



Mediterranean Gardening France

www.mediterraneangardeningfrance.org

NOVEMBER 2023

Dear members and friends

PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES IN FRANCE

Friday 27 October, 11.00, 75 rue de la Vieille Poste, Montpellier
2024 Planning meeting for Occitanie and seed cleaning



Chantal Guiraud is hosting a meeting at her home in Montpellier to discuss ideas for activities in 2024, in Aude, Aveyron, Gard, Hérault and Pyrénées-Orientales. Come with your ideas and a picnic lunch. Those able to stay for the afternoon will participate in the annual cleaning of seeds sent in by members for inclusion in our seed collection. Please let Chantal know if you would like to attend in the morning, the afternoon, or both. chantal.gouverner@gmail.com.

Photo: *Gladiolus italicus* seeds (John Fielding)

Thursday 9 November, 11.00, Le Barroux, Vaucluse
2024 Planning meeting for the Vaucluse, Drôme and Bouches du Rhône

Event coordinators Hedwige Lauwaert and Nanouk Pelen are hosting a meeting to discuss next year's MGF activities in the Vaucluse, Drôme and Bouches du Rhône. The get together will be held at Hedwige's home in Le Barroux. Please bring your ideas and a picnic lunch, and Hedwige and Nanouk will provide coffee, tea, refreshments and cake. If you cannot be present, please email any suggestions for visits or activities in these départements to hlauwaert@gmail.com or noux@mac.com. If you would like to take part in person, please email Hedwige.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Friday 16 to Friday 23 February 2024, Paphos, Cyprus
Wild flora and historic sights of Cyprus



A trip organised by MPG based in Paphos and in Latchi on the edge of the Akamas nature reserve. Spring comes early in the eastern Mediterranean and we can expect a range of spring flowers including many endemic species of orchids. The tour will be led by Yiannis Christofides, author of two books on the plants of Cyprus.

For more information and to book, see [the Forthcoming Events page](#) of the MPG website.

Photo: *Mandragora officinarum*

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Plant fairs and open gardens 2023

10 November	Atelier - Découverte des concepts de Gilles Clement	Domaine du Rayol Rayol-Canadel-sur-Mer (Var)
18 November	Atelier - La taille au jardin	Domaine du Rayol Rayol-Canadel-sur-Mer (Var)
From July to December	Visites botaniques à la Villa Thuret See program here	Villa Thuret, Antibes-Juan-les-Pins (Alpes Maritimes)
Until 12 November	Bambouseraie : Exhibition Art et Nature	Bambouseraie, G�nerargues (Gard)
18/19 November	Les Journ�es de l'Arbre de la Plante et du Fruit	Quissac (Gard)

NEWS AND INFORMATION

New on the website



A visit to Ch teau la Coste

“On a gloriously sunny and warm September day, twelve members met for a picnic on the hill of Domaine de La Quille overlooking the extensive vineyards of Ch teau La Coste....”

Read Nanouk Pelen’s illustrated account of this visit to [the sculpture garden at Ch teau La Coste](#).

Recommended nurseries

Those of you attended this year’s AGM will remember that Roseanne Mcnamee suggested that MGF should relaunch its publicity leaflet. She volunteered to lead a small group of members to make a proposal for a new design and for methods of distribution to places where keen gardeners might see the leaflet. This could include stands at plant fairs, and a display in good quality nurseries.



The group noted that the MGF Recommended Nurseries list, as published on our website, has not been updated for some time. There are around 60 nurseries on the list, all of which have been recommended by members, but some may have changed hands or gone out of business. Equally, there may be some new nurseries which you have found which supply good quality plants suitable for Mediterranean climate gardens.

Please look at the [Recommended P pini res list](#) and send your thoughts for changes to the website editor, [Christine Daniels](#).

We’d like to know those you continue to recommend, those which we should remove from the list, and any new ideas for inclusion.

Pine needles, pine needles and pine needles



Roland Leclercq writes:

How can I use the pine needles that line my garden? A quick look on the internet doesn't give me any clues, as there are contradictory opinions, some saying that this plant waste is harmful and others that it's useful. In great despair, I turned to artificial intelligence, Chat GPT, which suggested some solutions (see below). But that's not as good as the expertise of our experienced members. So please share your experience with me ([Roland Leclercq](#)). If there are enough responses, perhaps we can do an article for the website.

The question to Chat GPT was "How can I use pine needles in my garden?"

The answer: "Pine needles, also known as pine straw, can be a valuable resource in your garden. They have several practical uses that can benefit your plants and landscaping. Here are some ways to use pine needles in your garden:

1. **Mulch:** Pine needles make excellent mulch for your garden beds. They help retain moisture, suppress weed growth, and regulate soil temperature. Spread a layer of pine needles around your plants, leaving a few inches of space around the base of each plant to prevent moisture-related issues.
2. **Acidify Soil:** Pine needles are slightly acidic, making them ideal for plants that thrive in acidic soil conditions, such as azaleas, rhododendrons, blueberries, and camellias. As pine needles break down, they gradually lower the pH of the soil, which can be beneficial for these acid-loving plants.
3. **Erosion Control:** Pine straw can be used on slopes or areas prone to erosion. It helps stabilize the soil and prevent erosion by slowing down the flow of water and protecting the soil from washing away during heavy rains.
4. **Compost:** While pine needles decompose more slowly than some other organic matter, they can still be added to your compost pile. They add carbon to the mix and improve aeration.
5. **Pathways and Walkways:** Pine needles can be used as a natural and attractive covering for garden pathways and walkways. They create a soft surface underfoot and add a rustic touch to your garden.
6. **Nesting Material:** Leave piles of pine needles in a corner of your garden for birds and other wildlife to use as nesting material. This can attract a variety of beneficial birds to your garden.
7. **Pine Needle Tea:** You can make a pine needle tea or infuse them in water to create an acidic solution for acid-loving plants. This can be used as a foliar spray or for watering plants that require acidic conditions.
8. **Crafts and Decor:** Pine needles can be used for various crafts and decorative purposes. You can weave them into baskets, wreaths, or use them as a natural element in floral arrangements and decorations.

When using pine needles in your garden, it's essential to know that they break down more slowly than some other organic materials, so they won't need to be replaced as frequently. Additionally, make sure the pine needles are free from any chemicals or contaminants and are not from diseased trees “.

Plant in the fall

David Bracey writes

Here is an extract from « [Water, use it wisely](#) ” , Sept 2023, which is appropriate for the MGF. “ Why plant in the fall? From September to early December soil temperatures are still warm, encouraging root growth [...] . Planting now allows plants to become established before next summer’s heat. Also, the cooler temperatures mean that plants need less water. It is a forgiving time of the year compared to

summer. From fall season to spring, water newly planted plants once every 3-4 days- gradually increasing the number of days between watering as the new plants get established.”

FROM OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

Visit to Cape Town

A few weeks ago, members Christine and Anthony Daniels had the opportunity to spend a few days in Cape Town, where they had lunch with Glenda Thorpe, secretary of the Cape Horticultural Society, and her husband Andrew. Christine reported that it was fun to compare notes about our two garden associations and the challenges faced by gardeners in a changing climate.

There had been very severe flooding in the Western Cape a couple of days before the visit and a number of roads were impassable, which meant it was impossible to visit some of the gardens Anthony and Christine had hoped to see. However, local garden designers and botanists, Leon Kluge and Tristan Woudberg, found a rather special alternative in the Karoo Desert National Botanical Garden, in Worcester. Christine has written a report on this colourful semi-desert garden which will be on the website soon.



Christine with Glenda Thorpe



Mesembryanthemums in the Karoo Desert Botanical Garden

If you are planning a visit to the South African Cape and would like advice on gardens to visit, MGF members can contact Glenda at info@capehorticulturalsociety.co.za.

California Horticultural Society

Dave Tivol writes :

The videos of our [Featured Presentation](#) with Gerhard Bock (plus important general announcements) and our [Plant Forum](#) from our October 16 meeting are now available for viewing on our [YouTube channel](#). We've added chapter marker links in the descriptions to make it easier to revisit parts of particular interest. You can also [view or download a PDF of the Plant Forum slides](#) from our website.



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).



June 2023 (in a pot)

The September “What is it?”, (Roland Leclercq), showed the flower and the fruits of of *Nicandra physalodes*, (Apple of Peru, Shoo-fly-plant).

This is a fast-growing annual that can reach 1 m in any direction. It grows upright, bushy and branched. The flowers are short-lived, blooming from June to October. They are blueish with a white centre, in flared cups, and close at the end of the day. The fruits that follow are protected by large bracts, forming capsules in the shape of bulging lanterns, like the physalis.

CAUTION: *Nicandra*, *Datura* and *Belladonna* belong to the same family and are all highly toxic plants! Do not eat the seeds or the foliage!



September 2023



The new "What is it?":

Pierre Bianchi writes: "My mystery plant smells of autumn and is forming buds. What is it?"

Answer in the next newsletter.

AND FINALLY

It's time to pick mushrooms

"Mushrooms grow in wet places. That's why they're shaped like umbrellas." (Alphonse Allais, French humorist and writer, 1854-1905).

Best wishes

Roland Leclercq

Newsletter editor

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