



Pictured: Euphorbia Characias in garden at Driftwood.

# Green and pleasant

**THE month of March sees the opportunity for us all to appreciate our Mums with her special day falling on Sunday 15th. The customary way of doing that has always been to buy her flowers or a plant. Take a look at a few suggestions below. Another celebratory day, St Patrick's Day, falls on the 17th too. We must not forget, as gardeners, that the clocks go forward on the 29th of the month bringing longer days to work outside.**

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

**Spring is fast approaching and it is a good time of year to think about buying plug plants, either online or in your local garden centre. If you enjoy growing vegetables, now is the time to get seeds started in the greenhouse and you can sow hardy seeds straight outdoors into their final positions. It's also time to kickstart your flower displays. You can start sowing flower seeds undercover to enjoy colourful displays come the summer.**

## Mother's Day

What colour flowers should you buy to celebrate Mother's Day? All the experts say that green represents the protective

nature of mothers, while yellow alludes to their optimistic outlook towards life and for their children. Pink captures their compassionate and nurturing side and red focuses on their passion and empowerment drive. Take your pick in relation to your own mother. If you google the most preferred flowers to give on the day, it turns out to be carnations, roses and tulips. Mother's Day and carnations are inseparable so it seems. Tulips with their array of colours and lovely fragrance work well and tulips are always show-stopping and are bound to make your mum smile on the day.

## Jobs in the garden

A garden favourite is the popular buddleia. Now is a good time to prune to a framework of branches and encourage lots of vigorous new shoots that will have time to mature

and flower this summer. Cut back last year's flowered stems to within one or two buds of old wood, or you can prune back harder if you need to rejuvenate. I've got a couple around my water feature, two buddleia buzz, this compact variety still needs a prune every year. Now is also the last time, before the summer, for pruning roses, leaving it any later may mean cutting away stems with well-developed new shoots. You can however be as ruthless as you are as you are unlikely to kill it.

## National Garden Scheme

I mentioned *Pembury House* last month in Ditchling Road, Clayton, it has its final 2 openings on the 5th and 6th. There may still be some tickets left as pre-booking is essential and entry is £12 inclusive of refreshments. There will be timed slots at 10:30am & 2pm. Depending on the vagaries of the season, hellebores are at their best in March. It is a country garden, tidy but not manicured.

Over in Arlington, there is *Bates Green Garden* in Tye Hill Road, opening for the scheme from 10:30am to 3:30pm on Sunday the 22nd with entry £8 and children £4. This plantswoman's tranquil garden provides interest through the seasons. The woodland garden created around a majestic oak tree, the colour themed middle garden, courtyard gardens with seasonal container displays, will all be on show.

In Herstmonceux there is *Butlers Farmhouse* in Butlers Lane, opening on Friday the 27th and Saturday 28th from 2pm to 5pm with entry £5. 'Quirky and fun' are two words that pop up in visitors' comments, so go and see this 1-acre country garden for yourself! Enjoy the secret jungle garden, Cornish-inspired beach corners,

rainbow border, and the poison garden all set around a 16th century farmhouse in 6 acres of rural Sussex with the South Downs in the distance.

Over in Brighton there is *The Garden House* at 5 Warleigh Road, opening on Friday 27th and Sunday 29th from midday to 6pm and entry £6. One of Brighton's secret gardens it aims to provide year-round interest with trees, shrubs, herbaceous borders and annuals, fruit and vegetables, two glasshouses, a pond and rockery. It is a slice of the country in the midst of a bustling city. Full details on all four gardens can be found at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

## Time for a change

If, like me, you have a number of containers in the garden, why not consider moving them around in the spring. I have a collection that are transferred to the area behind the house, which provides a degree of protection from the harsh winter weather, in the autumn which now need to be relocated out in the garden again. It is always a demanding job and seems to get harder the older I become. That said, it is always refreshing to place them somewhere different, thereby creating slightly different vistas for returning visitors to enjoy.

Read more of Geoff's garden at: [www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk) or follow both him and the garden on social media.

Geoff is a 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.