



Stunning 'Driftwood' garden opening again

GARDEN expert and writer Geoff Stonebanks is opening his award winning garden again for visitors over the next three months with all proceeds going to charity. I caught up with him.

By Rachel Lucas

Why did you start opening your garden?

Geoff was offered early retirement aged only 51. After moving to beautiful Seaford, the next chapter of his life could begin.

"After sorting the house out, decorating and building work, I got bored and started gardening." Geoff was a born gardener. He was

"bullied" into opening for Seaford in Bloom in 2009. Soon after, Geoff was accepted into the *National Garden Scheme*. He first showcased his garden in 2011. Since then, its beauty has been marvelled over 140 times, seen 21,000 visitors and raised over £137,000 for charities.

Where do you get your inspiration?

Inspiration is found at all times and in all walks of life. Geoff often gains his ideas from shop window displays, images on social media, flower

shows like *Chelsea* and *Hampton Court*, magazines and online features. Of course, his best creations are sudden and can just come to him. "I often feel like I am dressing a film set when creating areas in the garden." It is no wonder he feels this way! All eight garden rooms allow for different spaces and ideas to mould into an awe-inspiring display.

When will you be opening your garden?

The stunning views of the garden are open this year until the 12th August. As part of the *National Garden Scheme*, Geoff's garden will be open on 29th June, 13th July and 1st August. Though YOU MUST PREBOOK on their website at www.ngs.org.uk, otherwise you will miss out! Geoff has organised the *Macmillan Garden Trail* since 2012 and his garden is open as part of it on the 24th and 25th of July. Full details are available at www.macmillangardentrail.co.uk

Geoff offers private visits, between those dates when people can book tea and cake or a light lunch and enjoy the garden with family and friends. Please call Geoff on **01323 899296** to arrange.



Enjoy delicious tea and cakes in beautiful surroundings.

Image: John Glover.

Tell us about the charities you are supporting

Geoff's garden supports two charities, the *National Garden Scheme* and *Macmillan Cancer Support*. To date, Geoff's attraction has raised £137K for these well-deserving charities. "I am always keen for money raised to be spent locally and that works well for *Macmillan* as it all goes to the *Horizon Centre* in Brighton." Please support Geoff and these charities and book your tickets!

What can we expect from your garden?

The many 5* reviews on *TripAdvisor* are truthful; you will be wowed by the views. The garden won Best Small Garden in the UK with *Garden News* in 2012. In 2016 it was a finalist in *BBC Gardeners' World* magazine's Best Small Garden competition and featured on *BBC TV's Gardeners' World*. It featured on *Good Morning Britain* a few years ago too. This garden is truly a wonder and undoubtedly an unmissable attraction.

What is your favourite plant?

Sunflowers, succulents and Sage all come to mind. Geoff has "many, many favourite plants". Aeoniums and Agave are particular loves of his. His grand collection was his giveaway. The garden has three display areas of aeoniums, probably amounting to over 80 individual plants. Likewise, the beach garden at the front of the house has over 40 agaves on show.

To find out more about the garden's opening, please visit Geoff's website, www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk