

Over the FENCE

REAL readers' gardens!

A very warm welcome to all!

Fab *Chamaerops humilis*



Geoff Stonebanks

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



'King Charles Coronation'

A rain shower did wonders for the rear patio

It's nearly June! The garden will open for its 18th year, with visitors booked until August 2. I've got 100 portions of cake baked and stored them, but will need 300-400 more if visitor numbers match previous years.

I had to sand down and apply teak oil to garden furniture; I couldn't do it last year because of my knee surgery. My new two-handed cushion means I can kneel on softer surfaces. I've been growing *Lamium orvala*, a red deadnettle. It's a herbaceous perennial with a clump of attractive, ovate leaves and spikes of whorled pinkish-purple flowers in late spring and summer.

A standout palm is *Chamaerops humilis*; I've several in gravel beds but the one pictured is the largest at over 2.5m. In 2008 I purchased an *Agave americana* for the spot but it didn't survive the first winter

so the company who supplied and planted it substituted it for the palm. A great choice.

I recently bought a kokedama wisteria bonsai from Japan that I fell in love with after it popped up on Facebook. I followed the directions, leaves started to appear within a month and it's gone quite mad. I hope flowers appear!

I've put my more delicate agave in the beach garden. I bought the large *Agave parviflora* in 2012 and now have over 20, all from the same plant, in pots. I keep them in the unheated shed in winter and they've done well as it has reasonably good light.

I have about 10 mangaves on the upper patio. You can see me with a larger one called 'Mission to

Mars'; they haven't long been out in the garden, kept in the greenhouse until mid May.

Delicate blooms on the 'King Charles Coronation' rose given to me by my mother (who turned 99 last month) look elegant and pretty. Light rain made the whole area more lush; perfect for tea and cakes.

We managed a short break in Norfolk, viewing magnificent gardens. En route we went to Suffolk with a friend, Kate Elliott, the head gardener at Columbine Hall in Stowmarket. She and the new owner Hew Stevenson gave us a wonderful guided tour.

Read more of Geoff's garden at driftwoodbysea.co.uk. Follow both Geoff and his garden on social media too and if you're in Sussex through June or July, why not email him at visitdriftwood@gmail.com and arrange a visit.



I love these poppies



A visit to Columbine Hall



With mangave 'Mission to Mars'

My highlight
Red poppies that flower every year at the bottom of the drive.