



Green and pleasant

SEPTEMBER is here, and there's still plenty to be done while you're outside in the garden, assuming the weather plays ball. Let's all hope we can enjoy the last of this year's warmth and perhaps experience an Indian summer. If you grow fruit and vegetables then there will be all your crops to harvest which will keep you busy this month. There's plenty of work to do tidying and maintaining plants and equipment as well. For me, it's a time to slow down after a busy summer showing visitors the garden.

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

At this time of the year, we can see the garden slowing down too. Some herbaceous perennials and annuals have finished for the summer, others such as roses, sweet peas may keep on flowering. Exactly what is flowering when, depends on the sort of spring and summer we have enjoyed, but there is always plenty of late colour in the garden.

Summer in the garden

We've had a great summer at *Driftwood* again this year, with over 500 visitors booking to visit, most of them enjoying my home-made tea and cake too, with over 480 portions baked to serve. One of the many plants they have talked about

is the pretty Shrubby Hare's Ear or *Bupleurum fruticosum*, pictured in the header. It is a spreading, evergreen shrub, growing up to 2m tall, with long, slender stems bearing blue-green leaves and domed clusters of tiny yellow flowers in summer and early autumn. The delicate flower heads are almost fluorescent and look amazing at the corner of the house where visitors go to enter the back garden.

National Garden Scheme

This month, there are five lovely gardens to visit in and around the town. The Langney and Willington trail takes place on Sunday 8th, between 1pm and 5pm, with a reduced entry of £5, as sadly, due to illness, 23 Oldfield Road is no longer able to open, so please don't visit the garden. The two gardens left to open are at 36 Jellicoe Close and 16 Hardy Drive and are both developed on land reclaimed from the sea.

In Hellingly, *Knightsbridge House* in Grove Hill opens on both Wednesday 4th and Saturday 7th, from 2:00pm to 5:00pm, with entry £7.50. This mature landscaped garden is set in five acres of tranquil countryside surrounding a Georgian house with lots of late season colour plus grasses and some magnificent specimen trees.

Over in Hailsham, *Limekiln Farm* in Chalvington Road, Chalvington, opens on both Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th, from 2:00pm to 5:00pm, with entry £7. The garden was designed in the 1930s when the house was owned by Charles Stewart Taylor, MP for Eastbourne. The planting aims to reflect the age of the 17th century property and original garden design.

Fairlight Hall in Martineau Lane, Hastings, opens on Thursday 19th from 10:00am to 4:00pm with entry £10. The formal gardens extend over 9 acres and surround the Victorian Gothic mansion and feature semitropical woodland avenues, a huge contemporary walled garden with amphitheatre and two, 110 metre perennial borders above and below the ha-ha with far-reaching views across Rye Bay.

Bates Green Garden in Tye Hill Road, Arlington, opens on Sunday 29th from 10:30am to 4:00pm with entry £7, and here children will pay £3. Pre-booking is essential at: www.ngs.org.uk

This plants woman's tranquil garden provides interest through the seasons, where a woodland garden has been created around a majestic oak tree. There is also a wildlife pond and wildflower meadow and the whole plot is gardened for nature and wildlife.

Full details on all the gardens at: www.ngs.org.uk

What to do with perennials as summer fades?

Some plants look good as they fade, such as sedum where the flower heads hold their own for weeks and look good with a dusting of frost. Others, such as hosta look a mess. There is no hard and fast rule about what to do with herbaceous and perennial plants once summer is over.

Some gardeners cut everything back, clearing out the borders, and others leave plants uncut to encourage wildlife and cultivate a less formal look. There is also a halfway house; cut back plants that look a mess, such as Hosta, Crocosmia, Delphinium leaving in place those which still add to the border, at least for a while, which also spreads the work in the garden over the winter months. As with many aspects of gardening, there is no right or wrong it's down to personal preference. I tend to cut quite a lot back in my garden.

Forward planning

September is a great time to look forward to 2025. Maybe sit down and think about spring bulbs you'd like to have in your plot next year. Spend time looking through catalogues or searching online and then take the plunge and purchase!

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 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.