



# Green and pleasant

**THE last official month of summer is the perfect time to enjoy your garden while it's still at its best. Children are on school holiday, lawns are in full use, and there's plenty of delicious fruit and veg to fill your dinner plate. If you're planning a holiday in August, enjoy. I'm pretty sure the one thing we will all be hoping for is some warmth and lots of sunshine. I know my garden will. It has been so wet and the sunshine will bring the flowers back to life.**

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

**Last month was so disappointing with so much rain at the start of the month, all the flowering annuals were beaten down and blooms had to be cut off as they all became very mushy! That said, the garden certainly looked lush all month but lacked overall colour, with just a few pockets, where the blooms were a little hardier.**

## Hydrangeas

With immense flower heads, hydrangeas flaunt an old-fashioned charm in summertime that's hard to resist. While these flowering shrubs are low-maintenance, proper care will keep them blooming. Unrivalled in the shrub world for beautiful flowers, these elegant plants are easy to

cultivate, tolerate almost any soil, and produce abundant blooms. Colours beguile with clear blue, vibrant pink, frosty white, lavender, and rose blossoms—sometimes all blooming on the same plant! They are excellent for a range of garden sites from group plantings to shrub borders to containers. Varieties abound (every year, it seems, breeders present us with more options!), and gardeners' expectations of bloom size and colour are boundless. I have several types in my garden, the one in the header is "Annabelle". It is a stunning, large flowered white hydrangea, often producing football sized flower heads over 10" in diameter. The enormous, densely packed heads of creamy-white flowers appear from July to September above pointed, dark green leaves. Unlike the better-known blue and pink hydrangeas, Annabelle blooms reliably every year, even after severe pruning or intensely cold

winters. The huge blooms will appear in profusion without fail. Some people plant 'Annabelle' as a hedge since it can be cut back severely in the winter for a tidy effect. Deciduous and with an upright growth habit, hydrangea Annabelle makes a gorgeous feature for a partly shady border with moist, well-drained soil. It will also be happy in a roomy patio planter, provided it is kept well fed and watered in the growing season. The large flower heads can also be cut for use in a vase, and are particularly suitable for dried flower arrangements too. I've had mine a few years now and it grows in a large pot behind the house. Check them out and maybe consider planting some.

## National Garden Scheme

As the summer moves towards its close, readers will find there are fewer gardens opening for the scheme. Later in the month, *Butlers Farmhouse*, the County Organiser's garden, in Butlers Lane, Herstmonceux, opens the garden gate over the weekend of the 21st and 22nd August with entry £6. The added bonus is you can listen to jazz in the garden too. Also opening is *Camberlot Hall*, Camberlot Road in Lower Dicker near Hailsham over the weekend of the 14th and 15th. It is a relaxed country garden planted and maintained to encourage wildlife, also £6 entry. Both gardens offer refreshments too, so why not pop the dates in your diary. Full details can be found at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

## Summer tip

At this time of year, especially with the extremes of weather we have been experiencing, a little trick you might like to pinch is one that I always employ. I start to relocate some of my own garden sculpture and ornaments, so that your eye is drawn to them, rather than the not so perfect plants around them. Trust me, you might

notice the change but visiting friends and family will not. It works a treat and helps keep the garden looking fresh even when some of your plants are not looking their best. Another idea is to slide grown on plants or bulbs into any gaps you might have in your borders, so they can burst forth when your other Summer plants are no longer looking their best. I always plant up extra containers in my garden, knowing I will need them as the summer progresses, to take the place of those which are past their best.

## August jobs

A task some gardeners seem to forget at this time of year is to ensure all Camellias and Rhododendrons are really well watered. Many of us wonder why buds fall off before developing. By keeping plants watered you can ensure that next year's buds develop well and do not dry out.

Jobs to this month might include planting out bulbs that will flower in the Autumn. There's not really room in my garden to do this now but I'm guessing your garden is probably not as packed as tight as mine! You could give your plot a real lift for later in the year with lots of new colour and fresh blooms. Nerines are a good example to fit this bill and look good planted in groups together but make sure they have good drainage.

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