



Mediterranean Gardening France

www.mediterraneangardeningfrance.org

JANUARY 2023

Dear members and friends



PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES IN FRANCE

Thursday 16 February at 14.30 Montpellier

Apothecary collection (*Droguier*), Faculty of Pharmacy (co-organization with Hortus)



Chantal Guiraud is organizing a visit to the apothecary collection (*droguier*) of the Montpellier Faculty of Pharmacy on Thursday February 16 at 14.30. Admission is 10 euros per person. The visit lasts approximately 1h30.

Address of the Faculty: 15 Avenue Charles Flahault 34090 Montpellier. Transport: Tram line 1 Boutonnet stop. "La Ronde" bus stop at La Domitienne.

If you come by car, on entering, the car park is on the left. Press the intercom to signal to the caretaker that you have come to visit the Droguier. It is located at Bât D 1st floor in the central corridor. Disabled access is possible by elevator. To enter the main Hall of the Faculty, there is an access ramp on the right along the building.

Numbers are not limited, but in order to organise the day, please register as soon as possible with [Chantal Guiraud](#)

To get you in the mood, we recommend reading a detective novel by Yves Desmazes entitled '*Au messenger de Montpellier*'.

Photo: Droguier, Montpellier Faculty of Pharmacy © Geneviève Motsch, portraitiste

Thursday 2 March, Château Pérouse, Saint-Gilles, Gard
A seed workshop with Chantal Guiraud and the botanists at Château Pérouse



If you wish to attend and have any preferences as to what sort of plants might be discussed at the workshop, please write to Chantal.

For example, a particular type of plant, such as bulbs, annuals or biennials, or a specific genus.

Photo: *Gladiolus italicus* seeds © John Fielding
To book, please contact [Chantal Guiraud](#)

Late April 2023: Le Barroux, Vaucluse



Domaine les Baies Goûts - Hedwige Lauwaert and Nanouk Pelen are organising a day near the Dentelles de Montmirail. In the morning we will take a guided walk in one of the vineyards discovering how the vines are grown along ecological principles with a view to sustaining biodiversity. There should be a profusion of wild flowers at this time of year. The walk will be followed by an on-site picnic and wine tasting. In the afternoon, a visit is planned to a member's garden in the hills near the Dentelles de Montmirail

More details and precise date to follow in February. For more information, contact [Hedwige Lauwaert](#).
Photo : Dentelles de Montmirail

Mid May 2023: Irises and Peonies in the Drôme



Nanouk Pelen and Hedwige Lauwaert are planning a day trip to the south of Valence to visit two specialist plant nurseries cultivating irises and peonies, respectively. Each nursery cultivates over 600 varieties which should be at their best at this time of year.

These visits will be preceded by a guided visit and picnic to the Jardin des Sables in Montvendre, which we were unable to visit during our previous two-day tour in October 2022 due to torrential rain. Those wishing to visit the Jardin Zen d'Erik Borja could stay on an extra day, as this stunning garden is in the vicinity.

More details and precise date to follow in February. For more information, contact [Nanouk Pelen](#).
Photo : *Paeonia officinalis*

Thursday 1 June, Château Pérouse, Saint-Gilles, Gard
The MGF 2023 Annual General Meeting



Save the date!

We hope to make this a two-day event and are looking at options for garden visits in the area.

Photo: The river garden at Château Pérouse

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Saturday 21 January at 12.00 French time (11.00 UK time)

Lecture in English on the garden of La Mortola in Ventimiglia, Italy



The MPG annual winter lecture will take place via Zoom. It will be preceded by business reports from the MPG management committee.

The lecture, by Alasdair Moore, Head of Gardens at the Lost Gardens of Heligan, in Cornwall, UK, will explore La Mortola, the Mediterranean garden overlooking the sea in Ventimiglia, created by Sir Thomas Hanbury. Alisdair has written a book on the subject and will explain the history of the garden and the link to Heligan.

To book, go to [Winter meeting and Hanbury Gardens](#) (under “Events – Upcoming”. At the end of the application form you are asked whether you’re a member of MPG. If someone is a member of MGF and not MPG they should select “No” and a new menu will appear where they can enter that they belong to MGF)

Thursday 16 February – 19.00 French time (18.00 UK time)

Informal conversation and quiz on Zoom led by horticulturist John Fielding. This is a fun annual event, not at all competitive! You don’t have to say your quiz answers out loud, and you don’t need to say what your score is. It’s simply an opportunity to inter-relate with other members, privately test your plant knowledge, and chat if you want to.

Saturday 22 to Saturday 29 April 2023

Plant hunting in Croatia



Photo: *Euphorbia characias* above Trogir

MPG is offering a primarily botanical tour of Croatia in minibuses, starting in Dubrovnik, and ending in Zagreb, starting with a little sightseeing in old Dubrovnik. Some days will be in Mediterranean-climate areas near the sea and others inland in the cooler Velebit highlands and Plitvice National Park. The botanical guide is Chris Gardner.

See <https://www.medpag.org/events/upcoming-events/plant-hunting-in-croatia-april-2023/> and Contact [Heather Martin](#) to register ([one place left](#)).

Saturday 27 May to Tuesday 6 June

Epirus, Northern Greece

MPG is planning an expedition in north-west mainland Greece starting at the end of May, led by Graham Kendall. More information will be available in January.

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Hortus Programme

28 January	Les grimpanes dans les jardins	Montferrier sur Lez, Hérault
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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

January 2023 update to the seed list

Chantal Guiraud writes:

I would like to thank once again the generous donors who have made it possible to add 81 new species to our seed list. These seeds come from Belgium, Cyprus, France, Greece, Malta, Morocco, Norway, Spain and the U.S.A.

Furthermore, Jan-Willem Vos of the Château Pérouse has most generously made available to MGF members his *Index Seminum* containing around 1600 taxa, for which the link is [here](#). The seed from this list should be ordered as usual, through Chantal.

I'd like to propose a small selection of plants that delighted me when I came across them by chance in my travels, walks and botanical expeditions. The seeds of all these plants should be sown immediately as they remain viable for only a short time.

- David Tivol, President of the California Horticultural Society, has given us seed of *Amelanchier laevis*, native to Canada and the eastern United States. It is a small (7 to 8 m) and slow-growing fruit tree which is of interest throughout the year. Its small, scented, bee-attracting white flowers in spring are followed in summer by small, sweet edible fruits, known in Quebec as 'little pears'. Then in autumn its deciduous leaves turn an orange-red colour. It requires rich, cool soil but can withstand periods of dryness. However it does not tolerate alkaline conditions.
- Françoise Salomon lives in Belgium and every year sends me very interesting seeds. This year we include in our list two foxglove species from her garden which grow very well in semi-shade, even in soil that is dry in summer, and which tolerate calcareous soils. *Digitalis parviflora*, a biennial native to Spain and produces brown/reddish bronze flowers in July/August, while *Digitalis grandiflora*, a very striking perennial, has pale yellow flowers from June to August.



Amelanchier laevis



Digitalis parviflora



Digitalis grandiflora

- Françoise has also sent us clematis seeds. *Clematis flammula*, often seen in the garrigue, is a small climber which can reach 2 to 3 m in height with a spread of 1.5 m. Its scented white flowers appear from July to early September, after which its decorative feathery silver-grey seedheads last until winter. This pretty climber or scrambler adds a charming natural air to a hot rock garden or can be used as a groundcover on a dry slope, requiring minimal upkeep. *Clematis pitcheri* is striking for its blue bell-shaped flowers marbled with white which are produced from June to September. It can reach a height of 4 m and prefers a sunny or semi-shaded position and cool, rich, light soil. It does not tolerate soils that are waterlogged in winter or too dry in summer.



Clematis flammula



Clematis pitcheri

- Lucinda Willan has supplied us with the seed of some of the bulbous plants that grow at Sparoza (MGS garden in Greece). *Gladiolus tristis*, a truly elegant gladiolus, comes from winter-rainfall areas of South Africa where it grows on damp flats. The subtle scent of its pale creamy-yellow flowers perfumes the night in June. It is well adapted to a not too harsh Mediterranean climate since it likes soils that are moist in winter and it is dormant in summer when conditions are hot and dry. The bulbs can withstand frosts in the order of -6°C . Another very desirable geophyte is *Haemanthus coccineus*, native to the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, which produces short stems surmounted by scarlet flowers in late summer before the leaves appear. It is also well adapted to the Mediterranean climate with wet winters and dry summers but it is much less hardy than the gladiolus as it cannot withstand temperatures lower than 10°C . Its seed should be sown immediately since it rapidly loses its ability to germinate. Barely cover the seeds and keep the substrate moist at a temperature of between 16 and 18°C . This plant can be grown in a pot. Another South African bulbous plant adapted to the Mediterranean climate is *Moraea vegeta*, whose flower colour, between yellow and salmon pink, can vary according to the soil and orientation. This false iris or peacock iris withstands frosts down to -7°C for brief spells.



Gladiolus tristis

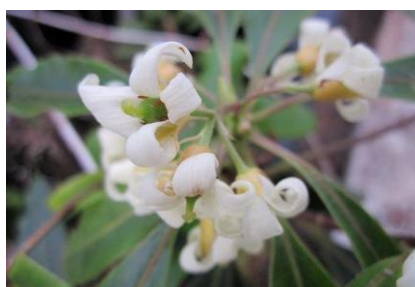


Haemanthus coccineus

- I was able to bring back from Morocco seeds of *Pistacia lentiscus* growing wild on Cape Spartel. This is a reliable shrub which can reach a venerable age and is thus indispensable for the permanent structure of a garden in a mild climate. It can attain a height of 2 m and tolerates being clipped. Its flowers are insignificant, but its dark green foliage turns red in winter. Fresh seed germinates easily in spring. I also brought back from Morocco, and specifically from the Donabo garden near Tangier, seed of *Pittosporum undulatum*. This small tree with rough bark grows rapidly and produces scented creamy-white flowers in May turning towards yellow. It is native to eastern Australia; it tolerates dry soils, alkaline conditions, salt spray and wind, as well as any orientation. In other words, it is an easy plant. The seeds should be rubbed with sand to remove the sticky substance that covers them and should then be placed in the fridge for one to two months before being sown under heat in spring.
- Finally, during a trip to Spain I discovered an admirable shrub of which I'd heard a lot but which I hadn't come across until then: *Elaeagnus angustifolia*. It is fast-growing and forms a branching shrub of a wide but supple habit reaching a height of more than 5 m and a spread of 4 m. It stands out from far off due to the clarity and moon-like shine of its ever-moving foliage. It should be planted in semi-shade (in a hot climate) in any soil, even calcareous. Once established it can do without water. The seeds should be soaked in tepid water overnight, then stratified in vermiculite or sand in the fridge for three months before being sown at room temperature.



Pistacia lentiscus



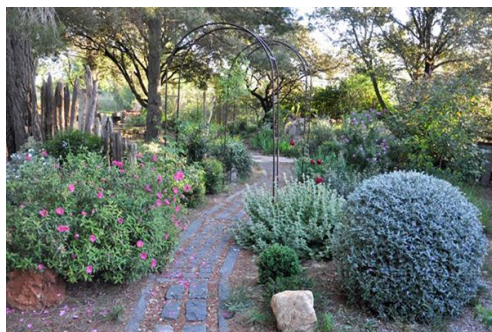
Pittosporum undulatum



Elaeagnus angustifolia

I hope that you may like to try some of these seeds and obtain satisfactory results. Let me take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy New Year, rich in botanical surprises.

New on the website



[The evolution of MGF members' gardens: Towards a 'Mediterranean' style](#)

David Bracey writes: "The gardens of Nicole de Vésian in Bonnieux and Olivier Filippi in Mèze have influenced members' garden ideas. Nicole de Vésian clearly had an eye for design, she was, after all, a designer at Hermès....."

Read David's analysis of how MGF members' gardens have evolved in the 'Gardening' section of the website.

Photo: A members' garden in Hérault



[Visits to gardens in the Drôme](#)

Jacqueline Potter and Tilly Chambers have written an account of the October visits to Erik Borja's Zen garden and to the Mexican Garden and Jardin des Rêves in Montélier.

Photo: The MGF group at the entrance to the Zen garden



[Le Jardin Zen de Erik Borja](#)

Jacqueline has also written a more detailed article about the Zen garden, and a summary of Erik Borja's talk. This included a brief history of Japanese gardens, influences, such as Feng Shui principles and the three key roles of the Japanese garden. The article is illustrated by photos by Philip Ramsell, and Hugues and Nanouk Pelen.

Photo: L'étang des nymphéas



[Gardens of Marrakesh and Tangier](#)

Chantal Guiraud has written an account of a visit to gardens in Morocco, a country very close to her heart. The trip was organised by Angela Durnford, head of MGS Italy, and included public and private gardens, contemporary and traditional, in city, countryside and coastal locations.

Photo: The garden of Veere Grenney, in Tangier

Alternatives to box hedges

David Bracey writes:

In 2021 MGF published an article, [Is there an alternative to Box?](#) which listed various alternative hedge plants to replace damaged *Buxus sempervirens*. Corokia, a plant indigenous to New Zealand, was included as a possibility, however several members questioned its ability to withstand a Mediterranean climate.

Two members volunteered to test corokia in their gardens. At one site, *Corokia x virgata* 'Frosted Chocolate' and *Corokia x virgata* 'Sunsplash' were planted in January 2022, some in full sun with manual watering and others in partial shade with automatic watering. This was repeated at two locations in the same garden.

At the end of 2022 the member wrote that "growth of all subjects was in my view rather limited, none died but I would not be super-enthusiastic about recommending corokia generally to our members".

Another member planted *Corokia x virgata* 'Frosted Chocolate' in full sun in January 2021. These were watered weekly (7-10 litres.) *Corokia x virgata* 'Sunsplash' was planted in partial shade. The report said: "In brief, the corokia in full sun died at the end of this very hot and dry summer despite watering once a week. The other one, in partial shade, is in good shape but is slow growing (15 cm in one year). Based on my experience I would not recommend corokia for a hedge in full sun. Maybe as part of a mixed hedge, with other shrubs, in partial shade."

In conclusion, these results albeit limited in scope, suggest that corokia is not a reliable hedge plant for the Mediterranean basin.

Thanks to our two volunteers who provided their time and interest.

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. Contributions should be sent to [Roland Leclercq](mailto:Roland.Leclercq).

The November "What is it?" was *Lespedeza thunbergii*



Lespedeza thunbergii, native to Asia, is a late blooming shrub. At the end of the summer, it is covered with clusters of pink flowers resembling those of the sweet pea, its cousin. Beautiful deciduous foliage, green with a blue tint, very thin and light. Perfect for covering a low wall. Hardy to -12°C

On the photo of the new "What is it" (proposed by Pierre), you will probably recognise the flowers which will give you the genus name.

But what is the species? (a clue to help: have a look on the leaves).



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

Roland Leclercq writes:

I enjoy these plants that offer us their flowers during the winter. The photos show these plants in flower at the moment in my garden. Thank you to them.



Jasminum nudiflorum



Acacia baileyana



Correa alba



Iberis semperflorans



Iris unguicularis

AND FINALLY

“Anything that is not essential, is tiring to the eyes, is detrimental to thinking and adds nothing to the whole.”

Claude Nicolas Ledoux. L'architecture considérée 1804.

The Saline Royale (Royal Saltworks) d'Arc-et-Senans, near Besançon, is the masterpiece of Claude Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1806), a visionary architect of the Age of Enlightenment. The Saline Royale is enriching its five-hectare visitor trail around the [Cercle immense](#) with a series of new gardens including “jardins en mouvement” designed by Gilles Clément. If any members are in the area, this could make an interesting visit (and website article).

Best wishes

Roland Leclercq
Newsletter editor

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