



Green and pleasant

AS bulbs start to fade and herbaceous borders begin to grow in leaps and bounds, it's a clear sign that summer is approaching. With the milder coastal climate, we enjoy here on the south coast, sowing and planting out bedding can begin and you can take softwood cuttings. If you have a lawn, it's also time to get back into the mowing regime, as your lawn will be loving the warmer temperatures this month should bring with it. The weather can sometimes catch us out though, so keep an eye out for, unpredictable changes from mild spells to low temperatures and chilly winds.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

All gardening advice has to be adjusted though to consider the weather. Each Spring brings different weather from the previous year. Hopefully we should be frost free by the end of the month, but it is always an idea to have a fleece or cloche handy. With the world-renowned flower show later this month, May is the time we hear those immortal words, "Chelsea Chop" time. It is great method for stopping some plants getting too big and leggy, and with others, staggering their flowering times.

Celebrating the Coronation

This month sees the Coronation of our new King, Charles III. There has been much written about his favourite flowers over the years and which might appear as an integral part of the long weekend celebrations. While we won't know until the day, it is expected that we'll see some of the King's favourite blooms, delphiniums, pictured in header, make an appearance. In the past, the King has been quoted as saying: "For me, the magnificent, gloriously appressed delphinium, with its impeccable bearing and massed in platoons, holds pride of place in my botanical affections," I suppose it's easy to see why he's such a fan. The plants are extremely popular in cottage-style gardens, they grow in beautiful shades of blue, pink, white and purple, and will add a splash of

colour to your garden border. They are best planted in the springtime in full sun to light shade, with shelter from strong winds. I have to confess to not having much success with them in my own garden, as it is so exposed.

I have been extremely fortunate to meet the new King on two separate occasions, when he was Prince of Wales, back in 2018. The first at a reception for volunteers for *Macmillan Cancer Support* at *Buckingham Palace* and later the same year at a Royal Garden party at the Palace. On both occasions he was charming and engaging on talking with him.

Preparing Driftwood for opening

This year, my garden will open by arrangement only, between 1st June and 11th August. I'm extremely pleased to be welcoming groups from both the USA and Belgium this summer, along with a special booking, inclusion on a coach tour of "Artist Gardens of Sussex", which includes some of the magnificent Sussex gardens, so we'll be in great company. To date, over 200 visitors have pre-booked their visit across the 10 weeks but there is still plenty of opportunity for readers to get in touch and book their visit. Either call **01323 899296** or email visitdriftwood@gmail.com to arrange.

This month sees me make the final push to get it all ready for visitors. I'll be collecting over £250 worth of plants, at trade prices, in the next week or so, from a local nursery to plant up and help transform the plot in time for the first day.

There have been major changes since we last opened, with the sunken pond removed and replaced with a corten steel water feature and new patio.

National Garden Scheme

On 21st May, six gardens open in Seaford for the scheme between midday and 5pm with entry £7. On show, a cottage garden over three levels with ponds, flowers, vegetables and shrubs, a flint walled garden with a coastal and kitchen garden, a plot on different levels with interesting planting and seasonal interest and two mature gardens with a mix of flowers, vegetables and an auricula theatre. The Community Garden provides an interesting space with flower and vegetable beds for members of the community to come together to share their gardening experience.

Over the weekend of the 13th and 14th May, *Limekiln Farm* in Hailsham opens the garden gate between 2pm and 5pm with entry £7. It was designed in the 1930's when the house was owned by Charles Stewart Taylor, MP for Eastbourne. It has not changed in basic layout since then. The planting aims to reflect the age of the C17 property and original garden design. The house and garden are mentioned in Virginia Woolf's diaries of 1929, depicting a particular charm and peace that still exists today.

Full details on both gardens can be found at www.ngs.org.uk

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.