



Green and pleasant

LATE summer progresses into autumn. September is generally a cooler, gustier month than August and the days are noticeably shorter. While you may not have much to do in the bulk of the garden, if you have a fruit or vegetable patch, hopefully you'll be busy reaping the rewards of your harvest. It's also time to get out and start planting spring-flowering bulbs for next year and you can collect seeds for next summer's colour too. Make the most of the remaining warmth while you can!

By **Geoff Stonebanks**

At this time of the year, we can see the garden slowing down. 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. Sadly, this year's excessive heat has played havoc with many plants in our gardens and we may need to review what we grow for future years.

Open Gardens for National Garden Scheme this month

There are several gardens you could visit this month, including a brand-new opening at *Black Shed Studios Garden* at Sunnyview in Nursery Lane, Fairwarp near Uckfield. Set

in the Ashdown Forest, this unique 3-acre garden blends formal structure with naturalistic planting. Designed by an artist, it features sculpture, painting, ceramics, and glass art throughout. Explore a wildlife pond, meadow, and a small wetland, all offering tranquillity and inspiration in a relaxed, welcoming setting. Open from 2pm to 5pm for a 3-day weekend, from 11th to 13th of the month, but for pre-booked ticked holders only.

Alternatively, you could pre-book a visit to *Rapkyns Nursery* in Street End Lane, Broad Oak from 11am to 4pm on Wednesday 9th with entry £15. There will be 2-hour time slots at 11am and 2pm. They have been growing plants in an idyllic country setting for over 30 years, and during that time have amassed an extensive range, including a large collection of salvias. Join them for a talk about the nursery and discover more about how they grow

and propagate our beautiful plants, with a chance to learn some of our secrets. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions about all things gardening.

Full details and how to book for both gardens at www.ngs.org.uk

Drought tolerant planting

After the summer we've had here in Sussex this year, maybe we need to think more about drought tolerant planting! Drought tolerant plants have evolved over millennia to cope with high temperatures and long periods of drought in summer. They often have succulent or furry leaves, thin leaves or grey or silver leaves. They also often have underground storage organs (bulbs) and wide and deep root systems. If you have a hot, sunny border with well-drained soil, consider switching to more drought tolerant plants. This will cut down on watering and the plants will positively thrive in these conditions.

Here are a few you might like to consider. Sedums look good for months, with their fleshy leaves and flat, nectar-rich flowerheads which develop slowly over many months. It's worth doing the Chelsea chop on sedums to prevent them flopping in the middle later in the year.

Anthemis are lovely mound-forming plants with attractive, ferny leaves and masses of daisy flowers in summer. Most have grey leaves and low mounding, silver ferny foliage and pale-yellow flowers that fade to cream as they age.

Salvias are excellent drought tolerant and long flowering plants. They tend to flower for ages and are great for bees, flowers are borne in long, dense, spikes on reddish stems in summer.

Santolina (cotton lavender) is also a really good deer plant. You can see it growing in my beach garden in the header. People tend to think it's a bit mundane and boring but if used in association with other plants, it becomes much more interesting.

Nepetas are really good value, both the low mounding ones and the taller ones and are great for attracting bees and butterflies to the garden as well.

One of my very favourite grasses is *Stipa tenuissima*, also called pony tail grass. It is good for adding animation in a border as it provides a nice bit of movement. It produces narrow, arching, feathery flowering panicles from early summer. I have several planted along the footpath in my beach garden to visitors can run their hands through them as they walk up the footpath.

Another very delicate and pretty flower is *Nigella*, also known as love-in-a-mist. It does really well on dry soil and will flower May and early June then go to seed but the seedheads are useful and pretty too as well. Once you've got it, you've got it forever.

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or follow both him and the garden on social media.

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.