



# Green and pleasant

**IT'S very hard to believe but 2023 marks the 15th year that I have been opening my garden, *Driftwood*, to the public. It is also a long time to enjoy and feel enthusiastic about the task of getting it ready. I'm often asked by returning visitors how I renew and refresh my gardening enthusiasm each new gardening year. If I'm being honest, I don't find it too much of an issue. How about you? Have you succumbed to any New Year resolutions about your own plot? Once my garden closes in the late summer, I'm always thinking about what small changes can be made to help create a slightly different feel to the plot for visitors the following year.**

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

**Sometimes it's small, cosmetic changes and other times bigger projects, depending on how my imagination runs riot. The same rule of thumb would be true for me, whether I opened the garden to others or not because it's important, in my book, to have the garden looking the best it can possibly be it for friends and family or paying visitors.**

Pictured in the header is my beach garden covered in a light frost, looking out to sea with a dazzling January sunrise.

## **New Year at *Driftwood***

So, New Year, new beginnings, what's in store at *Driftwood*? It's always good to try and renew your gardening enthusiasm each year and mine generally comes from ideas conceived wandering around the plot the previous summer. Some ideas are major, others on much smaller scale are less costly.

In readiness for the 2023 season, I've slightly changed the beach garden, as the old wooden boat had rotted away over 10 years. Some local visitors last summer offered me one for free, as they no longer needed it. Many said don't have fibreglass it won't look as good, but I knew, once installed and dressed

with plants and marine objects, it would look fine, as it now does.

Regular readers of my articles will know 2023 is a landmark year for me, I'll be 70 in April and I'm sure many readers will be only too aware that it does get harder to garden the older you get. Over the last couple of years, I've consciously been trying to make it a little easier to get things done, to help compensate for a pair of dodgy knees. Especially trying to reduce the number of containers across the plot.

The big change for 2023 is a revamp of the pond area, the only part of the garden I've never really changed. I've had the pond filled in and a new patio laid, bounded by a beautiful corten steel curved wall. Sitting on the new Indian sandstone patio is a corten steel water feature with fountain. I've also introduced a new small set of steps up to the centre of the garden as well.

## **New Year ideas, big impact, small outlay!**

Many wonder how to make a big difference in the garden for a relatively small outlay. This has been something I've tried to do every one of the past 15 years. My garden is made up of many small components, be they sculptural pieces to be relocated around the plot creating a different feel or new ideas or themes to change a corner or vista across the garden. Here's a few recycling ideas that can really make a difference in your own plot.

If you are taking out an old fireplace, wooden or metal, consider erecting it as a set piece in the garden, placed against a fence and plant up the grate and decorate with succulents.

Likewise, if you have an old dining room chair, take the cushion section out and replace with a container and plant up with summer annuals spilling over the side, it will look wonderful on a balcony, patio or as a centrepiece in a larger garden display. Alternatively, check out your local recycling site and see if one is available.

Look out for old enamel kitchen colanders, I've seen many for sale on my recent travels, they make great outdoor planters for succulents as a centrepiece on a garden table. Think twice before you discard any old junk. I've an old vintage typewriter, rusting on a table, with small pots of succulents arranged around it, which is much commented on by visitors. Over the years I've gathered a small collection of old wooden handled garden tools and stuck small metal birds on the handles as a cheap piece of unique garden sculpture. You'd be surprised how many visitors comment on them and wish they had done the same, before getting rid of their old tools.

Never discard leaky old metal watering cans either, you can repurpose them as a feature in amongst you planting to great effect.

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.