



# Green and pleasant

**APRIL'S here and spring has finally sprung! We can expect the inevitable April showers but with sunny days too we hope. This month you can focus all your attention on the garden as the weather warms up and early flowers start to bloom. There's a load of jobs to do outside and in the greenhouse. It's an exciting month with daffodils and flowering trees starting to bloom and indoor-sown seeds well into growth. It is also time to start sowing outdoors but just watch out for any frosts. Easter is coming up, the clocks have gone forward, so let's hope all the dreadful wet weather has gone away and we can finally enjoy some pleasant time outdoors with family and friends.**

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

**I've recently finished delivering a series of seven talks over the winter months, about my own garden, gardening by the sea generally and growing succulents. It is about now that garden clubs, horticultural societies and WI groups start looking for speakers for their next season! Over the years I've presented over 120, so, if you know of any groups or societies that are still looking for speakers across Sussex or the borders of Kent and Surrey this autumn or next spring and beyond, please get in touch.**

## 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 80 assorted plants in my house. 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.

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.

## National Garden Scheme

This month, there is a brand-new garden opening for the scheme in Mayfield that you may like to visit on the 11th of the month. *Quarry Wood Farm and Tilsmore Vineyard* is located in Newick Lane, Mayfield, TN20 6RQ. It will open from 10:30am through until 3:30pm with entry £6. This is a 2-acre organic garden set in a beautiful valley, surrounded by wildflower meadows and mature woodland. It features extensive spring bulbs and flowering shrubs, mixed herbaceous borders, and colourful pots. There is a Mediterranean garden, as well as vegetable and cut flower gardens with raised beds. Enjoy the woodland walks, a vineyard and an orchard.

Over towards Battle there is *The Old Rectory*, Warbleton in Kingsley Hill, TN21 9PT. It will be open, for pre-booking only, on Thursday 23rd from 10am to 3pm with entry £10. Nestled in the *High Weald AONB*, *The Old*

*Rectory* garden was re-imagined by renowned designer Arne Maynard. His vision blends formal elements like yew and beech topiary, a knot garden, and herbaceous borders with wild flowers and rambling roses. A stream separates the formal garden from an orchard interplanted with roses and wild flowers. Over 10,000 tulips bloom in spring. Other features include a cutting garden, pond, copse, meadows and pot displays. Full details on both venues at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

## Driftwood Opening 2026

Geoff's multi-award-winning garden, *Driftwood by Sea*, will be open again this summer, for pre-booked visitors only, from 1st June through until 2nd August. You can book your slot by emailing [visitdriftwood@gmail.com](mailto:visitdriftwood@gmail.com) or by calling Geoff on **01323 899296** to arrange your visit, for individuals or groups of up to 25. His small coastal garden is full of character, with a tapestry of plants and a sunken Mediterranean garden. See inventive planting and design all complemented by original sculptures throughout with seven local artist's work on display for sale too. Geoff's home-made tea and cakes are served on vintage china on trays in the garden. Full details on the website below.

Read more of Geoff's garden at: [www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk) or follow both him and the garden on social media.

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.