



Green and pleasant

JUNE 21st is the longest day of the year, and the extra light and warmth will encourage your garden to put on an exuberant burst of growth, well that's the plan! The extra light and additional warmth will also mean you can expect to find weeds sprouting up from seemingly nowhere. It's best to try and keep on top of them by hoeing regularly in dry conditions. With the worrying trend in the last few years of scorching summers and the inevitable hose-pipe bans, many gardeners are having to think very carefully about their plots, this year maybe the time to consider what plants to use this summer.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

Until a few years ago, for me, that meant filling *Driftwood* with 300 plus containers, proudly displaying hundreds of summer annuals, very easily purchased from local nurseries and garden centres. Something had to give, not only was it becoming time-consuming and extremely stressful in times of a hose pipe ban, but it was becoming increasingly more difficult, the older I got.

Beautiful displays are still possible by utilising succulents such as aeoniums,

mangave, agave, sedums and sempervivums, all of which are great drought resistant plants, with some lovely varieties available that equally attract bees and other pollinators. See the image of new planters in my garden at *Driftwood* above.

Watering

It is best to water in the mornings if you can, when plants will start to use water. The foliage and soil surfaces are also likely to stay drier for longer than evening watering, discouraging slugs, snails and mildew diseases. Plants start to transpire in sunlight, drawing water from the soil, through their roots, up their stems and out through tiny pores on their leaves. Evening watering is also fine, as the cooler conditions mean less water is lost to evaporation.

Watering in the heat of the day is not a good idea as much water is lost through evaporation from the surface of the soil and the plants will use water more efficiently if watered in the cooler parts of the day. There is no simple rule of thumb for watering, as each plant has different needs – for example, a container plant in hot sunny weather may need watering daily, whereas a mature shrub might only need a drink in extreme drought.

National Garden Scheme

June is by far the busiest month for garden openings with many on offer across Sussex, I've just picked three that you might like to visit. Opening in Seaford on the 11th June are seven pretty gardens in the town, including one brand new one at 8 Downs Road. All the gardens open from midday to 5pm. The County Organiser's garden, *Butlers Farmhouse* in Herstmonceux, opens its gate from 2pm to 5pm on both Thursday 15th and Friday 16th June. Look out for their glorious meadow of flowers and maybe spot an orchid or two. On the 25th June a small trail of gardens opens close by too, the Herstmonceux Parish Trail comprises six gardens with two brand new for 2023. My own garden, *Driftwood* is also open by arrangement for the scheme from 1st June through until 11th August, why not book a visit? You can see a picture of my new patio area in the header. Full details on all the gardens, prices and directions can be found at www.ngs.org.uk

Personal 2023 gardening successes

Some readers may be aware that 2023 has already been a pretty wondrous year so far! On 1st June, I was extremely lucky to be able to attend *Macmillan Cancer Support's*

"Thanks To You Awards" ceremony, as a finalist in their Outstanding Supporter Awards. Last month, I learnt that the production team at *BBC Gardeners' World* TV programme had commissioned a crew to come and film *Driftwood*, at some point in July, with the results being aired on the programme in the autumn. The subject matter will be drought tolerant planting and use of recycled objects. Then, to top the lot, I was officially crowned one of the 500 Coronation Champions in late April, issued with a signed certificate by their Majesties, King Charles III and Queen Camilla and then invited to a *Coronation Garden* party at *Buckingham Palace* on the 9th May. All pretty amazing stuff.

Jobs in the garden for June

Now is the time to keep on top of your lawn, assuming you have one. Try and mow at least once a week but you might like to consider leaving some areas uncut for the benefit of wildlife. This month most gardeners plant out their summer bedding, as generally, all risk of frost has passed. Take care to stake tall or floppy plants as they develop then you will find the supports get hidden as the foliage grows. This month is also a good time to prune many spring-flowering shrubs.

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.