

Over the FENCE

REAL
readers'
gardens!

The garden's staying happy



Geoff Stonebanks

A seaside garden in East Sussex that opens for charity, featuring sculpture and reclaimed objects.

After the busy summer, we had a week away in Dorset and visited about six beautiful gardens including Mapperton, a family home and historic estate. At Forde Abbey later in the week, I treated myself to three new plants, a *Fuchsia magellanica* 'Arauco' and two new dahlias, 'Karma Bon Bini' and 'Honka Red'. I also bought a delicate kalanchoe in Budleigh Salterton as a houseplant.

Leaving the garden for seven days, I worried about its state with no one to look after it. A friend watered the bonsais and fed our tortoise Hector, but the garden is too much responsibility to ask someone to take it on. Before leaving, I watered well and moved some containers to the shade. On returning, it still looked



Olives liked the heat

good and nothing dried out. A yucca in the beach garden, originally a baby of one in the back garden, got its first flower stem while we were away. *Verbena bonariensis* looks quite magical.

I love succulents. I have a really large *Agave americana* that I've grown from a pup in the ground at the front of the beach garden. It was planted there in 2021 and has really done well as we're based on chalk.

This summer seems to have been a great year for olive trees. I have a 25 foot one, two standard ones and a small one growing in the gravel garden. I've seen a large number of tiny olives

growing but sadly not really big enough to do anything with.

Back in August, two members of the National Garden Scheme's head office came to see the garden and a couple of weeks later I received a thank you note accompanied by a beautiful small watercolour of the folly door, painted by Christina Plowman. It has been framed and sits in my office.

Last month I gave a talk to the Woodnesborough Garden Club near Sandwich in Kent after reader Linda Flower contacted me. We booked a cottage for two nights in the area and saw some local gardens.

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

My highlight

My lovely hydrangea 'Groundbreaker Blush' whose flowers emerge white and turn rust-red.



Watercolour by Christina Plowman



My new kalanchoe