



Green and pleasant

AUGUST is usually one of the hottest months of the year – making watering essential. That said, it's going to be hard, if not impossible, to follow the weather we had in June. Try to use grey water wherever possible, especially as water butts will be running low and we are experiencing hose pipe bans. August is traditionally holiday-time, so you might need to enlist the help of friends and family to look after the garden while you are away. When you are at home, take the time to prune Wisteria and summer-flowering shrubs such as lavender once they've finished flowering.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

The last official month of summer is the perfect time to enjoy your garden while, hopefully, it's still at its best. I'm certainly finding it more relaxing at Driftwood with no public days this summer, just visitors by arrangement.

Over 400 have seen the garden so far since 1st June. If you have not visited but have a desire to do so, then we close the garden gate on the 11th August, so get your booking in quick. Just call me on **01323 899296** or email visitdriftwood@gmail.com

August gardening jobs

If you want a good show of flowers next spring, make sure you water evergreen shrubs like camellias and rhododendrons thoroughly this month, this will ensure that next year's buds develop well. Try to keep your patio container plants well-watered and don't forget to feed them to encourage more flowers. If you have tall or top-heavy dahlias and lilies it is important to stake them to prevent wind and rain damage. Don't forget to dead-head lilies for a better flower display next year, along with annual bedding plants and perennials to encourage them to flower into the autumn and stop them self-seeding.

Keep an eye on your borders and cut back faded perennials to keep them

tidy. If you have seed heads on plants around the garden, leaving some in place can be attractive and allows the plant to self-seed in the surrounding soil. If you enjoy propagating new plants for next year, remember to take cuttings of your favourite, tender, perennials such as pelargoniums and fuchsia now. Now is the time to prune climbing roses and rambling roses, once they've finished flowering, unless of course they are repeat-flowerers in which case leave them.

National Garden Scheme.

There are a couple of gardens opening for the charity this month, not far from the town. *Camberlot Hall* in Camberlot Road, Lower Dicker, Hailsham, opens across the weekend of the 19th and 20th from 2–5pm with entrance £6. This is a 3-acre country garden with a lovely view across fields and hills to the South Downs. It was created from scratch with all design, planting and maintenance completed by the owner. There is a lavender lined carriage driveway, naturalistic border, vegetable garden, shady garden, 30 metre white border and dahlia garden.

Fairlight Hall in Martineau Lane, Hastings makes a welcome return to the scheme on the same weekend too. See a recently restored stunning garden with formal gardens extending over nine acres and surrounding the Victorian Gothic mansion. The garden features semitropical woodland avenues, a huge contemporary walled garden with amphitheatre and two 110 metre perennial borders above and below ha-ha with far reaching views across Rye Bay. It opens from 10am to 4pm with entry £8, not to be missed. Full details on both gardens can be found at www.ngs.org.uk

Oleanders

Last winter was by far the coldest and wettest few months we have had since moving to Sussex in 2004. I and many other gardeners lost plants that would usually survive. In my case that was several oleanders. Oleander plants (otherwise known as *nerium oleander*) are among the most versatile of shrubs, (pictured in header) with dozens of uses in southern and coastal landscapes. They tolerate a wide range of conditions, including difficult soil, salt spray, high pH, severe pruning, reflected heat from pavements and walls, and drought. The one thing they can't withstand, though, is winter temperatures below -7 °C. However, in cooler climates, you can grow an oleander plant in a container and bring it indoors when temperatures drop, or as I have been doing successfully for several years, heavily fleecing them outdoors.

Last winter, as normal, I protected all five shrubs in the garden with several layers of protective fleece. Sadly, when I removed the protection in the Spring, three had obviously died! Two, however, a red and white one, survived and are flowering well in the garden now. The red was in the ground and the white in a large container, so, no logical explanation. That said, I decided to cut the three damaged plants right back and I am pleased to say that they are now showing signs, albeit slowly, of new growth, so will live again for next year.

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.