

The Driftwood Garden Diary

with Geoff Stonebanks



Dicentra scandens



Aquilegia



Persicaria runcinate

I don't know its name but we call it Dad's rose and it sparkles

IN THE beach garden an Aquilegia has self-seeded, thankfully in a lovely magenta colour that is so in keeping with the planting around it. It is a hardy perennial plant which is relatively short lived at around three to four years, however it self-seeds, so you'll find new plants popping up every year, making your Aquilegia last for ever.

They are known as quintessential cottage garden favourites also called granny's bonnet or columbine. They are easy to grow so are great for naturalistic or wild gardens and informal spaces. The nectar-rich flowers are attractive to bumblebees too.

Moulsecomb Forest Garden in Brighton is celebrating 30 years with an open day. Nestled at the foot of the South Downs, just behind Moulsecomb railway station, this wildlife haven is where outdoor education is taught to pupils who struggle at school and gardening and cooking to adults with learning disabilities. There will be tours, pizza making, primitive technology exhibitions, pond dipping, bug hunts and a cafe for tea and cake.

Project manager Warren said "We know our small community garden can have a big impact on people's lives – especially those that have been ignored, discarded or dismissed – to realise their full potential, to make them feel part of something. So, the open day is a chance for them to show off what they do."

Gates open from midday on Friday, July 12, till 6pm and entrance is free. Take a look at the website for full details www.moulsecombforestgarden.org

I have a pretty rose that my mum bought in memory of my dad, after he passed away in 2007. When we sold her house, I dug it up and planted it in the garden at Driftwood. It is a gorgeous colour but I'm not sure of its name but to us it is called Dad's rose. It brings a real sparkle to the area just outside the back door every year.

Next Saturday, July 13, Seaford Community Garden at The

Crouch, BN25 1AD, have their open day from 10am to 3pm, so if visiting the town, why not pop along and take a look.

Over in Ditchling this weekend the National Garden Scheme has a new trail you could visit. The six plots open from 11am to 5pm with combined entry of £8. Maps will be available at The Sandrock gardens with full details at www.ngs.org.uk The gardens at Aspin, The Barn, Coum Cottage, 4 The Dymocks, Meadow Cottage and September Cottage make up this trail. Each garden has its own feel, united by a love of bees, birds, butterflies and wildlife. Maybe even spot a hedgehog family.

Tomorrow, Sunday, over in Bexhill on Sea you could join the Bexhill and Little Common trail of six gardens also open for the scheme. Tickets and maps will be available at all locations, which open between midday and 5pm with a combined entry of £7. A complete mix of gardening styles on view from a beautiful plot laid to lawn with beds, Gaudi inspired steps to a plot that has over 50 specimen fruit trees. All six are not to be missed. Check the website for full details.

A plant I was given several years ago now is the beautiful Dicentra Scandens. This is an easy to grow perennial from the Himalayas where it normally would scramble around in shrubberies etc. It is essentially a climber and has tendrils. It will climb by itself but not up a flat wall but benefits from something to grow up such as a trellis or shrub. The pretty foliage has a bronzy hue when young but turns brownish green when mature. The flowers are bright yellow and held in bunches on the upper parts of the stem as seen in the image. Mine looks great as it tumbles over the old railway sleepers.

Another gift is Persicaria runcinate or Purple Fantasy. It is a brilliantly coloured, semi-evergreen perennial, grown predominantly for its patterned leaves. It can be a bit thuggish, spreading by means of runners. Fortunately, it's easy to pull up should it start spreading too



Geoff with Dad's rose

much in spring. Alternatively, you can grow in a container. From midsummer into early autumn it produces small but pretty ice-pink flowers. It is great for providing colourful ground cover in shade, too. It is advisable to wear gloves when pulling up as some people find that the foliage irritates the skin.

At last, now we have had a bit more sunshine, the many succulents across the garden are starting to grow bigger. I've also got several aloes which are flowering too with pretty orange flowers. The forecasts for the month look good, so fingers crossed we have a lovely warm July.

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk or email visitdriftwood@gmail.com to arrange a visit before July 31.



Moulsecomb open day