



Green and pleasant

SEPTEMBER is upon us and soon it will be autumn! There's plenty to be done while you're outside, hopefully enjoying the last of this year's warmth. If you grow crops and fruit, harvesting will keep you busy this month, and there's plenty of work to do tidying and maintaining plants and equipment. September is generally a cooler, gustier month than August and the days are noticeably shorter. There may not be as much to do in your ornamental garden at this time of the year, maybe it's a good time to get out and start planting spring-flowering bulbs for next year or collect seeds for next summer's colour too.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

One of the best flowers for September is the aster it blooms in an array of colours such as purple, white, red, and pink, where various colours of flowers can signify some specific meaning. Asters are a large group of plants, consisting of many different species, each one offering something different in height, colour and design potential.

There are many cultivars available to provide you with good displays of late summer and autumn colour, with daisy-type flowers in shades of white, pink,

purple, blue and red. Most are easy to grow, except on very heavy clay soils or soils that dry out in summer.

Jobs for September

Here are a few suggestions to keep you busy in the garden this month! Keep your plants healthy and vigorous year after year and multiply your stock by dividing your herbaceous perennials. If you have a pond, now is a good time to place a net over before autumn leaf fall gets underway, thereby reducing the amount of debris entering the water. Clean out cold frames and greenhouses ahead of autumn sowing and growing.

Continue to feed and deadhead hanging-basket and container annuals as they will often keep going until the

first frosts hit your plot. Also deadhead annuals and perennials to extend their performance, particularly penstemons, dahlias, and roses to keep flowers coming. You can also prune any late-summer flowering shrubs, such as the rock rose, climbing roses and rambling roses once they've finished flowering. I have to remember to keep my camellias and rhododendrons well-watered at this time of year too, to ensure that next year's buds develop well.

National Garden Scheme

Limekiln Farm will open the garden gate for the scheme on the 23rd and 24th September. It is located in Chalvington Road, Chalvington, Hailsham and will open between 2 and 5pm with entry £7, children free. The garden was designed in the 1930s 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 17th century 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. Flint walls enclose the main lawn, and there are herbaceous borders and a rose garden. In the physic garden, at 3pm, there will be a talk about medicinal plants.

Meanwhile on both the 6th and 9th of the month *Knightsbridge House* at Grove Hill, Hellingly, Hailsham will open, between 2 and 5pm with entry £7 and children free. This is a mature landscaped garden set in 5 acres of tranquil countryside, surrounding a Georgian house. See several garden rooms, spectacular herbaceous borders planted in contemporary style with lots of late season colour plus grasses and some magnificent specimen trees. Full details on both gardens at: www.ngs.org.uk

Looking good at Driftwood

You can see one of my favourite plants in the header, hydrangea *Vanille Fraise*. This extra special hydrangea has a stunning appearance and a garden performance to match. *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Vanille Fraise' is easy to grow and perfect for those problematic north-facing areas, due to its extreme hardiness, down to -20C! Mine sits in a raised bed at the back of the house which is north facing. Its height and spread are about 72". Loose pyramid-shaped clusters of flowers form at the tips of red-stemmed branches in summer. They emerge creamy-white and turn shades of pink as they age, before finally taking on rich red and russet tones. Perfect for adding late summer colour to the shrub border, or for creating an informal, flowering hedge.

Later this month, I'm hoping to see the garden on *BBC Gardener's World*. At time of writing, filming is scheduled for late August and broadcast before the current series ends in the Autumn. There is always the possibility they may hold the film and use next year but when it last appeared on the programme in 2016, filming was done late August and was aired at the end of September, so fingers crossed. The subject matter will be around climate change and drought tolerance.

Read more of Geoff's garden at: www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk

Geoff is a multi-award-winning garden owner, garden writer & broadcaster. Driftwood has appeared 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 2 Royal Garden Parties, in 2018 and 2023. Read the many published features on the garden in national, local and worldwide media, including TV.