



# Green and pleasant

**APRIL'S here and spring has sprung at last! As the weather warms up and early flowers start to bloom, all of a sudden there's a load of jobs to do outside. This month, there's plenty to sow and grow in your garden and greenhouse. But there's lots more to do besides sowing and planting out, especially in my eclectic garden. Tulips pictured in the header looking good at Driftwood this month too.**

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

**This month provides us with many of our favourite spring flowers to enjoy but the weather can be unpredictable. We can have anything from a heatwave to ground frosts and sleet, so be prepared. The best protection for tender bedding plants, if frost strikes, are cloches or a horticultural fleece. 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.**

## Caring for Hellebores

I have some magnificent hellebores in my beach garden which are starting to fade. Depending on how they look, April is a good time to cut down their stems. The new growth can be seen at the base of the plant and care is needed to ensure this is not snipped instead. I have the taller hellebore, *argutifolius* or the Corsican hellebore and it is prone to flop all over the place. It is hard to stake, so best chopped, taking off the flower and stalks down to the ground although the other types Hellebores can be left alone.

## The National Garden Scheme

There are several plots open for the scheme this month across the county but here are three of them you may like to visit. First up, *The Garden House* at 5 Warleigh Road in Brighton, opening on Friday 11th and

Sunday 13th from 1pm to 5pm with entrance £6. This is one of Brighton's secret gardens aiming to provide year-round interest with trees, shrubs, herbaceous borders and annuals, fruit and vegetables. It's a friendly garden, with a touch of magic to delight visitors, above all it is a slice of the country in the midst of a bustling city. Plants for sale too.

Over now in Lewes there is *Banks Farm* in Boast Lane, Barcombe, opening both days over the weekend of 26th and 27th from 11am to 4pm with entry £5. This 9 acre garden is set in rural countryside with extensive lawns and shrub beds which merge with the more naturalistic woodland garden set around the lake. An orchard, vegetable garden, ponds and a wide variety of plant species add to an interesting and very tranquil garden.

The third is *The Oast* in Fletching Street, Mayfield also open both days of the same weekend from 11am to 5pm with entry £5. Wander through a 1 acre garden in an idyllic High Weald setting with a beautiful view. There is year-round interest, with highlights in spring. This month there should be over 4000 tulips and other spring bulbs bloom. Enjoy the woodland-edge walk, wildlife pond, vegetables and soft fruit, along with quality homegrown plants for sale. Full details on all the gardens can be found at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

## New Garden Talk

For any readers that might be looking for people to come along and provide garden talks to their horticultural society, garden club or other club from the autumn into 2026, they may be interested to note that I have now created a brand new talk entitled

"Succulent Obsession", a presentation on succulents and how you can use them in your garden. My other two talks currently available are "From City Courtyard to Seaside Sanctuary", the story of my garden move from London to the coast and "Gardening by the Sea", a talk about plants that have worked well for me in my coastal plot. All last approximately 1 hour and my fee is £105 plus expenses.

## Feeding regime

I'll be starting my feeding regime to ensure all the plants and shrubs look their very best for my Summer visitors. I feed everything! I have a large collection of shrubs which provide a variety of fragrant flowers, berries, autumn colour, foliage and coloured stems. In addition, they add shape and a basic structural framework to my garden and provide shelter and a great food source for wildlife. No matter what, they are, they all get fed throughout the season. The results I get from feeding every year are amazing. The product is soluble and I water by hand, with a watering can, a task that can take a few hours, in stages! You don't have to be so meticulous as me but feeding will help get the best from your plants.

Read more of Geoff's garden at: [www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk)

Geoff is a multi-award-winning garden owner, garden writer & broadcaster. Driftwood has appeared twice on BBC2 Gardeners' World and was a finalist in Gardeners' World Magazine Best Small Space. See the amazing 5-star reviews on TripAdvisor. Read all about Geoff's work for the community, appointment as a Coronation Champion and trips to Buckingham Palace including two Royal Garden Parties, in 2018 and 2023. Read the many published features on the garden in national, local and worldwide media, including TV.