

Discover more



Real gardens: seaside garden

Discover how one man created an exuberant flower-filled plot, despite the salt-laden sea winds

By [BBC Gardeners' World Magazine](#)

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Just a quarter of a mile from the seafront, in Seaford, East Sussex, is a garden that's bursting at the seams, with vibrant colour. When Geoff Stonebanks first moved in, the winter sea gales quickly flattened all of the plants he'd lovingly brought with him from his previous garden. Through trial and error, he learnt which plants could survive in the exposed conditions, on the chalky soil, and how to create height, interest and shelter.



Driftwood: the rear garden is packed with colourful plants and eclectic objects

The small front garden takes full advantage of the views out to sea and has a distinctly coastal feel to the planting, enhanced by lobster pots and a dinghy. While the 30m-long rear garden is packed with a colourful jumble of bedding plants, perennials and shrubs, combined with rusted metal sculptures, an eclectic mix of objects and several seating areas tucked amongst the plants.

- Geoff's garden can be visited by appointment, using your 2-for-1 card, from 1 June-12 August. [Find out more.](#)

What was the garden like when you moved in?



Driftwood: When Geoff moved in the garden was mostly laid to lawn

How have you transformed the garden?



Driftwood: the rear garden is packed with colourful plants and rusted metal sculptures

"The rear garden is split into eight different small rooms, with the chance to sit in each and take in the atmosphere. There are no lawns and no exposed spoil and hundreds of plants, intertwined with an eclectic mix of sculpture and rusty metal. There are over 300 containers throughout the plot. The front garden is beach-themed and overlooks the sea, complete with small dinghy, lobster pots, anchors, two Adirondack beach chairs and a mix of coastal planting, featuring many *Agave americana*."

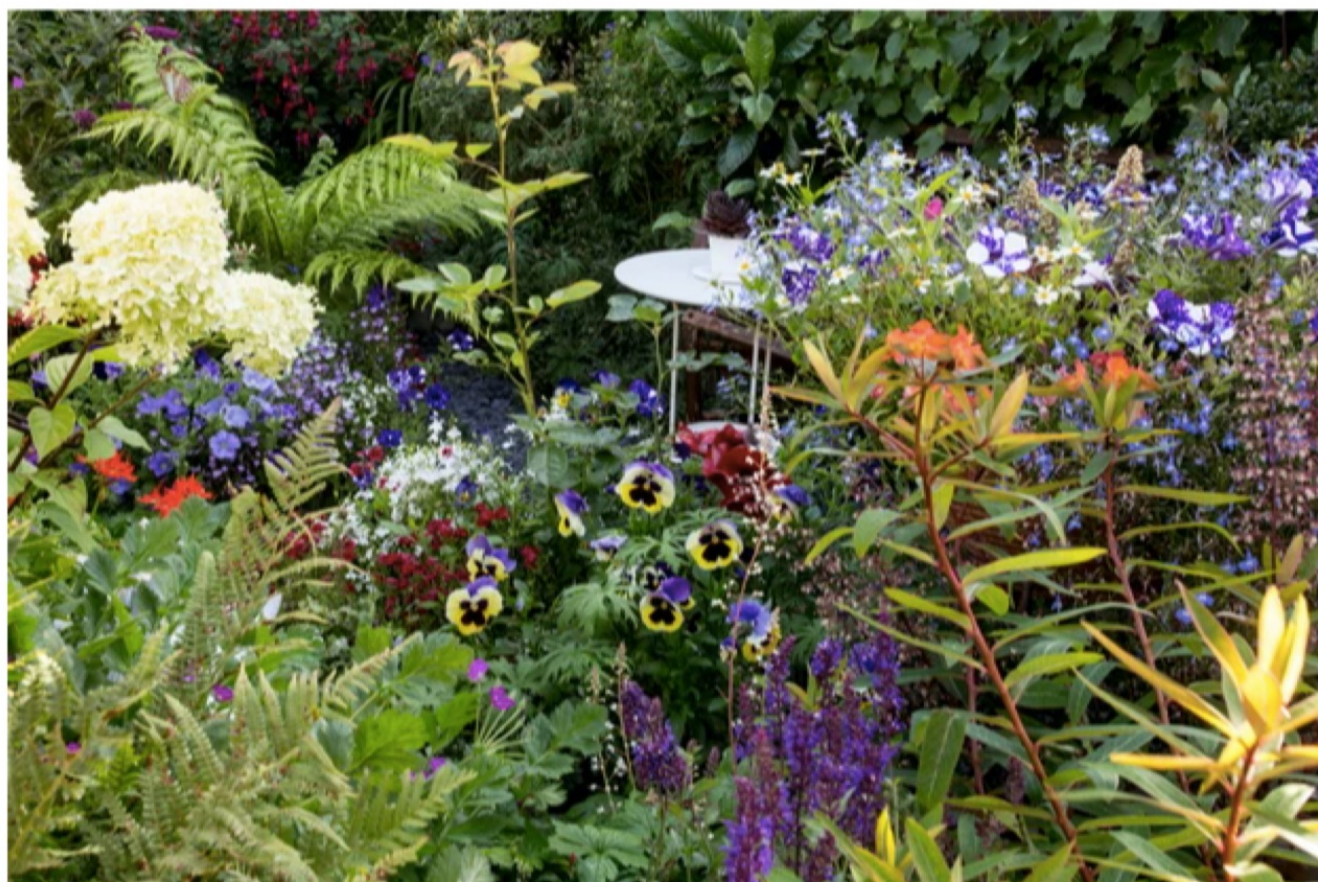
What has been the biggest challenge?



Driftwood: the front garden has a seaside feel with agaves, *Verbena bonariensis* and grasses growing through the gravel

"Without doubt, the biggest challenge by far has been creating an enticing space that will thrive despite the extreme coastal weather, salt and sometimes gale-force winds blown in from the sea. It has been a real learning curve, for someone who knew nothing about gardening at the outset."

What have been the biggest successes?



Driftwood: petunias and pansies rub shoulders with hydrangeas, salvias, ferns and heucheras

"Creating such an amazing garden in a relatively small space. I have been lucky enough to receive praise from the many visitors, various media in print and on television and success in several gardening competitions. I was a runner up in the BBC Gardeners' World Magazine [Gardens of the Year Competition](#) in 2016. Plus, without question, the ability to use the space to generate income for charity – over £137,000 raised to date, with £86,000 of that for Macmillan Cancer Support."

What do you love about the garden?



Driftwood: Succulents thrive in pots and an old chair has been converted into a planter

"I never tire of looking out over my plot and struggling to comprehend that I, single-handedly, have been able to create such a magical space. This really came to the fore, for my partner and myself over the past 12 months, having been locked down caring for my 94-year-old mother at home. We had our own little world and it was quite idyllic!"

Is there anything you'd change?



Driftwood: with over 300 pots, and the drying sea air, it's a labour intensive garden to maintain



Driftwood: Geoff opens his garden to raise money for charity

Visit Geoff Stonebanks' garden at Driftwood

- [Visit Driftwood using your 2-for-1 Card](#)
- [Visit Driftwood through the National Garden Scheme](#)
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