect it from the winter weather. I love this time of the year starting to pull it all out as I tend to forget what has been stored. It is always a treat to rediscover pieces, clean them up and find them a home outdoors for the summer months. I try and relocate them in different places each year, as it really helps to give a different feel or vibe to the garden, really important in the case of returning visitors, who don't want to see the same vistas each year!

It never ceases to amaze me what I have, much of which has been curated over the last 25 to 30 years. This stage of my garden preparations always seems to me like dressing a film set, creating little set pieces, combining plants, shrubs and art into one.

As mentioned above, I shall be transferring my collection of succulents from the greenhouse into the garden for the summer and will then need to give it a thorough clean. Each year I seem to amass more and more of these interesting plants. The house certainly breathes a sigh of relief, as many are also stored in both the front and back porches of the house too.

Arlington Bluebell Walk 2023

The Bluebell Walk is managed by John McCutchan with the support of *The Bluebell Walk Advisory Group*, comprising of members of his family and others committed to ensuring that the *Arlington Bluebell Walk* (pictured

in header) continues to raise money for local charities. This year it celebrates its 50th year. It could not operate without the participation of the many local charities, who welcome their visitors and offer them delicious refreshments every day they are open. It has been opening since 1972 and over time has developed into seven interesting walks over three working farms. A circular walk of 1100 metres or 2/3 a mile in *Beatons Wood* has been made suitable for wheelchair users. This is where you see white anemones followed by the vistas of bluebells, established over centuries. On this walk there are seats for you to enjoy the peace and tranquility of this oak and hornbeam ancient wood. Along the walks there are signs illustrating the flora and fauna of the countryside for your information. At neighbouring *Parkwood Farm* (2.75 mile walk there and back), milking of the large dairy herd can be seen from a special viewing gallery every afternoon between 3:00pm and 5:00pm.

To date, the walk has raised an incredible £890,000, pushed to £1.5m, if account is taken of inflation over that period. Full details on dates and prices can be found at: www.bluebellwalk.co.uk

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.