



Green and pleasant

JUNE brings us the longest day with extra hours of warmth and sunshine. In 2021, the solstice occurs on Sunday, June 20th, marking the start of summer in the Northern Hemisphere. The threat of frost has now long past and we can start planting in earnest. There's certainly plenty to keep you busy in the garden but also plenty to sit back and enjoy!

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

This month also marks, probably the busiest time of the year to visit open gardens. It is certainly the National Garden Scheme's busiest month. The easing of lockdown and hopefully the lifting of all restrictions later this month, mean we can all get out and enjoy those venues that open their garden gates for us all to share.

Geraniums: Garden favourites

Geraniums are popular summer plants in the UK. They add fragrant foliage and bright blooms wherever they're planted, whether that's in pots, planters or containers. They love bright sunny climates and moderate to regular watering, as long as they are planted in well-draining soil. They're relatively low-maintenance and are excellent choices for container gardening. Geraniums tend to thrive

when they're contained in pots as they keep the plants coralled and can also be easily moved to ensure they are receiving enough bright sunlight. Some geraniums grow best with a bit of afternoon shade as well. You can find them with blooms in vibrant orange, brilliant red, and eye-catching coral. The ivy geraniums bloom in white, red, coral, rose, and lavender hues too and you can get upright or trailing. All in all, a great choice for your garden this summer.

Driftwood this season

After remaining closed through 2020, due to COVID-19, I am opening my garden again for visitors over the next three months. Things will however be slightly different. On all three dates for the *National Garden Scheme*, 29th June, 13th July and 1st August, all visitors will have to pre-purchase their tickets and book a timeslot in order to visit. Unfortunately, no one will be able to arrive on the day without booking ahead. You can do this via

the home page of my website or by looking the garden up at: www.ngs.org.uk. In addition to this, the garden will be open for private "by appointment" visits between 21st June and 12th August with all the entry and refreshment proceeds going to *Macmillan Cancer Support*. Full details are on the event page of my web site. The other two public days will be as part of the *Macmillan Coastal Garden Trail* which will take place on the 24th and 25th July when all visitors will be able to just turn up, more on that next month. www.macmillangardentrail.co.uk

Garden tasks for June

As well as enjoying your plot this month there are a few jobs to be getting on with too. Something I'm not very good at, as I get impatient and want to plant summer annuals, is to wait until spring bulb foliage has died back naturally before cutting back! If you have sweet peas, start to pick as soon as they flower to encourage more growth. As new shoots appear on climbing plants such as honeysuckle and clematis, make sure you tie them up, to train them where you want them to grow! I have a few oriental poppies and they need to be cut back to the ground to stimulate new growth. Likewise, any hardy geraniums will benefit from a cut back after flowering to encourage more to follow. This month is the time to pinch out the tips of fuchsias too thereby creating a more-bushy plant and more blooms.

Tropical influence

If, like me, you want a little tropical influence in your garden, then why not invest in a thoroughly hardy plant like *Aloe striatula*. (See mine in header). It is an evergreen succulent with bushy, scrambling stems. It can be grown under cover or outdoors! The stems

and leaf sheaths are striped light and dark green. Yellow racemes of flowers with protruding orange stamens are produced on spikes 40cm high in summer. They always remind me of mini bananas, once they have turned yellow! I have two large specimens, both in the ground in the gravel garden at the back of the house, one either side of the central path up to the summer house. Indeed, one had got so big last year that I had to cut it back last Autumn and masses of small new growth has now emerged on the woody stems. They need no winter protection in my garden! They originate from South Africa and look pretty amazing planted with palms and grasses. Outdoors protect from excessive winter wet by ensuring very sharp drainage and plant in full sun.

National Garden Scheme

In addition to the many gardens that open on pre-planned days for the scheme each month, there are also many venues that open by arrangement only. These are listed on page 12 of the Sussex booklet or if you don't have access to one, via the web site, www.ngs.org.uk Just click find a garden then select gardens open by arrangement followed by discover by region. There are 32 gardens in Sussex this month that will be happy to take your bookings and provide the appropriate catering for your visit.

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.