



Green and pleasant

SUMMER is moving on at a pace and July is often one of the hottest months of the year. It's the perfect time to sit out and enjoy the fruits of your labour in your garden with family and friends. Remember to keep your plants looking good by regularly dead-heading to ensure you enjoy a much longer display of fantastic blooms. If you've recently put some new plants and shrubs, make sure you keep them well-watered, remembering that you can use grey water as well. This time of year, you can expect lots of weeds, which thrive in the sunshine, so keep on top of them!

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

I am finding watering much easier this year after all the changes I have made in recent years! The use of more drought tolerant plants, along with my large collection of succulents and geraniums has meant much less watering which goes down really well, especially in times of drought and hose pipe bans. We've had quite a few visitors through June but there is still time to book a visit until 2nd August.

National Garden Scheme

If you want to get out and visit some gardens this month, there are a couple of great trails in Seaford and Winchelsea and the gardens of *Herstmonceux Castle*.

Seven gardens will open in Seaford on Sunday 5th from midday to 5pm with a combined entry of £8. Each garden offers its own unique charm, with a huge range of different planting styles, making this a truly inspiring group of gardens to visit. Enjoy tea, ice cream, plants, and artwork for sale at various gardens. Tickets and maps are available from any participating garden on the day.

Winchelsea's secret gardens open on Saturday 18th from 11am to 5pm with a combined entry of £10. Old favourites return with new owners, and the group expands to thirteen mostly cottage style gardens large and small. Set in the historic Cinque Port of Winchelsea with its picturesque townscape and long unspoiled sea and country views. Explore the town with its magnificent church.

Herstmonceux Castle Estate in Wartling Road opens on Wednesday 22nd from 10am to 6pm with entry £12 and children £6. The estate has formal gardens, woodland trails, meadows and lakes set around a majestic C15 moated castle. The gardens and grounds first opened for the NGS in 1927.

For full garden descriptions and details, visit www.ngs.org.uk

Sea Lavender

As summer heats up, so do the plants in the garden. Sea lavender is a beautiful summer stunner, many visitors are not familiar with it and often ask its name. Also known as marsh rosemary and lavender thrift, it is a perennial coastal plant that can often be found growing in both salt marshes and along coastal sand dunes. Despite its name, it is not actually related to the lavender plant. The plant creates leathery, spoon-shaped leaves, red-tinted stems, and delicate purple blooms that appear in summer. These plants are easily recognizable as a result of their dense, cloud-like sprays of tiny, paper-like lavender flowers.

They are primarily grown for their beautiful floral displays; though its large green paddle-shaped basal rosette leaves will also create an attractive ground-cover in the early spring, until the plant flowers in the summer. Part of what makes sea lavender a somewhat unusual perennial is that the leaves are so close to the ground, and long flower stems will develop from this grouping of foliage.

Driftwood

A feature was recently published by *The English Garden Magazine* on 11 of Britain's most extraordinary coastal gardens every garden lover should

visit. The boat in my beach garden is pictured in the header. Imagine my amazement to find my garden was listed as number 9. The description given was this! A very pretty seaside garden, this award-winning plot has been featured on *Gardener's World* and *George Clarke's Beautiful Builds*. *Driftwood Garden* is a popular garden to visit as part of the *National Garden Scheme* in Seaford. It cleverly uses a drought-tolerant planting and coastal textures in marvellously artistic ways. The landscape has been inspired by the Mediterranean and is a masterclass in sustainability, too. If you're searching for inspiration for a contemporary coastal planting scheme, it offers it in abundance.

So, if you've not yet seen *Driftwood*, why not book a visit before we close on 2nd August this year? You can visit either with the scheme (entry £7) or though the *BBC Gardeners' World 2* for 1 scheme too (£10 including talk for 2 persons). While visiting you can enjoy a slice of my home-made cake served on vintage china on trays in the garden. Additionally, there are seven local artists displaying their work for sale too, more importantly the garden accepts individual visits as well as larger groups, just email visitdriftwood@gmail.com to make a booking.

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk

Geoff is a member of the Garden Media Guild and 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.