

# EAST DEAN AND FRISTON GARDENING CLUB **SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER**



We have had a very wet but not too cold a winter so we expect trees and plants in our gardens to start growing again in March when everything will hopefully warm up. Many members, including the writer, had bumper crops of fruit in 2025 but are not sure if they will get so much this year. We'll have to see!

Meanwhile **Jan Olive** is circulating forms for our first order of garden supplies to be delivered **w/c 16<sup>th</sup> March**. Please ensure you get your form and payment to her by **26<sup>th</sup> February** else you will be too late!

The **Club AGM** will be held on **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March** and the agenda has already been circulated with the financial statement for 2025 and the minutes of last year's meeting. After a break for the usual refreshments there will be a film on the subject of "Ponds and Water Features".

## **Committee**

Julie Wilkinson has decided to leave the Committee and we thank her for her generous contribution as Membership Secretary. Tony Deadman has also decided to stand down as Chairman but is happy to continue as a committee member.

The other members, including Paul Richards who was co-opted last year, have agreed to continue. The club is therefore urgently seeking either another committee member or someone to take over as Chairman. Frances has already circulated this request and we are awaiting responses from members. The Gardening Club is in very good heart with a stable membership it will suffer if this situation remains unresolved.

## **Tates Loyalty Cards**

To further clarify matters, their new schemes operate on an individual basis and give similar benefits to those from the cards we used to distribute. The Gardening Club will therefore not have any future involvement and anyone interested in joining Tates' Loyalty Schemes is welcome to sign up by visiting in person or going online.

## 2026 Subscriptions

For those who have not renewed their subscription of **£10 for 2026** please note the cut-off date of **February 28<sup>th</sup>** is fast approaching and anyone who has not paid by then will be deemed as **'lapsed'** meaning no more communications and **no more newsletters!** If this applies to you **please contact Keith right away on 01323 423529** to avoid this happening.



## COMING SPRING EVENTS

### 2026 Coach Outings



#### Ramster Garden – Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May

The coach is now full and there is a waiting list. For those who have a place Keith is requesting immediate payment of **£30 per person** to secure your booking.

#### Polesdon Lacy – Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July

At the time of writing there are some places available so please contact Keith if interested. Prices are **£21 per person** for National Trust members and **£37 pp** otherwise. These prices are all inclusive of the coach hire, the gardens and admission to the house.



## SPRING MEETINGS



We have invited back **Irene Wilson** of Butler's Farmhouse on **Tuesday April 14<sup>th</sup>**, this time to tell us about some **"Secret Gardens of Sussex"**. Irene has become well-know to us in her role of East Sussex County Organiser for the NGS so she has an intimate knowledge of gardens in this area and it is expected that she will be telling us about some of the ones we are less likely to have heard of.

On **12<sup>th</sup> May** we look forward to another presentation by **Jacqueline Aviolet** titled **“I am a Tulip, What are You?”** We are not sure what to expect but judging by her previous visits, including at our recent Christmas Tea we know it will be amusing and perhaps interlaced with some mildly suggestive comments! That being the case she does carry out thorough research into her subject matter so we will certainly be informed as well as entertained.



## Winter Events

We had our **Christmas Tea** on December 9<sup>th</sup> where we were welcomed with a festive drink and settled down to hear Jacqueline Aviolet’s talk on “Nuts”. Although coming with a list of twelve varieties she only managed to cover four of them in the time available. We learned that Turkey grows the greatest number of hazelnuts and they are largely used to make Ferrero Rocher and Thorntons chocolates and 365000 tonnes/pa apparently goes into Nutella spread. Filberts and cobnuts are variations of hazelnuts we also familiar with.



Going on to coconuts which are not nuts at all, Jacqueline explained that all parts of the tree and its nuts can be used for one thing and another as well as being eaten and they make very useful windbreaks in exposed tropical and coastal regions. One must “stand from under” when the fruits are ripe or being picked to avoid potentially fatal results!

The next subject was peanuts which are used to make “ground nut” oil used in paint and varnish as well as multifarious applications in cooking. The plants and roots are a valuable source of nitrogen-fixing bacteria for composting and there was a mention of the infamous “Ground Nut Scheme” in the late 1940’s designed to grow large numbers of peanuts in East Africa where conditions were very unsuitable and which wasted a lot of government money!

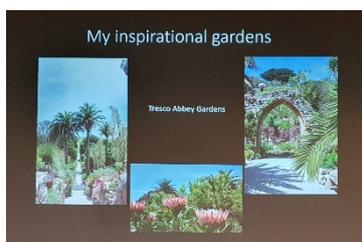


Brazil nuts are very nutritious but are now in short supply due to climate change and deforestation in the Amazon Jungle. We know Jackie could have told us more but at this point it definitely was time for tea with cake and minced pies and were delighted she could stay and enjoy this with us! She had also brought a selection of rose plants for sale which proved very popular.

Finally we had the raffle where about 30 prizes were given out to those lucky enough to have winning tickets. Mant thanks to everyone who helped in setting tables, providing the eats and drinks and clearing up afterwards.

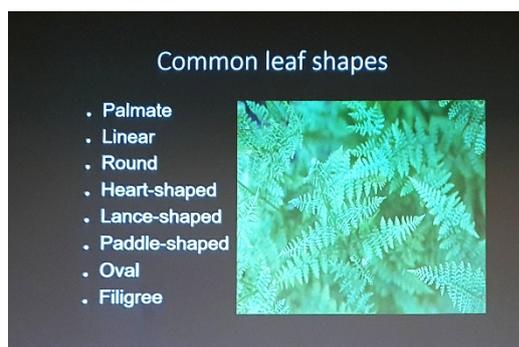


Following the recent legacy January is now the month we have our **annual “Leonore Corney Talk”**. This time we had invited Philip Oosterbrink to tell us about **“Creating a Lush Foliage Garden”**.



He came to England from Holland about 25 years ago and gained inspiration from many of our famous horticultural sites including the Abbey Gardens of Tresco in the Isles of Scilly. He was sometime Head Gardener at Canterbury Cathedral and now has the same position at Walmer Castle, also in Kent.

Philip began by recounting the history of Walmer Castle and how it became the home of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. These days it is no longer lived in but the whole site is in the care of English Heritage. The gardens won a European Gardens Heritage Networks award in 2024 and it is now an RHS Partner Garden so its members can visit free of charge at nominated times.



The original moat is now dry and Philip has used some of this space to create a “Jungle Garden”. We might have imagined it would consist of tender “tropical” species but he pointed out that this was a misconception. Jungle gardens can be created in any climate and it is important to select hardy plants. These should be densely packed, meaning that fewer weeds will grow,

less watering is needed and the environment will be more wildlife-friendly. He then showed us a slide describing the different types of leaves followed by others showing species by leaf shape. To get a good visual effect one should not place plants with similar leaves next to each other. Linear leaves are useful to direct the eye towards key features and there are a range of colours as well as



different shades of green to give further interest. Philip showed pictures of some established gardens to show what could be achieved, including a small one at Kew which is sometimes open through the NGS.

Finally he described the foliage garden he has created behind his house near Walmer. It is quite small but densely packed in the style he recommended. Because of this it requires minimal attention and, in his words, **it looks amazing!**

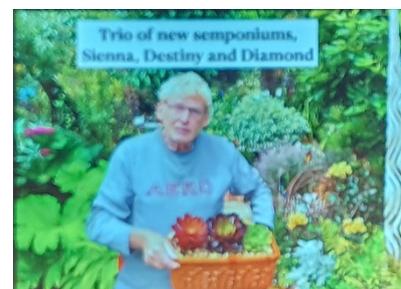


We tend to judge our own gardens on the variety and colours of the flowers we grow so it was very interesting to discover the effects one could achieve simply with leaves!

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For our final Winter meeting on **February 10<sup>th</sup>** we invited back **Geoff Stonebanks** of **Driftwood Garden** in Bishopstone. Last year he told us how he had developed this very distinctive garden after his retirement from the Post Office 20 years ago, and his subsequent achievements. This time his presentation centred round one of his keen interests, namely succulent plants. He described this as an obsession which started in 2012 and since then has amassed a vast collection which he proceeded to describe.

He showed a large number of slides in quick succession which listed different species and displayed his own favourites of these. Succulents store water in their leaves and stems which enables them to withstand high temperatures and thrive in dry conditions. Many are monocarpic ie they flower once and then die off, however their leaves and stems can provide a vibrant succession of colours during their lifetime.



### **The main types listed were:-**

Aloes, Agaves, Aeoniums, Mangaves, Cacti, Crassulas, Echivarias, Euphorbias, Sedums and Semponiums,



and Geoff has succeeded in growing varieties of all of these in the considerably wetter and cooler climate of Seaford. His free-draining chalky soil is ideal and there is plenty of sun in the warmer months, but they absolutely hate cold and damp conditions which causes them to rot. Geoff explained how he plants succulents at an angle rather than horizontally so

**Aloe**

- Attractive house plant
- Spiky, fleshy leaves
- Serrated at edges.
- Love some summer sunshine
- Mine go in garden
- Produce yellow/orange tubular flowers.



water runs off easily. Most cannot withstand frost so they must be kept under cover in winter, which also keeps them dry. His solution is to grow them all in pots using a mixture of grit with a little peat-free compost and then covered with more grit. These are buried in the beds in his garden during the summer, then lifted out in the autumn and stored in a large greenhouse. He showed a slide of this completely packed with hundreds of plants which made a very colourful display in its own right.

Although Geoff has purchased many varieties, sometime at considerable expense, he has been very successful in propagated new plants. Succulents readily grow new stems, described as “pups”, which can be carefully cut or broken off. However the next step breaks most rules of propagation in that we have all watched eminent gardeners such as Monty Don armed with a

**Aeoniums at Driftwood**



<p><b>Aeonium</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Many different types</li> <li>* Tall &amp; dark</li> <li>* Low and flat</li> <li>* Variegated varieties too</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aeonium Sunburst</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Rosette 15-20 cm</li> <li>* Spoon shaped leaves on grey stems</li> <li>* Leaves yellow with green central stripes</li> <li>* Reddish pink tints on edges when exposed to sunlight</li> </ul>	<p><b>Aeonium Schwarzkop</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Evergreen with open habit</li> <li>* Rosette</li> <li>* Deep blackish/purple leaves</li> <li>* Panicles small starry bright yellow flowers</li> </ul>
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handful of polythene bags in which to quickly place their cuttings to avoid them drying out. Succulent cuttings need to be set aside for a day or two for the tips to callus over before planting in a pot filled with a coarse blend of grit and compost. The pot should then be watered and left in a dry position so the pups can develop roots. Hints on growing and watering are listed and will be useful for any of our members who either already grow these plants or would like to give them a try.

**General Positioning of Succulents**

- Place in relatively dry locations.
- Ensure they receive full sun.
- South or east facing window good.
- That said some do like a more shaded location.
- Always check growing requirements.
- If it looks unhappy, try relocating.

**General Succulent Watering Guidance**

- Usually a small amount Spring to Autumn.
- Always check before watering.
- Let compost dry out between times.
- Can tolerate some neglect.
- Ideally water from base to avoid leaf rot and form stronger root system.

Due to advancing years Geoff has been obliged to reduce the amount of physical effort required to maintain Driftwood. Growing succulents has proved to be ideal as they provide an interesting display throughout the year and thrive on neglect!