



Green and pleasant

WITH the advent of July, we can hope for long, warm days that continue late into the evening, perfect for those of us who enjoy pottering in the garden after work, maybe hosting barbecues, and more importantly enjoying our beds and borders as they reach their peak. We must all hope there will be no more restrictions placed upon us later in the month, enabling us to maximise our enjoyment of the garden with friends and family.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

This month also heralds the time of year when we are most likely to have to engage in many hours spent watering our plots too. If, like me, you find it therapeutic, all well and good, if not, then it can be a real chore but a very necessary one if you want to keep your blooms in tip top condition.

Roses

Although I am not a great lover of roses, I do have a few in my garden that look pretty good. The one in the header above is called Tess of the d'Urbervilles, a gift from two garden volunteers a few years ago. I have a gorgeous rambling rose too, Vielchenblau, given to me as 50th birthday gift quite a few years ago!

It has beautiful, large clusters of small, orange-scented, semi-double, white-streaked, dark magenta flowers in June and July and light green leaves.

Roses are a classic and instantly recognisable plant, ideal for almost every style of garden. They flower abundantly from early summer in a choice of colours including pastel shades of pink, peach, cream or snowy-white; vibrant yellow and gold; orange, crimson or red. Many roses are fragrant. Some types flower in one flush of blooms while others flower all summer long. Some have colourful fruits (hips) too. They come in a range of forms, from traditional shrubs and climbers to miniature plants for patio containers. Care is easier than you might think, anyone can grow them successfully. Plant your roses in a sunny location with good drainage. Fertilize them regularly

for impressive flowers, water them evenly to keep the soil moist and prune established rose bushes in early spring. Watch for diseases like powdery mildew or black spot.

National Garden Scheme

This month, there are a number of gardens which will open, without pre-booking. Over the weekend of the 17th and 18th, the Peacehaven and Woodingdean trail has three gardens, including a brand new one for 2021. Sunday 18th sees 29 Fairlight Avenue open in Hastings as well between 11am and 5pm. On 31st July and 1st August, 33 Wivelsfield Avenue in Saltdean will open on its own, having been part of a group previously. All the details, prices and times can be found at www.ngs.org.uk. If you have not yet seen my garden, Driftwood, it opens on 13th July but it is by pre-booked tickets only through the scheme's website.

Watering

This can be the bane for many during really hot spells. If I'm in the mood, I find it can be quite therapeutic! It also gives you the chance to physically check all your plants at the same time. It can take five hours, non-stop, to water my plot, front and back, but I tend to split it into three sessions to ease the burden. The experts recommend watering at dusk to reduce evaporation and to use mulch to retain moisture around plants. I certainly do the latter but do prefer to water in the very early morning at Driftwood. Terracotta pots are prone to evaporation, so dampen the pot down to keep roots inside cool and damp. A trick my Aunt told me about, many moons ago, is to line the pot with a piece of tinfoil to create an inner saucer. That way, when the soil gets really dry, water will not flow all the way through, the foil will retain some, allowing it to be soaked up by the dry compost!

Macmillan Garden Trail

Last year, the annual garden trail I organise for Macmillan Cancer Support had to be cancelled. This year, a scaled down event will take place over the weekend of the 24th and 25th July. There are 14 gardens scheduled to open, eight in Brighton and six in Seaford, across the two days, several selling garden art and offering home-made refreshments too. All allow dogs on leads too. There are three brand new ones for 2021 among the 14 as well. You can see all the gardens and trail details at www.macmillangardentrail.co.uk or for more information please call **01323 899296**.

Dead heading & feeding

By regularly deadheading your bedding and perennial plants, throughout the summer, you will encourage new blooms for as long as possible. If you have hanging baskets, cut back growth, as this too will encourage new flowers and foliage and will revive your display. It is always good to feed your baskets well after doing this. If you have hardy geraniums and delphiniums, you can also cut these right back after their first flush of flowers to extend flowering. Regular readers will know that I wholeheartedly recommend feeding all my plants and shrubs in the garden, every couple of weeks in the season. You will be amazed at the difference it will make.

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.