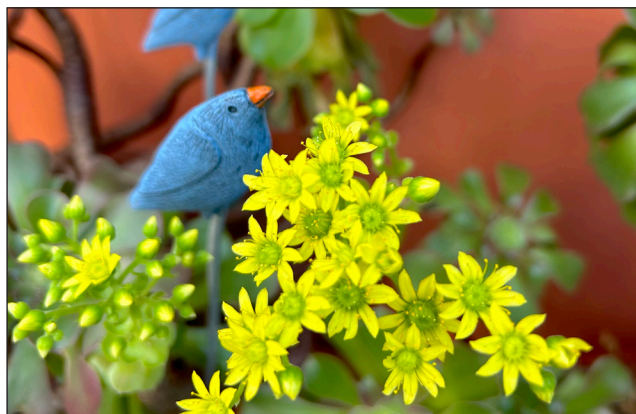


# The Driftwood Garden Diary

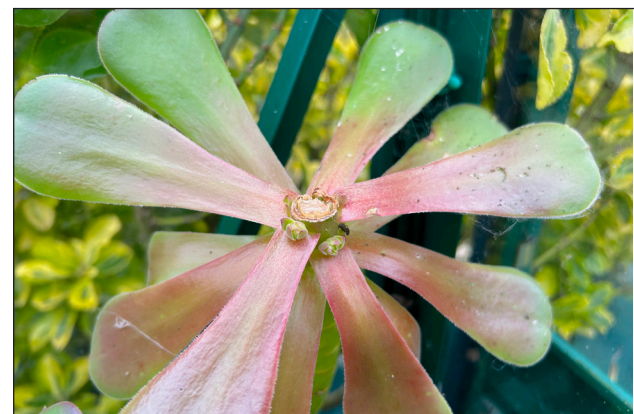
with Geoff Stonebanks



Flowering aeoniums



New growth below cut-off flower



New growth on cut-off flower

## How to get the best start to spring and bring out the colour

**T**ONIGHT sees the clocks go forward, providing gardeners with much needed additional daylight hours to get on with their many tasks.

We just need to hope the inevitable April showers don't prevent us from getting out there to get it all done. As the weather warms up and early flowers start to bloom you will find that there's a load of jobs to do outside and in the greenhouse. It's an exciting month with daffodils and flowering trees starting to bloom and indoor-sown seeds well into growth. It is also time to start sowing outdoors but just watch out for any frosts. Let's hope all the dreadful wet weather has gone away and we can finally enjoy some pleasant time outdoors with family and friends.

This week I've been checking my fern collection throughout the garden. I've probably got about 25, either in containers or planted in the ground, at the back and now is the best time to carefully cut back those tatty old fern fronds to make way for the new ones that are slowly beginning to unfurl. I find that they always look quite interesting, almost alien like, as they start to unfurl and reveal their full leaves. They are a real staple for a woodland corner and can look quite prehistoric and very architectural as they emerge.

If you fancy a drive out to Lindfield, the National Garden Scheme has a beautiful and tranquil plot opening the garden gate, both today, 30th and Monday 1st. 47 Denmans Lane will open between 1pm and 5pm with entry £7. The garden was described by Sussex Life as a "garden where plants star". It has been created by the owners over the past 20 years and is planted for interest throughout the year. Spring bulbs are followed by azaleas, rhododendrons, roses and herbaceous perennials. The garden also has ponds along with vegetable and fruit gardens. There will be an extensive choice of perennial and annual bedding plants for sale, plus home-made jams. Full details available at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

This year, the scheme will have a

show garden at Chelsea Flower Show which is being fully funded by Project Giving Back and is designed by internationally-renowned designer Tom Stuart-Smith, who has an unrivalled record of success with Chelsea show gardens. This is only the second time this has happened in the charity's history. After Chelsea, the garden will live on as the central part of the garden for a new Maggie's Centre at Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge, Maggie's being one of the National Garden Scheme's major long-term beneficiaries. Book a ticket for the online talk on 9th April at [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk) to learn more.

With all the warmer weather we have been experiencing, our plants don't seem to know what's going on! My pretty tete a tete's are flowering along with the delicate snowflakes, the latter usually long finished flowering before the former make an appearance. I've got several lovely hyacinths popping up around the back garden which really bring a pop of colour where needed. With their distinctive scent, hyacinths are among the most popular spring bulbs. They are very suitable for growing in borders, rock gardens and containers. Hyacinths grow in any ordinary garden soil that drains easily, preferring a position in full sun.

Meanwhile, the many containers of aeoniums, stored through the winter in the back porch of the house and greenhouse, have produced their delicate yellow flowers. Many growers cut them off, but I love to see them. Aeonium succulents are some of the most unique, beautiful, and popular succulents, they are also very easy to grow and care for, and very easy to propagate. They are monocarpic succulents, meaning usually after they flower, they will die. You can take your time and enjoy the beautiful flower that your aeonium produced, but you will need to make sure that you cut them off just in time, before the flower actually dies on its own. After you cut them off, more baby plants from that cut will produce clusters.

After cutting the flower you will



It is unusual to see tete a tete and snowflakes flowering together

notice a very ugly stump that doesn't look great, see the two images. Definitely ignore that stump because it will get replaced in about a month or so with new baby clusters of aeoniums. You can see four new, reddish, succulent heads appearing in one image directly below where the flower was cut off and in the other, the new succulent heads are forming where the fleshy leaves join the stem, directly below where the cut was made. It is always quite satisfying to enjoy the flowers and then see the wonderful new growth thereafter. It is quite important to ensure that you give the aeonium enough sunlight after cutting the flower to help the succulent produce these new baby clusters.

Read more of Geoff's garden at [www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk](http://www.driftwoodbysea.co.uk)



Hyacinth at Driftwood