



# Mediterranean Gardening France

[www.mediterraneangardeningfrance.org](http://www.mediterraneangardeningfrance.org)

## MAY 2023

Dear members and friends

### PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES IN FRANCE

#### **Tuesday 16 May, Montvendre, Crest and Chabeuil, Drôme** **Irises, peonies and the Jardin des Sables**



Photo : Jardin des Sables

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

We will start our day visiting Pivoines Rivière, where we will be given a guided tour and talk. This specialist peony nursery near Crest, in the Drôme, was established in 1849 and has belonged to the Rivière family since then. [pivoinesriviere.com](http://pivoinesriviere.com).

We will then visit the Jardin des Sables in Montvendre, a lovely private 12000 sq m garden owned by Mme Annie Amoretti. She will explain to us how she and her husband created the garden in 1997 on a plot of empty land. Inspired by the natural look of English gardens, it is now well established with a variety of interesting and rare trees and shrubs. We will have time to enjoy our picnics in the garden.

Our day will end with a visit to a nursery specialising in a huge variety of more than 600 irises. The owner will take us around the nursery and answer questions about planting and care of the plants. [les-iris-du-grand-barbu.com](http://les-iris-du-grand-barbu.com)

Those wishing to visit the Jardin Zen d'Erik Borja could stay on an extra day, as this stunning garden is in the vicinity.

To book, contact [Nanouk Pelen](#).

#### **Thursday 18 May, Antibes, Alpes-Maritimes** **Garden visit, Domaine de l'Orangerie**



Set in the hills above Antibes, the owners of this property have, since 2018, been transforming what was a traditional heavily irrigated lawn and annual planting, to a dry garden (designed by James Basson). They have taken the bold step to replace the lawn with a garden that comprises flora from around the Mediterranean basin. This garden now relies on the natural rainfall of the area. The entrance of the property has been planted with local oak and pine, and the area around the house is now a haven for bees, birds and insects. Neither pesticides nor herbicides are used on the property.

For more information and to book, contact [Gill Clarke](#).

**Wednesday/Thursday, 31 May/1 June, Château Pérouse, Saint-Gilles and the Nîmes area**  
**The MGF Annual General Meeting and visits to gardens**



Jardin de la Chapelle



Château Pérouse



LUMA's landscape park

**Wednesday 31 May – Visits to gardens near Nîmes and a dinner**

On the day before the AGM, we will visit two gardens and have a picnic on the banks of the River Gardon.

- A private garden to the north of Nîmes, created by Emmanuel de Sauveboeuf, a passionate collector and gardener, who also created the Jardin des Oules, near Uzès.
- The Jardin de la Chapelle, a small romantic garden in Garrigues-Sainte-Eulalie, which has a great variety of roses and interesting flowers.

In the evening, there will be a dinner at the restaurant of the Logis Les Aubuns Country Hotel, Caissargues.

**Thursday 1 June - Château Pérouse, Saint-Gilles and Luma in Arles**

- A guided tour of the garden of Château Pérouse, led by the botanical team
- The Annual General Meeting of Mediterranean Gardening France
- Lunch – freshly made sweet and savoury pancakes
- A guided tour of the LUMA landscape park in Arles. The Belgian landscape architect, Bas Smets, has transformed a former industrial site into a vast park with hundreds of trees and a large pond. This tour is limited to 25 people. Duration of the visit: 1h30.

Members are welcome to join all, or just some of the elements of the programme. Please book via the booking form which was circulated at the end of March.

For a copy of the booking form, please contact [Chantal Guiraud](#)

**INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

**Thursday 18 May, 10.00am**

**Celebrate Fascination of Plants Day - A visit to Orchard of Flavours, Luz de Tavira, Portugal**

Mediterranean Gardening Association Portugal is offering a discovery visit of a new botanical garden dedicated to fruit trees and edible plants of warm climates. Miguel Cotton, the founder of Pomar dos Sabores or Orchard of Flavours, will give us a private guided tour. The garden is run as an open source educational project, see [www.orchardofflavours.org](http://www.orchardofflavours.org). There are about 240 species of fruit trees with many varieties of each species.

The number of visitors is limited and is initially reserved for MGAP members, but MGF members may request a place at [mgapevents@gmail.com](mailto:mgapevents@gmail.com). To support the project, a donation of 5 euros per person is suggested.

**Sunday 28 May to Tuesday 6 June**  
**Epirus, Northern Greece**



Photo: Meteora

This MPG expedition in north-west Greece will be led by Graham Kendall. Participants will see both Mediterranean and Balkan plants, including a relative of the African violet, *Ramonda serbica*, the lizard orchid, *Himantoglossum jankae*, and native horse chestnut trees. The scenery is outstanding, with beautiful old stone bridges, villages, chapels and monasteries. Visits include the Unesco World Heritage site of Meteora where monasteries are built on immense natural pillars. For more information: [MPG Epirus 2023](#)

Before booking, please contact [Heather Martin](#) to check availability.

**Wednesday 1 November to Thursday 9 November**  
**Rhodes, Greece**

A botanising and sight-seeing trip organised by MPG to the historically interesting and diverse Greek island of Rhodes. There will be guided exploration of the wild flora in woodland, meadows and coastal habitats as well as the island's archaeological and historical sites such as Ancient Kameiros. Depending on the weather, we can expect to see many autumn cyclamen, sternbergia, colchicum, *Crocus tournefortii*, *Spiranthes spiralis*, and ancient trees.

For more information contact [Heather Martin](#).

**OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Plant fairs and open gardens 2023**

11 -14 May	Orticola	Milan, ITALY
12-14 May	Un Printemps sous les Arbres	Saint-Brès (Hérault)
14 May	Plantes et fleurs en fête	Grospierres-en-Ardèche (07)
14 May	Foire aux plantes	La Londe les Maures (Var)
14 May	Journée des plantes	Uzès (Gard)
18 May	Fête des Fleurs & Vell'Art	Velleron (Vaucluse)
19/20/21 May	Journées des Plantes d'Albertas	Bouc-Bel-Air (Bouches-du-Rhone)
20/21 May	Foire éco biologique Naturellement!	Nyons (Drôme)
27/28 May	Marché aux Fleurs	Tarascon (Bouches-du-Rhone)
10/11 June	Open weekend - Le Jardin Champêtre	Caunes-Minervois (Aude)

**24 May, Musée Fabre, Montpellier**

***Sonder l'âme des Romains" : nature et jardin dans l'Antiquité***, par Ilse Hibold, chercheuse associée, Université de Berne.

A lecture looking at how various writers have interpreted Roman gardens and their contribution to the society of the time.

<https://museefabre.montpellier3m.fr/event/les-mercredis-de-lantiquite-3>

**2 – 4 June Rendez-vous aux Jardins**

Open gardens throughout France. This year's theme is 'Les Musiques du Jardin'

See [the website](#) for a list of participating gardens.

## NEWS AND INFORMATION

### **The MGF AGM, Thursday 1 June 2023 at Château Pérouse, Saint-Gilles**

All members should have received an invitation to attend the Annual General Meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> June and voting forms were sent out in early May. If you have not received an invitation, or have any questions, please contact the secretary, Jacqueline Potter, at [secretary@mediterraneangardening.fr](mailto:secretary@mediterraneangardening.fr)

### **Towards a semi-arid climate in Southern France: What place for Mediterranean plants?**

Pierre Bianchi (Pyrénées-Orientales) writes:

« Finding increasingly that 'Mediterranean' plants in the strict sense do not cope well with the summer heat (cistus in particular), I am turning more and more to plants which grow on the edge of the desert. Those from Australia are poorly suited to most of southern France (sensitive to cold and unsuited to alkaline soils), even if many are still interesting and I collect them.

Some plants from the American South-west can withstand cold (-8°C to -10°C), and often alkaline soils, but unfortunately do not tolerate clay. The Agavaceae family offers great possibilities, but black weevil is destroying them, with state environmental agencies seemingly unable to do anything about it.

I am testing several of them and keeping myself informed using information from books and nurseries in the USA. These plants from the American South-west may be of interest to MGF members with dry gardens in southern France, and I hope will be the subject of a future article.

In the meantime, here is some interesting reading:

- The new edition of '*Cool Plants for Hot Gardens*' by Greg Starr
- A website: [Water, use it wisely](#)

### **International partners**

Christine Daniels writes:

Now that many of us have started travelling again, I wanted to remind members that MGF has links with partner associations in many Mediterranean-climate regions of the world. If you are planning a trip to California, South Africa, Australia, Chile, Portugal, Italy, Spain or Crete you could write to our contacts there for recommendations on gardens to visit, and you will be welcome to join any events the associations may be planning.

Margot Tobin, from the Western Australia branch of the MGS, recently wrote:

"I'm always happy for people to visit – last time we had a couple of your French members, and it turned out to be a wonderful weekend for them and the whole branch! They even joined us for a pub lunch and then went off with new WAMGS friends to see a garden which wasn't in the plan. Those things are so special and should not be lost."

You can find out more about the seven associations in [Mediterranean Gardening International](#) by visiting the website. Contact information for these garden groups and for our other international partners is on the Home page of [the MGF site](#) under 'Our Partners'.

## MGF Facebook page

As Nina Guichard is no longer managing [the MGF Facebook page](#), we are looking for someone to join the team, to help in the task of putting up posts. Volunteers should have a personal Facebook account and have experience in posting information. If you are interested, please contact [Julia Fogg](#) to find out more.

## New on the website



A new section has been created in 'Gardening' to feature articles about growing vegetables and other edible plants.

Michèle Bailey has started us off with her article on [growing vegetables in containers](#). Michèle shares her experiences of growing culinary herbs, salad leaves, tomatoes, courgettes, beans, carrots, winter radish and tetragon in pots.

Photo: Courgettes growing in a pot



In addition, Chantal Guiraud and Roland Leclercq have produced a spreadsheet entitled "Fruit trees and aromatic plants for waterwise gardens".

[English](#) and [French](#) versions can be consulted on the website. These spreadsheets need to be zoomed to 125% for best viewing and will be replaced in the future by fully illustrated lists.

Photo: *Prunus persica*



In February a group of MGF and Hortus members visited the faculty of pharmacy at the University of Montpellier. Read [Chantal Guiraud's report](#) on the foundation of the dispensary in 1588 and how the current apothecary collection is used for medical research.



Elisabeth Gratraud has been visiting gardens in the north of France, and has highlighted two for our 'Gardens to Visit' list:

[Le Jardin du Mont des Récollets, Cassel, Nord](#)

[Le Jardin de Séricourt, Pas de Calais](#)

Photo : Le Jardin du Mont des Récollets

## **Plants cry out when they need watering – but humans can't hear them.**

This article by Sarah Knapton was published in TELEGRAPH SCIENCE EDITOR on 30 March 2023 and was reproduced in the April edition of the Cape Horticultural Society newsletter.

“Scientists find recordings of plants show they make occasional ultrasonic popping noises likely heard by insects and mammals. Plants were generally thought to be an uncomplaining bunch, silently enduring the ravages of neglect, drought, or disease with stoical forbearance.

Now scientists have discovered that they cry out when distressed or need watering, even though humans cannot hear their high-pitched emergency calls. Recordings of tomato, tobacco, wheat, corn and cactus show that they make occasional ultrasonic popping noises - similar to bubble wrap - which ramp up when under stress. The sounds are comparable in volume to normal human conversation but are too high for human ears to detect. However, it is likely they can be heard by insects, other mammals, and possibly other plants.

“An idyllic field of flowers can be a rather noisy place, it's just that we can't hear the sounds” said Professor Lilach Hadany from the School of Plant Sciences and Food Security at the Wise Faculty of Life Sciences at Tel Aviv University. “Our findings suggest that the world around us is full of plant sounds, and that these sounds contain information – for example about water scarcity or injury. We assume that in nature the sounds emitted by plants are detected by creatures nearby, such as bats, rodents, various insects, and possibly also other plants, that can hear the high frequencies and derive relevant information”.

Listen to a recording of grapevine sounds:

<https://cf.eip.telegraph.co.uk/store/bin-media/3d88b00a-13b2-4750-9d02-6de22c6520e0/3d88b00a-13b2-4750-9d02-6de22c6520e0-original.mp3>

The notion that plants emit sounds has been controversial, with some studies suggesting they “scream” when they are cut or uprooted. Vibration detectors have also picked up pulses emanating from plants, but it was unknown if they actually became soundwaves which could be picked up. To find out, the team placed plants in an acoustic box in a quiet, isolated basement with no background noise. Ultrasonic microphones recording sounds at frequencies of 20-250 kilohertz were set up at a distance of about four inches from each plant. The maximum frequency detected by a human adult is around 16 kilohertz. The plants were subjected to different treatments. Some had not been watered for five days, while others had their stems cut. A control group was left untouched.

The recordings showed that the plants emitted sounds at frequencies of 40-80 kilohertz with unstressed plants making a click less than one sound per hour, on average, while the stressed plants – both dehydrated and injured– emitted dozens of sounds every hour.

Water-stressed plants began emitting noises before they were visibly dehydrated, and it was also possible to identify the plant, as well as what type of stress it was suffering from. For example, a dehydrated tomato plant made a different pattern of clicks to a dehydrated cactus. Happy plants tended to be very quiet.

Watch and listen to a recording of tomato sounds:

<https://cf.eip.telegraph.co.uk/store/vid-media/27402371/27402371.mp4>

The team hopes that in future it may be possible to monitor plants and determine if they are struggling based on the pattern of noises. For example, sound recordings could be used in agricultural irrigation systems to monitor crop hydration and help distribute water more efficiently, the authors say.

'The fact that plants are making these sounds opens a whole new avenue of opportunities for communication, eavesdropping, and exploitation of these sounds,' said co-senior author Yossi Yovel, a neuro-ecologist at Tel Aviv University. How the plants are making the noises is still unclear, but the researchers suggest the popping may be caused by the formation and bursting of air bubbles in the plant's vascular system, a process called cavitation.

Other plants could also be listening in and benefiting from the sounds, the researchers believe. Previous research has shown that plants increase the concentration of sugar in their nectar when they "hear" the sounds made by pollinators.

"It's possible that other organisms could have evolved to hear and respond to these sounds" added Prof Hadany. "For example, a moth that intends to lay eggs on a plant or an animal that intends to eat a plant could use the sounds to help guide their decision."

The research was published in the journal 'Cell'.

### 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:rolandlec@wanadoo.fr).



The new "What is it?" is a tool.  
What is it used for?

Answer in the next newsletter.

### AND FINALLY

In the face of climate change, let's not be afraid to change our practices. Two quotes in this regard:

- « There is nothing wrong with change, if it is in the right direction » Winston Churchill, *Statesman, Prime Minister (1874 - 1965)*
- The second one is in French and untranslatable into English: « Face au monde qui change, il vaut mieux penser le changement que changer le pansement. » Francis Blanche, *Actor, Author, Humorist (1921 - 1974)*

Best wishes

Roland Leclercq

Newsletter editor

Please send contributions to this newsletter to: [rolandlec@wanadoo.fr](mailto:rolandlec@wanadoo.fr)