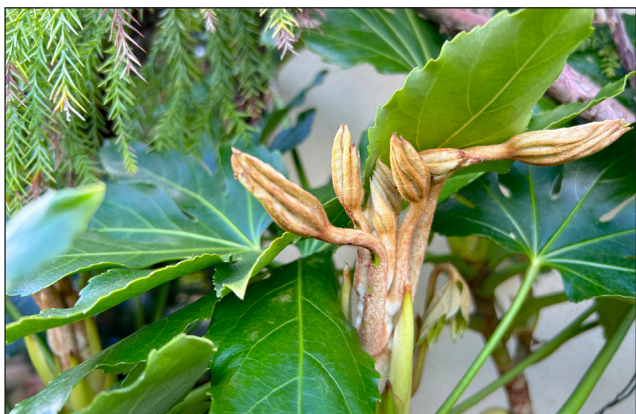
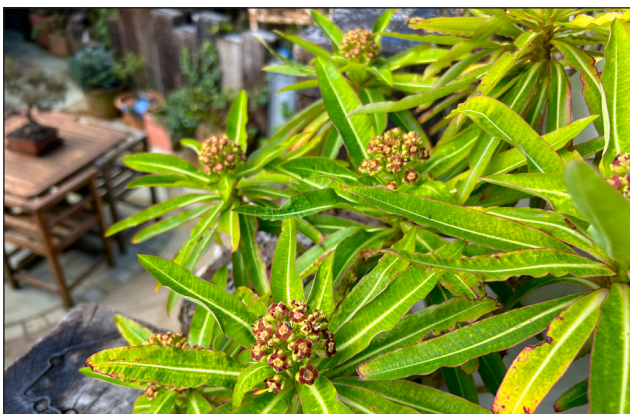


The Driftwood Garden Diary

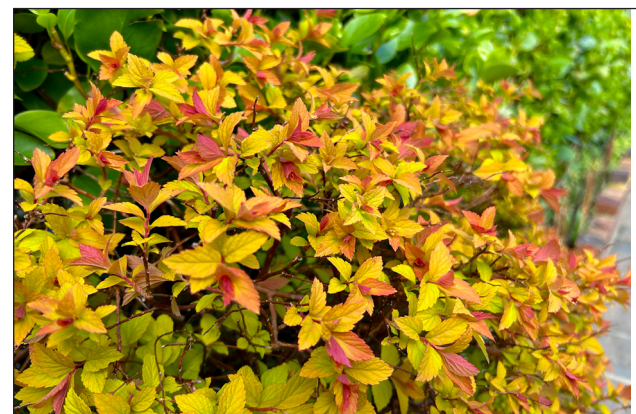
with Geoff Stonebanks



Fatsia is a reliable shrub



Mellifera is native to Madeira



Spirea magic carpet

Lots to do... it's not long until my my first booked visitors arrive

AS we hurtle towards May, the jobs in the garden seem never ending, trying to get ready for my first booked visitors in June. Over the next week or so I shall be transferring all my succulents from the greenhouse and arranging them in the railway sleeper area, on the shelves, bench and the ground. I have had three of my bonsai trees arranged there over the winter months. The area will look quite spectacular once it is all completed.

I've recently repotted two of the small palms in the garden. I bought them a few years ago. *Chamaerops humilis* Cerifera is a beautiful dwarf growing blue-leaved fan palm originating from the high Atlas Mountains in Morocco where it endures both heat and extreme cold. I've grown mine outside, unprotected, in all weathers and they remain healthy and undamaged by the weather. It is probably one of the best hardy palms suitable for growing in a UK climate. It is compact and demands little more than a sunny position and relatively free draining soil.

If you fancy some garden visiting this weekend you could venture over to Banks Farm in Boast Lane, Barcombe, opening for the National Garden Scheme today, and tomorrow, April 28, from 11am to 4pm with entry £5. This pretty, nine-acre garden is set in rural countryside with extensive lawns and shrub beds which merge with the more naturalistic woodland garden, set around the lake. An orchard, vegetable garden, ponds and a wide variety of plant species add to an interesting and very tranquil garden. Hopefully cherries, crab apples, bulbs and early flowering shrubs will be on show.

In Horsham you could visit Warnham Park, in Robin Hood Lane, Warnham, which will open today from 11am to 5pm with admission £6. The garden is in the middle of a 200-acre deer park, which has a very special herd of red deer, husbanded by the Lucas Family for over 150 years. See borders with traditional planting and a kitchen garden that is

prolific most of the year. The rest of the garden comprises different spaces including a small white garden, a Moroccan courtyard and a walled garden. There is also a woodland walk. Full details at www.ngs.org.uk

Don't forget to catch up with my weekly slot on BBC Radio Sussex tomorrow, with Pat Marsh, on Sunday Gardening at about 11.40am.

Three very reliable shrubs in my garden that always make a real statement are *Spirea Magic Carpet*, *Fatsia* and *Euphorbia mellifera*. All three have been established in the garden for many years now and are very easy to maintain.

Spiraea are easy to grow and suitable for most corners of the garden. They are quick-growing and make excellent ground cover, hedging or can be used in large patio pots too. More importantly for my coastal garden, they are weather resistant, and especially tolerant of drought. It is a fantastic shrub for beginners and ideal for small gardens. Ovate leaves open red and change to yellow, always with some red young growth. It produces flat clusters of deep pink flowers in summer too. I have two large shrubs either side of the central path in the back garden.

Fatsias are among the most architectural of plants, being evergreen shrubs that add a touch of the exotic to any planting, and combining well with ferns, hostas and other shade lovers. These plants will grow in nearly all soils, unless very wet or dry, in sun to full shade, but need a sheltered position from severe winter cold. Strong winds, especially cold and frosty, can tear large leaves in winter. My largest specimens are planted up in big containers on the north wall, at the back of the house, so are nearly always in shade. If they grow too tall, I am quite severe in cutting them back and they always recover and produce lots of new growth.

They are known by several common names including false castor oil plant, Japanese aralia or paper plant and is a fantastic foliage plant, native to Japan.



Geoff and the sleepers

They bear glossy evergreen leaves and spherical, ivy-like flowers, followed by black berries.

Honey spurge, or *Euphorbia mellifera*, is a handsome, semi-evergreen shrub native to Madeira and the Canary Islands. It has become a popular garden plant for its honey-scented summer flowers, which are popular with bees, attractive domed growth habit and waxy leaves. It can be grown in full sun or partial shade, and will vary in habit depending on the sunlight it receives. In full sun it will develop a denser, more compact shape and in shadier spots a looser and taller habit. It looks brilliant when growing in exotic borders or gravel gardens.

Read more of Geoff's garden at www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk
Geoff Stonebanks



Cerifera isa great tough palm