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Make the **most** of *your garden*

From tea parties to bug removal, award winning gardener, writer and broadcaster, Geoff Stonebanks, shares his tips



Every garden enjoyed, every piece of cake served and every cuppa poured will support the wonderful work of Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Hospice UK, Carer's Trust, Parkinson's UK and The Queen's Nursing Institute - charities supported by the National Garden Scheme.

Welcome to this, my inaugural gardening feature for the digital magazine. I hope you enjoy reading the content and future articles about gardening and garden visiting.

The month of July is often one of the hottest months of the year and a great time to sit back and appreciate the fruits of your labour by enjoying your garden. It is essential to keep plants looking good by regularly dead-heading and you'll be able to enjoy a longer display of magnificent blooms. Make sure you keep new plants well-watered, using grey water where possible, and hoe off weeds, which always thrive in the sunshine.

Host a Tea Party

If you enjoy sharing your love of gardens then maybe the perfect solution is to host a party for family and friends and do so as part of the National Garden Scheme's, *Great British Garden Party*, now in its third year! It is very simple to take part, as the scheme invites everyone and anyone to join them and Dame Mary Berry, President of the National Garden Scheme and undisputed Queen of Cakes invites you to hold your own Great British Garden Party event to raise funds for some of the most important and best-loved nursing and health charities in the UK.

The important point is that it doesn't matter whether your garden is large or small, a horticultural delight or a children's playground, you can still get involved and have fun! Your event can be anything - an informal barbeque, coffee morning or quintessential afternoon tea and cake, family bake-off, book swap or plant sale by your garden gate.

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Joining the Great British Garden Party couldn't be simpler. Just sign up, invite your guests and start planning your perfect day. On the website you'll find colourful invitations to send to your guests, tips on how to boost your fundraising, mouth-watering recipes, and inspirational ideas for the perfect event to help you on your way. Their official garden party week is 16th - 24th July but you can choose any day across the summer that is best for you. Full details at www.ngs.org.uk

Greenhouse

If, like me, you have a greenhouse remember they can really overheat through the summer months and your plants can suffer from sun scorch. It

might be useful to install some shade netting or a polythene mesh to help reduce temperatures. I put mine up every spring and take it down again for the winter months to allow maximum light in the darker months. Something I've not personally tried but can also achieve success is to use shade paints which are painted on the exterior of the glass. Make sure you open greenhouse vents and doors on warm days, to help improve air circulation. If you are growing tomatoes, water daily to prevent them drying out, which can lead to split fruit.

Bugs

I've got several large containers of wonderful lilies around the garden. Those orange ones pictured, belonged to my aunt, who died back in 2004. I inherited the pot from her garden and the flowers pop up religiously every year in her memory! They are beautiful flowers, but their one downfall is that they are very susceptible to damage from scarlet lily beetle.

The larvae from them can strip plants in a matter of days, so, be on the lookout for them. I'll also be checking for their sticky brown larvae on the underside of the leaves. You can just remove the larvae and the beetles by hand. It's also a good thing to look for aphids (greenfly and blackfly) on the stems and leaves of your plant shoots as well. I do tend to use a bug spray in my garden when needed.

Plant care

If, like me, you have a few sweet peas in the garden then do remember to water and feed them regularly, pick the flowers every few days, and remove seed pods to prolong flowering, you'll be surprised at how many flowers they produce. They are such delicate flowers with an amazing scent. Now is also a good time to cut back hardy Geraniums and Delphiniums, after their first flush of flowers. This will really encourage lots of new growth.

Visit Driftwood

If you open your garden, as I do every summer, then cakes are one of the key ingredients to make it a success. Over the 10 or more years that I've been doing it, I've personally baked in excess of 8500 portions of cake. The added bonus at Driftwood is that I serve everything on vintage china too, making the experience a perfect summer day out, weather permitting, of course. For those that would like to visit the garden, it is open from 1st June right through to 31st July, every day for visitors "by arrangement". Just call 01323 899296 or email visitdriftwood@gmail.com to arrange. Full details at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk