



Green and pleasant

THIS month delivers the longest day of the year, which falls on Sunday June 21st, bringing, we hope, warmer temperatures and extra sunlight and ultimately, more time out in the garden. Flowers are blossoming, there's lots to harvest in the vegetable garden, and keeping on top of bolting plants is a priority. Make sure you keep on top of the weeding too. Your plants shouldn't have to compete for precious water, light, and nutrients.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

June also marks, probably the busiest month of the year to visit open gardens. It is certainly the National Garden Scheme's busiest few weeks, which means we can all get out and enjoy those venues that open their garden gates for us all to share. With the worrying trend in the last few years of scorching summers and the inevitable hosepipe 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 and go for more drought tolerant options.

Coping with a drought

Climate change will continually present garden owners with the challenge of using much less water, thereby

forcing them to choose plants to suit their growing conditions becoming far more paramount. Gardening through the use of drought tolerant plants enables us to do our bit for the environment with the resulting reduced water use. Not to mention the reduction on household bills, if metered. It has been said that around two-thirds of domestic water used on hot summer days goes on gardens, which is going to be extremely hard to sustain. We all experienced the low rainfall, with a hosepipe ban here in Sussex for several months, meaning water companies asking gardeners to reduce their water consumption or inevitable enforcing bans.

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.

They are able to store water in their fleshy leaves and stems during wetter spells, and draw on that moisture when needed. Another great option is the aloe striatula, pictured in the header, which will easily withstand our winters, without protection.

Geraniums

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 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. Both hardy geraniums (cranesbill) and pelargoniums (common annual geraniums) are considered drought-tolerant once they are established too.

National Garden Scheme

Kitchenham Farm in Kitchenham Road, Ashburnham, near Battle, opens for the scheme on Saturday 6th from 2pm to 5pm with entry £6. Visit a 1-acre country house garden set amongst traditional farm buildings with stunning views over the Sussex countryside. See a series of borders around the house and Oast House along with lawns and mixed herbaceous borders including roses and delphiniums.

Over in Hellingly near Hailsham, their annual garden trail takes place on the 7th from 11am to 5pm with a combined entry of £8. Seven gardens are opening and visitors can enjoy a pretty walled cottage garden with a summerhouse and sunny terrace, a garden entered via a bridge over a large pond, perfect for wildlife, with countryside views. There's also a charming cottage garden overlooking the C12 Church of *St Peter and St Paul* plus so much more.

Seven gardens open in Seaford on both Sunday 14th and Sunday 28th 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. For full garden descriptions of all the gardens and location details, visit www.ngs.org.uk

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or follow both him and the garden on social media. His garden is now open until the 2nd August for pre booked visitors only. You can book your slot by emailing visitdriftwood@gmail.com or by calling Geoff on **01323 899296** to arrange your visit, for individuals or groups of up to 25. Full details on his website.

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.