



Mediterranean Gardening France

www.mediterraneangardeningfrance.org

MARCH 2021

Dear members and friends,

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES IN FRANCE

The 2021 MGF Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 19 May at 17.00 (French time), via Zoom

We had hoped to be able to hold this event at the UNESCO World Heritage Site, Pont du Gard. However, as it seems unlikely that by May large gatherings of people will be permitted, or advisable, the committee has decided to postpone the Pont du Gard event until 2022.

Instead, we plan to hold a virtual AGM via Zoom. This will be at 17.00 (French time) in order that MGF members living in North America will be able to join in. Details about how to take part will be circulated in the next few weeks.

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

We will decide on new dates for these events when future possibilities become clearer.

Cesseras, Aude

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

For information contact [Chantal Guiraud](#)

Baumes-de-Venise / Le Barroux, Vaucluse

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

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

Grignan and Nyons, Drôme

A guided rose walk and a visit to an ecological fair

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

Salvias

An article by Liz Runciman that appeared in the South Australian MGS Newsletter in December (reproduced with permission).

These are six very tough salvias that I have in my seaside garden (Myponga Beach). Conditions are harsher and drier than the Adelaide area. They are all from winter rainfall areas of the world, and once established, they don't need supplementary watering, and are all tolerant of limestone soils. An added bonus is that rabbits will not eat them.



Salvia apiana

This is a Californian salvia with large silvery leaves. The plant grows to about a metre or more, and the branches of small white flowers rise above the foliage in the spring. When you brush against it, the leaves release a strong aromatic scent. The soil should be well drained. My plants seem impervious to summer heat.



Salvia aurea

This plant was for many years known as *S. africana-lutea*. It is a shrubby evergreen, with greyish green foliage, growing to a metre and a half. The flowers vary from orange to rust, and appear all year round. They fade on the plant, retaining their shape and turning light brown, which gives the plant interest in all seasons. It is resistant to strong winds and salt-laden air. I have found it to be a bit of a thug unless you keep an eye on it as it self seeds. Apparently, the leaves make a pleasant tea though I've never tried this!



Salvia chamelaeagna

This is a very tough slow growing salvia with bright green foliage and which grows to a metre or more. The bright blue flowers appear from November to May. It is sometimes sold as Salvia 'African Sky'.



Salvia lanceolata

A relatively fast-growing shrub, a metre high. The foliage is grey-green and the flowers an unusual dull rose-red. It is very long flowering, from September through to June. It needs a light prune after flowering to keep it tidy.



Salvia muiirii

A very pretty tough salvia that grows naturally into a round cushion shaped bush. A little light pruning every so often keeps it compact. Its little blue flowers cover the plant throughout the summer. It has tiny olive green leaves.



Salvia namaensis

Fresh bright green lacy foliage characterise this salvia. It is fast growing, and the pale blue flowers appear from July onwards. It grows to just under a metre. The plants I have are an Australian selection called 'Finngrove', which are larger than the species.

Maureen Bristol, a member from South Africa who has a second home in the Vaucluse, writes:

It has been more than a year since we have been able to explore and travel in Provence. It is so special to be able to interact and meet with other gardeners and exchange ideas.

Knowing that I was going to be stuck in South Africa, I made an effort to plant in winter, consequently my spring garden was lovely. Gardening kept me busy and you certainly reap the rewards for your labour.



This year we have had more than the usual quota of rain so my roses have tended to get disease earlier than usual. The fungal spores must be thick in the air and there is still more rain to come. I am preparing my beds for another winter planting because I don't think France will allow anyone in from South Africa at the moment.

Last October, we had a short trip to Cape Town to go to the Yo-Yo Ma concert held at the Kirstenbosch gardens, and we went to see the wild flowers on the west coast, just two hours' drive from Cape Town. I was blown away by the vistas of colour as far as the eye could see.



There were clusters of different varieties next to each other, it was amazing. When I touched the soil, it was soft and spongy as if it was full of nutrients and compost. This was surprising because the Cape has high winds and you would expect all the compost to be blown away, but the thick ground cover seems to retain all the humus and probably retains water too. I would highly recommend a visit. The park is only open for about two months while the flowers are blooming. There are many other parks up the west coast, all the way to Nieuwoudtville. Here are some of the wild flowers we saw:



The orange flowers are probably *Dimorphotheca sinuata* (local name: Namaqualand Daisy), the small yellow ones are *Grielum humifusum* (local name: Pietsnotjie) and the blue-purple flowers are *Felicia australis* (local name: Sambreeltjies). *Ursinia* sp., the African Daisy, appears in shades of yellow and orange.

Galanthus and Companion Plants in Greece – a talk, in English, by Melvyn Jope



This illustrated talk was given in January, via Zoom, to members of our partner association, Mediterranean Plants and Gardens. The slide show and talk are now available on Vimeo <https://vimeo.com/500372119>. Thanks to David Mason for arranging this.

Photo: *Galanthus graecus*

Planting Design with maintenance in mind – a talk, in English, by James Basson



James and Helen Basson, of Scape Design, who were the speakers at our 2019 AGM, gave this very interesting talk, via Zoom, on how planting design can be adapted to take account of the needs of garden maintenance. It was organised by Angela Durnford, Head of MGS Italy. You can watch the recording [here](#).

Garden Masterclass – Le Jardin Champêtre

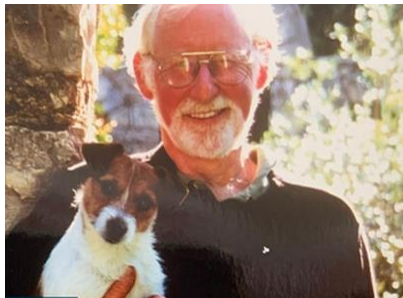


MGF members Imogen Checketts and Kate Dumbleton, owners of Le Jardin Champêtre, a garden and nursery, in Caunes-Minervois, recently participated in the Garden Masterclass series of on-line talks. Watch the video here:

[Le Jardin Champetre - a garden in south-west France - YouTube](#)

You can access other talks in this series [here](#).

William Waterfield



Gill Clarke writes:

It is with great sadness we learned of the death of William Waterfield. His garden, *Le Clos du Peyronnet*, was a favourite visit for Mediterranean gardening groups. A must when visiting Menton. The property has been owned and developed by William and his family for more than a century and, over the past 50 years, he has acquired near-legendary fame among garden-lovers all over the world.

The garden is a protected historic monument but visits will not be the same. We will sorely miss his expertise. Always welcoming, a fund knowledge and of stories. All who met him and visited his so special garden have their own personal memories.

Read more about the garden in this article:

[Le Clos du Peyronnet, France: The legendary English Riviera garden of William Waterfield - Country Life](#).

Support your local nursery

MGF member Nicola D'Annunzio recently went to Pépinière la Soldanelle in Rougiers to buy some plants. Many of you will remember visiting this wonderful nursery and the demonstration given by the owners, Christian and Sylvie Mistre on plant propagation. Nicola was very shocked to learn that she was only the second customer to visit the nursery in six weeks! With plant fairs having been cancelled for the last 12 months, Christian explained that he and other small specialist nursery owners are very concerned about their survival. In contrast, big generalist nurseries who sell by internet are apparently doing very well, with sales increasing.

It is very important that the small independent plant specialists, like La Soldanelle, who have done so much to encourage Mediterranean gardening, are able to continue to trade. Please support your local nursery by going there to buy plants. You can find a list of nurseries recommended by members on the MGF [website](#).

Is it helpful or necessary to sow seeds at home?

Pierre Bianchi writes:



Seeds of *Ricinus communis*

Photo: John Fielding

For many years, with devotion and dedication, Chantal Guiraud has carefully maintained the MGi seed collection. However, she tells me that the resource is underutilised.

This is a shame and I am taking this opportunity to motivate gardeners by reminding you:

- that many plants do not respond well to cuttings taken by amateurs.
- that plants produced by large commercial nurseries, even though many and varied, are often stereotypical and grown in sheltered conditions on artificial peat-based substrates. When multiplication is vegetative it can result in uniformity and genetic poverty, which makes it difficult for these plants to thrive in the bright sunshine and poor quality soils of many Mediterranean gardens. Of course, there are also real nurserymen, who sow on substrates suitable for subsequent garden cultivation and who harden-off young plants in the open air before offering them for sale to limit planting shock, and these nurseries should be sought out and visited.
- in contrast, seedlings produced from seeds of diversified origin have better genetic potential. Sowing seeds allows us to obtain plants not found in the trade, and undoubtedly the act of sowing seeds and raising young plants allows the gardener to create a beautiful garden without having too many failures. Indeed, ordering seeds can be a more considered act than buying a flowering plant. First, one must research both the needs of the plants envisaged and the growing conditions you can offer them. The raising of the seedling, especially if you are observant and passionate, will give you clues about the speed of growth and the needs of the plant. As the seedling develops you can think about the optimal moment to plant it out in the garden, taking into account climatic conditions. It is thus more likely to thrive than bought-in plants. In addition, in general, propagation from seeds results in several plants, which provides the opportunity to create groups of plants of the same species which is more natural and more aesthetic than planting a single example of a species. If you have too many plants of one kind, give them as gifts, or exchange them with other members, together with instructions on how to care for them. This will give pleasure to both parties and improve the diversity of our gardens.

Have I convinced you? If so, study the seed list, there is a tremendous variety and for some of them you will need to do some research.

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 January Newsletter (proposed by Annie Nivière) was *Periploca graeca* (the silk vine).



This plant in the family *Apocynaceae* is native to Eastern and Mediterranean Europe, Middle East, Asia Minor and Caucasus. It is a deciduous climber growing to 8-9 m. Flowers in June-July.

Photo: Hubert Nivière

The new "What is it?", is proposed by Pierre Bianchi:



A clue: our South American readers will find the answer more easily.

THE PLANT THAT I HATE/ MY FAVOURITE PLANT

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:RolandLeclercq)

AND FINALLY

Cabbage: a familiar kitchen-garden vegetable about as large and wise as a man's head
Ambrose Pierce (American writer, poet and journalist, 1842-1914)

Best wishes
Roland Leclercq
Newsletter editor

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