



Mediterranean Gardening France

www.mediterraneangardeningfrance.org



JANUARY 2021

Dear members and friends,

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES IN FRANCE

Due to French government guidelines to reduce the transmission of Covid 19, our activities continue to be very limited. A provisional future programme is below:

The 2021 MGF Annual General Meeting Wednesday 19 May, Pont-du-Gard



We hope to be able to hold this event at the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Pont du Gard. A meeting room has been booked, then lunch in the restaurant and a guided visit to the third level of the bridge.

Nearer the time it will become clear whether we are able to go ahead with the day as planned, or whether it will need to be adapted, or cancelled. We will keep you informed.
For information contact [Christine Daniels](#).

Wednesday 2 June 2021, Simiane la Rotonde, Alpes-de-Haute-Provence A visit to the gardens of the Abbaye de Valsaintes and a talk on using essential oils in the garden



We have a new date for this visit to the 7th century Cistercian Abbaye de Valsaintes. The gardens are classed as a Jardin Remarquable and include a dry garden, with 350 plant species; an ecological potager, using permaculture techniques and a rose garden, where one follows a path tracing the history of roses (550 species). At an altitude of 600m, the abbey is ideally situated for roses which benefit from cooler nights.

The visit will be divided into two parts: in the morning, a guided 1h30 visit of the gardens (dry garden, roses, potager) with Jean-Yves Meignen.

This will be followed by a 30' guided tour of the church and demonstration of Gregorian chant. In the afternoon Jean-Yves will give us a talk and demonstration on using essential oils in the garden, including making blends for specific uses and how to apply them.

For more information, contact [Frances Horne](#).

Postponed events

Cesseroas, Aude

A visit to Liz and Jacques Thomson's garden and a talk on Persian Gardens

To be re-scheduled to a date in 2021

For information contact [Chantal Guiraud](#)

Beaumes-de-Venise / Le Barroux, Vaucluse

A walk and a visit to Tony Stone's garden, La Jeg.

To be re-scheduled to spring 2021

For information, contact [Tilly Chambers](#).

Grignan and Nyons, Drôme

A guided rose walk and a visit to an ecological fair

To be re-scheduled to spring 2021

For information, contact [Jan Morgan](#).

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Plant fairs and open gardens

10/11 April 2021	Plantes Rares et Jardin Naturel	Sérignan-du-Comtat (Vaucluse)
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Hortus Programme

All MGF members are welcome to join Hortus activities. For more information about Hortus, go to the [website](#). To book a place for any of the events in the Hortus programme, contact [Chantal Maurice](#).

NEWS AND INFORMATION

New recommended nursery – Vetiver Spain

The MGF list of recommended nurseries has just added a new name, that of **Vetiver Spain**.

This nursery is a major supplier of Vetiver grass (*Chrysopogon Zizanioides*), a clumping grass that is used to fight erosion and to stabilise slopes. Vetiver can also be used as a wind block to protect fragile young trees. Vetiver planted in the spring and summer will grow to 1-2 metres before the young trees are planted in autumn. It is also popular as animal fodder. Oil extracted from its roots is used in cosmetics, aromatherapy, herbal skincare and ayurvedic soap.

Vetiver typically grows to around 150 cm in height, though under favourable conditions it can grow 3 metres tall. It is resistant to drought, frost, fire, flood and grazing by animals.

Vetiver Spain has been cultivating and selling Vetiver throughout the EU for about 10 years. The strain cultivated is known as Monto or Sunshine and is a sterile non-invasive plant. **Vetiver Spain** also sells Moringa Seedlings, Organic Moringa Powder, Comfrey Plants and some local trees and exotic trees from Africa.

To see various other Vetiver applications or the fabulous colours of vetiver go to **Vetiver Spain's** website to visit the photo gallery: <https://vetiverspain.com/vetiver-photo-gallery>.

To view a short video, go to: https://youtu.be/rjTmb_LL2uo.

For many other videos, go to: <https://www.vetiverspain.org/youtube.html>.

Vetiver Spain

Anna and David Sterling

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Email: info@vetiverspain.com

Website: <https://vetiverspain.com/> and the Data site <https://www.vetiverspain.org/home.html>

January 2021 update to the seed list

An article by the seed list coordinator, Chantal Guiraud

Thank you once again to all the generous donors who have enriched our seed list, which currently stands at almost 500 taxa. Naturally, due to the pandemic, the number is a little lower than in previous years as I have been unable to visit any gardens other than my own, nor could I walk in the garrigue, and therefore could not harvest as many seeds as I would usually do. I could only focus on my garden and wait for your donations to arrive.

Notwithstanding this, we have a great selection and I think some of you will find it difficult to choose. To help you, I am highlighting a few of my favourite plants from the new list. They are all resistant to drought and mostly Mediterranean.

	<p><i>Achillea umbellata</i> Recommended by Olivier Filippi. This beautiful ground cover requires very little maintenance, thanks to its allelopathic properties (it diffuses chemical compounds that limit the germination of competing species). In addition, it is very resistant to cold, grows well in alkaline soils and withstands root competition if planted below deciduous trees and shrubs. Native to Greece, it has pure white flowers in April-May.</p>
	<p><i>Asphodelus ramosus</i> From the Mediterranean basin, similar to <i>A. microcarpus</i>, and a sacred flower in Greek and Roman mythology, still of symbolic importance today in Corsica, Greece and Italy. In my garden, it has white flowers from March to May and disappears in summer. This is why it needs no water during the hottest time of the year as it is dormant at this time. A good climate adaptation strategy!</p>

	<p><i>Cenolophium denudatum</i> or Baltic parsley This rare perennial is one for people like me, who love umbellifers. Vigorous and remarkably adaptable, it is tolerant of cold, drought and heavy clay soils and seeds itself easily. It has white flowers and has been awarded an AGM by the RHS. Once established, it needs no watering in summer. It could happily partner with <i>Papaver rhoeas</i> Mother of Pearl Group (available from our list).</p>
	<p><i>Ceratostigma plumbaginoides</i> The creeping plumbago, that slowly forms a dense ground cover even on dry, stony soils. It has intensely blue flowers from July to October and thrives in all soils and with root competition.</p>
	<p><i>Cheirolophus crassifolius</i> This perennial is endemic to the Maltese Islands and our seeds have been contributed by a member living on Malta. It has pink/purple flowers from May to July, semi-succulent foliage, and grows to 50cm tall on the coastal cliffs.</p>
	<p><i>Cistus criticus</i> Another beautiful Mediterranean shrub with pink flowers from April to June. It is perfectly adapted to drought, grows on all types of poor, stony soils and tolerates root competition.</p>
	<p><i>Dianthus anatolicus</i> A plant with allelopathic properties, recommended by Olivier Filippi. It forms a neat cushion, 25 cm high, with white or pink flowers in May and June. Originally from Turkey, as the name suggests.</p>
	<p><i>Dodonaea viscosa</i> 'Purpurea' Although this shrub is not Mediterranean it deserves attention because there are not many shrubs with purple foliage. It has reddish green-bronze foliage that turns purplish red in the autumn and reaches a height of 3 - 4m. Once well established, it will tolerate drought. As this is a natural cultivar, I hope that seedlings produced from these seeds will have the same foliage as the parents.</p>

	<p><i>Drimia pancratiion</i> Another wild flower from the island of Malta, this one being very similar to <i>Drimia maritima</i>.</p>
	<p><i>Echinops spinosissimus</i> A beautiful bluish-grey thistle, native to Greece, Sicily and the Middle East. Growing to 1m high, it flowers in May-June and may re-seeded abundantly.</p>
	<p><i>Euphorbia rigida</i> This plant is a must for the Mediterranean garden. Recommended by Olivier Filippi, it has long-lasting yellow flowers and offers year-round interest. It requires no maintenance due to its allelopathic properties and no water other than that from the sky.</p>
	<p><i>Gladiolus communis</i> The gladiolus of Byzantium grows wild in Spain, Sicily and North Africa and is much hardier than its taller cousins in South Africa. It has bright pink flowers and adapts to all soils. In my garden I noticed it didn't like root competition.</p>
	<p><i>Liriope muscari</i> Despite its Japanese origin, this perennial is very suitable for dry gardens and can be grown around the base of evergreen trees or in a shady corner. Reaching a height of 30 cm, the purplish mauve flowers appear from August to November.</p>

	<p><i>Lomelosia cretica</i> Recommended by Olivier Filippi, this Mediterranean plant forms a neat 80 cm cushion of lavender blue flowers which bloom from March to July. It has allelopathic properties, prefers poor, stony soils, and tolerates both alkaline soils and sea spray.</p>
	<p><i>Manihot grahamii</i> Despite its provenance, this ornamental cassava from Brazil will cope with periods of drought. It can reach 3m in height (I know of a magnificent specimen growing near Montpellier). It will give your garden a guaranteed tropical look!</p>
	<p><i>Narcissus bulbocodium</i> A small Mediterranean bulb growing no taller than 10 cm, best in a rock garden. I recently sowed some seeds and they germinated in 4 weeks; however I will need to avoid touching the seedlings for at least a year because they don't like to be disturbed.</p>
	<p><i>Origanum dictamnus</i> A small Cretan gem for the rock garden, growing no taller than 20cm. It is hardy and drought resistant, with pink flowers and green bracts which turn to purple, from June to August.</p>
	<p><i>Periploca laevigata subsp. angustifolia</i> An unusual thermophilic shrub (adapts to high temperatures) from the coastal maquis of the arid regions of Spain and the Maghreb. It has small, dark red flowers.</p>

	<p><i>Salvia apiana</i> A Californian plant, and therefore drought resistant, with pinkish-white flowers from April to June, height up to 1.2m. Its silvery foliage gives off a powerful menthol-camphor scent.</p>
	<p><i>Salvia munzii</i> Another Californian salvia, this one is hardy and has pale purplish-blue flowers from June to September. It can grow to 1m tall and its grey foliage grows in whorls along the stem. Usually evergreen, in extreme drought it can lose its foliage. Remove any dead stems in spring.</p>
	<p><i>Tanacetum haradjanii</i> If you look for this pretty ground cover plant in Olivier Filippi's catalogue you will find it under another name: <i>Tanacetum densum</i> subsp. <i>amanii</i>. In my garden, it doesn't give a show of its small yellow flowers, but I don't mind because I love the elaborately cut silvery foliage. In addition, the plant has allelopathic properties and tolerates root competition from deciduous shrubs.</p>

Of course, like many of you, I was frustrated that we were unable to get together for our General Assembly last year, but this is merely a pleasure postponed. As with many unexpected events, there can be some good outcomes, and this year the pandemic gave me the opportunity to sow and test a variety of seeds. Being still in lockdown as I write to you, I am able to closely monitor the development of my seedlings. I very much hope that 2021 will bring you a year full of gardening pleasure.

Latest news:

This year, not only do we have our usual updated seed list from Chantal, but in addition, we have been offered access to the Index Seminum of the botanical garden at Château Pérouse, near Nîmes, in the Gard. This is a wonderful opportunity for plant collectors to source rare and special plants. Its website includes [a database](#) containing a mine of information about each taxon on the list. As usual, you can order up to 10 varieties, or, if you are a seed donor, up to 15 different varieties. Please add one or two alternatives in case the ones you want are out of stock.

WHAT IS IT?

In this topic, photographs of unusual plants, fruits, seeds or garden tools will be shown without the caption and readers are asked to identify them. The answer will be given in the following newsletter. The photos will also be available in the Members' Forum where you can suggest your answers. Contributions should be sent to [Roland Leclercq](#).



The "What is it?" in the December Newsletter (proposed by Pierre Bianchi) was *Agave vilmoriana*, also known as Octopus agave. This species is endemic to Mexico. It is known for its untoothed arching and twisting leaves.



Photos (Pierre Bianchi): *Agave vilmoriana*

This is the new "What is it?", proposed by Annie Nivière.
You can find a clue on the MGF website (Forum item "What is it?"). Answer in the next newsletter.



THE PLANT THAT I HATE

Michèle Bailey writes:



Eleagnus x ebbingei

Why? Because of its super-rapid growth-rate which means you have to prune it every month or else it gets to look like a sputnik. And because of its nasty thorns which leave unpleasant little wounds.

You are welcome to send a picture of the plant that you hate or of your favourite plant (rare or common), accompanied by a short text, to be published in this newsletter. Contributions should be sent to [Roland Leclercq](mailto:rolandlec@wanadoo.fr).

And finally

Remind the bright colours of the spring flowers, they will be back soon.



Photos: *Nerine bowdenii* 'Codora' and pink *Gaura lindheimeri*, Mixed flowers, *Cistus x purpureus*

Best wishes and Happy New Year

Roland Leclercq

Newsletter editor

Please send contributions to this newsletter to: rolandlec@wanadoo.fr