



Green and pleasant

AUGUST is the time of bumper harvests in all parts of the garden. Lettuces, beans, potatoes and peas all waiting to be harvested and enjoyed. Flower colours tend toward hot yellows, oranges and purples. We are fast approaching autumn, so we must all take a little time to savour the delights of what remains of the summer. It is usually one of the hottest months of the year too, making watering essential across your plot. It is always good to try and use grey water wherever possible, especially as water butts may be running low. Maybe you are off on holiday and trying to enlist the help of friends and family to look after your garden while you are away.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

The garden opening season is slowing down, my own garden has now closed for 2024 having seen over 500 visitors across June and July, raising lots of money for charity. There have been many lovely comments, you can see my beach garden pictured in the header. There are far fewer gardens open for the *National Garden Scheme* too this month with some local gardens listed.

Fuchsias

Some of my favourite plants in the garden are fuchsias. I have quite a large collection. Two of them

are quite special though. One is a standard Geneii that belonged to my Aunt who passed away in 2004. The other, also a standard, called Empress of Prussia that my father bought for my mother for their ruby wedding anniversary many moons ago. Dad passed away in 2007. Both of them are very precious plants. It helps to improve flowering generally with fuchsias, if you remove the seed pods that develop behind the spent flowers. These small green bumps can develop into striking reddish-black berries, which are actually edible, but not very tasty. Allowing the plants to go to seed can weaken them and reduce their flowering cycle, so it is best to remove seed pods, which should mean it will keep blooming into the Autumn.

National Garden Scheme

Butlers Farmhouse in Butlers Lane, Herstmonceux, opens on both Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th August from 2pm to 5pm with entry £7. There will be live jazz to listen to in garden, so why not take along a chair or rug to sit and enjoy after wandering around the garden. It is all in a lovely rural setting surrounding a 16th century farmhouse, providing lovely views of the South Downs. The plot is interesting and fun, a quirky garden with lots of surprises around every corner including a rainbow border, small pond, Cornish inspired beach corners, a poison garden and secret jungle garden.

Over in Battle, you could visit *Kitchenham Farm* in Kitchenham Road in Ashburnham on both the 6th and 10th from 2pm to 5pm with entry £6. It is a 1-acre country house garden set amongst traditional farm buildings with stunning views over the Sussex countryside. See a series of borders around the house and oast house with lawns and mixed herbaceous borders including roses and delphiniums. A ha-ha separates the garden from the fields and sheep. Full details on both gardens can be found at www.ngs.org.uk

Houseplants

If, like me, you have many plants in the house as well as the garden then don't forget to keep an eye on them too. High temperatures can make indoor plants wilt and they may need moving to a cooler spot in the house. Don't overwater them, just check the compost and if it is dry apply a little water. Over time plants leaves can attract dust, so just wipe

them down with a cloth and a bit of water, don't use polish or oils as this will block their pores. While wiping the leaves, it gives you a great opportunity to check the underside for insects and damage that can be removed. If I'm honest, while I might remember to feed the plants in the garden religiously, I'm not so hot on remembering to do the same with the house plants. They still need nourishment like their outdoor partners, so do remember to feed them, I tend to use the same feed I use in the garden.

Looking ahead

If you have camellias and rhododendrons in your garden, it is really important at this time of the year to keep them well watered. I have five large containers of camellias that always make a great show in the early part of the year. It is now that the new buds for all next years' flowers are starting to develop and form, so a lack of water at this stage will ensure you don't see any blooms next spring. It is so easy to forget them when concentrating on shrubs and flowers that are blooming now.

Read more of Geoff's garden at: 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.