



# Mediterranean Gardening France

[www.mediterraneangardening.fr](http://www.mediterraneangardening.fr)

## MARCH 2024

Dear members and friends

### PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES IN FRANCE

#### Thursday 28 March, Le Barroux and Jonquières, Vaucluse

##### A talk by Gilles Grillet and a visit to flowering tulip fields

Organised by Hedwige Lauwaert and Nanouk Pelen

Gilles Grillet, a former Director of the Hyères School of Agriculture will give a talk, in French, entitled: *The garden, between symbolism and redemption!*

He writes: "In any act of gardening, there is a hidden meaning that stems from our unconscious and which makes us realise the choices we make are not our own. When we plant a tree, or build a pergola, we feel a satisfaction that we do not always know how to explain. This feeling comes to us from the depths of our past and reveals an impalpable need to reconnect with our origins. The history of gardens is the history of humanity and its search for paradise lost".



Photo credit: Micha Van Den Broeck, taken early April 2023

After lunch, we will visit the tulip fields of Jonquières.

"Every spring, the tulip fields along the road towards Vaison, in Jonquières are a delight for the eyes - 8.6 hectares planted by the Dutch company Triflor. Red, yellow, orange... full bloom lasts only for a while. After leaves and flowers will be cut not for flowers but for bulbs that have multiplied and will be sent back to Holland, before blooming again".

We were told by the representative of the firm that this year the end of March is the ideal time to see the tulips in full bloom.

You can follow the evolution on the [facebook page](#) " Fêtons les tulipes de Jonquières".

To book, please contact [Hedwige Lauwaert](#).

#### Saturday 13 April: Medicinal plants day (Tourbes and Pézènes-les-mines, Hérault)

Organised by Roland Leclercq



Photo © domaine de Pouzes

We'll start this day on the theme of medicinal plants by welcoming you at 10.30am with a coffee at the "Jardin des 100 simples" in the former presbytery garden near the church in Tourbes (Hérault). We'll begin our visit to the garden with a quiz on recognising the medicinal plants (in French and English), followed by explanations by Roland Leclercq (chairs available). To see: the squares of medicinal plants, spiral of aromatics, square of oreganos, of mints, magic herbs of St John, plants of the vinegar of the 4 thieves, collection of wild salads, medicine cabinet of plants of an inhabitant of St Gély du Fesc in 1936.

We'll have a picnic in the garden of Liliane and Roland Leclercq in Tourbes (desserts provided).

We'll then drive (35 minutes) to the [Domaine de Pouzes](#), near Pézènes-les-Mines. This family-run guest farm, set in the heart of a beautifully preserved valley halfway between Clermont-l'Hérault and Faugères, is devoted to the organic cultivation of aromatic and medicinal plants. We'll visit the various strip plantations of herbs and different plant chemotypes for essential oils, the drying room, the farm machinery specially designed by the owner and a beautifully restored chapel. For those who wish, there is also a shop.

To register, contact [Roland Leclercq](#).

**Thursday 25 April, Sorgues and Sérignan du Comtat, Vaucluse**  
**Visits to the Chateau de Brantes and the Harmas de Jean-Henri Fabre**  
**Organised by Hedwige Lauwaert and Nanouk Pelen**



Photo: Jardin de Brantes ©FM Varga

The [Domaine de Brantes](#) was created by the Del Bianco family in 1619. The château, their summer residence, was built in 1700 and later extended. The stand of plane trees was planted in 1816 by General de Cessac and his spouse, Sibylle de Brantes, the ancestor of the current owners. Sibylle de Brantes also planted the magnificent 200 year old *Magnolia grandiflora*, one of the oldest in Europe. The garden, designed by the Danish architect and garden designer Mogens Tvede in 1959, is of Tuscan inspiration, with its three mirror pools, through which runs the river Sorgue, beloved of Petrarch.

Around the pools are beautiful viburnums, box, cypresses and rows of century-old lagerstroemia. Seasonal rhythm is established by the flowering of camelias, peonies, and star-studded rosebushes. The structure of the garden contrasts with the wild meadows and the educational vegetable garden. The Chateau was declared «Monument Historique» in 1987, and the gardens, chapel and cloister in 2016. The garden was designated a «Jardin Remarquable» in 2005.

Vegetarian lunch made with produce grown in the gardens of the Chateau.



Photo ©Harmas Jean-Henri Fabre

The [Harmas de Jean Henri Fabre](#) was purchased in 1879 by Jean-Henri Fabre, the famous 19th century Provençal naturalist, entomologist, and botanist. The property already included the farmhouse, apart from the left wing and the greenhouse, which J.-H. Fabre added to pursue his entomological and botanical research. The museum has renovated the house whilst keeping its unique atmosphere; everything is faithful to the rustic spirit of the Fabre family's late 19th-century life.

Various rooms introduce the visitor to Fabre's research, writings and watercolours. At the time, the house was surrounded by completely uncultivated land, known as harmas in Provençal. The garden is a natural extension of the house, with thousands of plants enriching its borders and beds. The Museum's gardeners have also preserved the spirit of the place by prioritising the introduction of species that are popular with insects.

Next door is the [Naturopère](#), (admission included in the ticket for the Harmas) a cultural and educational facility dedicated to nature, sustainability and the environment. There are indoor displays as well as several outdoor areas showcasing gardens favourable to biodiversity.

To book, please contact [Nanouk Pelen](#) or [Hedwige Lauwaert](#).

**Tuesday 14 – Thursday 16 May, Aveyron and Tarn et Garonne**

**Visits to private and public gardens**

Organised by Liz Godfrey



Photo: Le Château de Bournazel

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup>: Visit to Liz's garden near Najac, picnic lunch and then a visit to the [Abbaye de Beaulieu](#) with its modern art collection and especially its rose garden, designed and planted by André Eve. A dinner will be organised for us to get together in Najac.

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup>: The morning at [Le Jardin de la Mothe](#) in Salles Courbatiès, a Jardin Remarquable. Lunch will be provided by the owner. In the afternoon a visit to the magnificently restored [Chateau de Bournazel](#) and its gardens 'à la française' based on Renaissance principles.

Evening free

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup>: Our trip will finish with a morning visit to the garden of Margaret Guerit, a member of MGF in Bas Segala.

To book, please contact: [Liz Godfrey](#)

**Tuesday 28 – Friday 31 May, Hyères, Var**

**MGF Annual Meeting 2024 and garden visit programme**

Organised by Jacqueline Potter



Photo: Castel Sainte-Claire

The 2024 Assemblée Générale, at which we'll celebrate the first 10 years of Mediterranean Gardening France, will take place in Hyères, the oldest resort town on the French Riviera. The programme is set out below. Accommodation has been reserved at the [Hotel Mercure](#) and booking forms for the event and the hotel have been sent to members.

<p><b>Tuesday 28 May</b> Afternoon</p> <p>Evening</p>	<p><u>Hyères à la belle époque – a guided tour</u> In the late 19th century, Hyeres became a popular destination for the aristocracy of Europe and attracted writers and artists, including Victor Hugo and Leo Tolstoy. Opulent villas, parks, gardens and hotels were created, and this tour will act as an introduction to the town's history and to some of the gardens we will be visiting.</p> <p>Jean-Marie Rey, renowned pépiniériste and long-standing MGF member, has kindly invited us to have supper at his home in La Londe-les-Maures. Jacqueline Potter will give an introductory talk, then we'll have a celebratory glass of champagne followed by a buffet meal.</p>
<p><b>Wednesday 29 May</b> Morning</p> <p>Afternoon</p>	<p>Visit to a private garden near Hyères.</p> <p>Visits to two gardens, guided by Pierre Quillier, former Head Gardener of the town of Hyères:</p>

Evening	<p><u>Castel Sainte-Claire</u>, built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the French naval officer and archaeologist Olivier Voutier, then in 1927, purchased by the American novelist Edith Wharton who created the garden.</p> <p><u>Villa Noailles</u>, an early modernist house, built for art patrons Charles and Marie-Laure de Noailles, with a triangular Cubist garden designed by Gabriel Guevrekian.</p> <p><b>The MGF Assemblée Générale, at the Hotel Mercure, followed by dinner.</b></p>
<b>Thursday 30 May and Friday 31 May*</b>	<p>Visits to gardens:</p> <p><u>Le Plantier de Costebelle</u>, built in 1857, in the style of a Venetian Palladian villa, for the Baron de Prailly, who entertained Queen Victoria here in 1892. The property was bought in 1896 by writer Paul Bourget, who developed a botanical park and played host to writers such as Joseph Conrad and André Gide.</p> <p><u>Château Noir</u>, on the presqu'île de Giens. The owner, who became interested in exotic plants during travels for his diplomatic career, has acclimatised species from all over the world in this hillside garden overlooking the port of la Madrague.</p> <p>Self-guided walks on the presqu'île de Giens and the Île de Porquerolles.</p>

\*As numbers for Costebelle are limited, activities on Thursday and Friday will be split into two groups.

If you have any questions about the event, please contact [Christine Daniels](#).

## INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

**Monday 4 March at 17.30 (UK time) on Zoom**

**A talk - The importance of botanical art**

**Organised by Mediterranean Plants and Gardens**



This one-hour talk, in English, by Zoom, is about the importance of botanical art. Helen Allen trained as a textile designer at the University of Leeds, then graduated from the English Gardening School with a Diploma in Botanical Illustration and led King Charles's Transylvania Florilegium project when he was Prince of Wales.

Helen had her own school, the Chelsea School of Botanical Art at the Chelsea Physic Garden, and has exhibited at the Garden Museum, Hampton Court Palace, the Gallery of Botanical Art at RBG Kew, Brooklyn Botanical Garden New York and Chicago Botanical Garden.

Book a place at <https://www.medpag.org/events/upcoming-events/botanical-art-march-2024/> and click "No" when asked if you are a member of MPG.

Illustration: *Dipogon lignosus*

**Monday 22 – Monday 29 April, Corfu, Greece**

**Fabulous gardens of Corfu**

**Organised by Mediterranean Plants and Gardens**



This spring tour will feature visits to exceptional private gardens in the northern part of Corfu including Gastouri and the Rothschild estate, which has beautiful courtyards paved by the painter and sculptor Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghikas. Walks will provide opportunities to photograph spring wildflowers. There will be time to explore the historic Corfu Town with its Venetian architecture and to visit the old British cemetery with its wild orchids and specimen trees.

Photo: Gastouri

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

### OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

#### Plant fairs and open gardens 2024

17 Feb – 3 March	Fête du Citron	Menton (Alpes-Maritimes)
17 Feb – 3 March	Festival des orchidées	Menton (Alpes-Maritimes)
2/3 March	L'art des Jardins	Ille-sur-Têt (Pyrénées-Orientales)
3 March	La Fête de la Nature en Minervois	La Redorte (Aude)
22-24 March	La Petite Fête de l'Arbre	Lodève (Hérault)
23 March	Découverte des Salades Sauvages, La Gardie	Rousson (Gard)
23/24 March	Fête des plantes au MUCEM	Marseille (B-du-R)
24 March	Primavera	Montpellier (Hérault)
24 March	Fête des Plantes et de la Nature	Arles (B-du-R)
30/31 March	Fête des Jardins, Sophia Antipolis	Antibes (Alpes-Maritimes)
7 April	Le Printemps de L'Isle	L'Isle sur La Sorgue (Vaucluse)
7 April	Festival des Fleurs et des Plantes	Sommières (Gard)
13/14 April	Plantes Rares et jardin naturel	Sérignan-du-Comtat (Vaucluse)
14 April	Foire Plantes et Nature	Prades (P-O)
14 April	Les Florales de Saint-Andiol	Saint-Andiol (B-du-R)
14 April	Pernes en Fleurs	Pernes les Fontaines (Vaucluse)
14 April	Les Florales	Figanières (Var)
20 April	Fête du Printemps	Le Pontet (Vaucluse)
20/21 April	Fête des Plantes et du Massif, Fontfroide	Narbonne (Aude)
21 April	Balade fleurie bien être	Sausset-les-Pins (B-du-R)
27 April	Foire de printemps et paysans	Cuers (Var)
27/28 April	Floralies de Juhèges	Torreilles (P-O)
29/30 April	Exposition bébés plantes, Jardin du Val Rahmeh	Menton (Alpes-Maritimes)

#### Hortus Programme

23 March	Les jardins médiévaux par Annie et Elisabeth	Montferrier sur Lez (34)
27 April	Bourse aux plantes	Montferrier sur Lez (34)
Dates to be announced	Jardins dans l'Aveyron	Aveyron

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

### Update to the MGF seed list

Chantal Guiraud has completed the Spring 2024 update to our seed list. 78 new types have seed have been added, mostly from France, but also from other Mediterranean climate countries throughout the world. Have a look at [the new list](#) and send your orders to Chantal by [email](#).

Pierre Bianchi contributed a number of interesting new seeds and has provided some commentary about the plants and how to grow them.



#### *Leucaena retusa*.

A green-leaved, deciduous shrub from Texas and New Mexico, up to 4 m high, resistant to limestone and drought, hardy to -12°C. It produces large, golden-yellow blossoms in spring and after heavy rainfall or watering. Attractive to deer.

Original and rare in cultivation.

Sow in spring, put boiling water on the seeds for 30 seconds, let cool and soak overnight.



#### *Lachenalia bulbifera* syn. *L. bifolia*

A small South African bulb (*Hyacinthaceae*) with a Mediterranean rhythm (total rest in summer) and bright red flowers at the end of winter. Easy to grow in sheltered rock gardens (to -5°C), or in pots (50% sand).

Shallow sow in autumn. Makes an excellent pot for a windowsill.



#### *Tecoma stans* var. *angustata*

Native to the south-west of the USA, this deciduous shrub with narrow, compound leaves and superb golden-yellow trumpet-shaped flowers from spring to autumn should be planted in full sun, in a frost-free spot.

Sow in spring and keep frost-free for the first winter.

## New MGF leaflet

**Mediterranean Gardening France**

A friendly bilingual association promoting **knowledge of plants and gardens** suited to the Mediterranean climate

**Garden related visits** organised throughout Mediterranean France from the Pyrénées to the Côte d'Azur and sometimes beyond



**6 Newsletters a year** with details of forthcoming activities

**Seeds and plant exchanges**

A member of **Mediterranean Gardening International**

To find out more, consult our **informative bilingual website** : [www.mediterraneangardening.fr](http://www.mediterraneangardening.fr)

**Subscription : 10€ per year** 2024

We have produced a new leaflet, whose purpose is to introduce people interested in Mediterranean climate gardening to our association and to encourage them to join. The leaflet is double-sided, one side in French, the other in English.

Leaflets have already been given to several pépiniéristes in the Var and the Vaucluse and we plan to distribute more at plant fairs during the spring.

If you would like to help by giving some copies of the leaflet to a local nursery, please contact [Jacqueline Potter](#) for supplies.

**Mediterranean Gardening France**

Une association amicale bilingue qui **fait la promotion des plantes et jardins** adaptés au climat méditerranéen

**Visites liées aux jardins** dans toute la France méditerranéenne des Pyrénées à la Côte d'Azur et parfois au-delà



**6 Bulletins par an** avec les détails sur les événements à venir

**Échange de graines et de plantes**

Membre de **Mediterranean Gardening International**

Pour en savoir plus, consulter notre **site web bilingue informatif** : [www.mediterraneangardening.fr](http://www.mediterraneangardening.fr)

**Cotisation : 10€ par an** 2024

## FROM OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

### California Horticultural Society

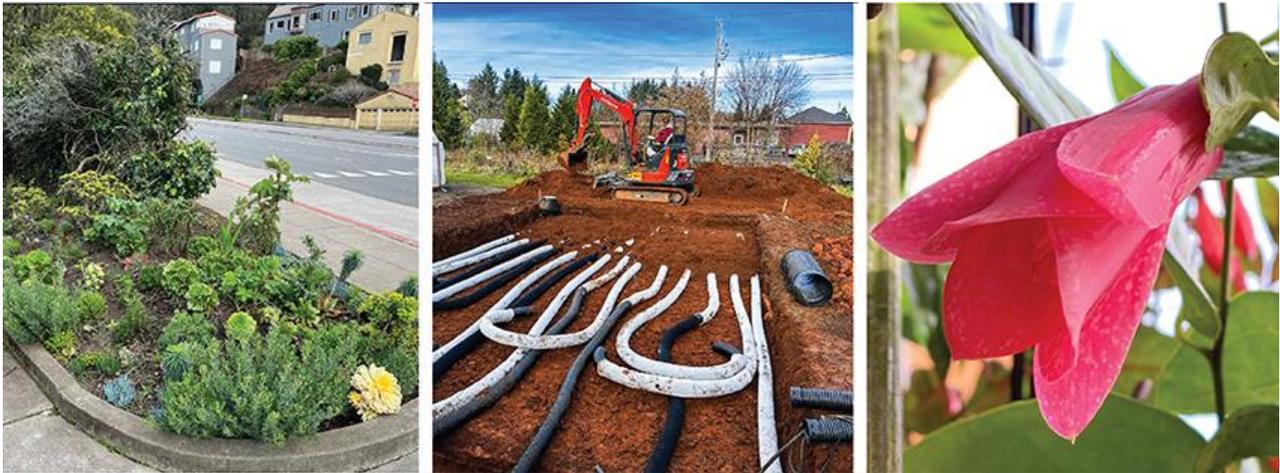
Dear Friends:

The videos of our [Featured Presentation](#) with Mark Akimoff (plus general announcements) and our [Plant Forum](#) from our January 15 meeting are now available for viewing on our [YouTube channel](#) [please note there was a problem with the Plant Forum video when first published which has now been corrected]. You can also [view or download a PDF of the Plant Forum slides](#) from our website.



## Gardens and Alpines of New Zealand

Mark talk about his wide-ranging trip to New Zealand December 2022-January 2023 in detail with beautiful photographs of the many ecosystems from alpine to tropical. He and his partner hiked the mountains, visited formal gardens, met locals who've created amazing xeric gardens and much more.



This month's Plant Forum discussion included a presentation by our newest Council member, Jeff Harter, on a guerrilla gardening project he undertook to beautify and make useful again a pedestrian access ramp near his San Francisco home. Our featured speaker Mark Akimoff joined the plant forum discussion to share his project to create a "poor man's geothermal" project to help moderate the temperature in the Illahe Rare Plant green houses. Members and friends shared what's blooming in their gardens now including *Cestrum newellii*, lachenalias, *Adenium obesum*, clematis, lapagerial, *Phlox drummondii*, bromeliads, aloes, *Acanthus sennii*, *Arctostaphylos*, *Epilobium*, *Ribes malvacee*, and *Peitoma arborea*.

## 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:

### Living with Zoysia

No, *Zoysia* is not the love of my life. It's just a grass, *Zoysia tenuifolia*, native to the Mascarene Islands (Reunion, Mauritius and Madagascar), which is an excellent alternative to lawns in Mediterranean climates. I've been using it for several years now. Here's the story of our adventures.

### Year 1 (2013), Disappointment: expensive, ugly and hard to plant



Photo: O. Filippi

The area between the house and the pool is a 20 m<sup>2</sup> lawn of couch grass and I decided to replace it with *Zoysia*. *Zoysia* can't be sown, so in the autumn I planted 6 small pots per m<sup>2</sup> (120 pots, expensive!) after turning over the soil to carefully remove every last root of couch grass (tedious). Watering once a week is necessary, along with a little fertiliser to get things started. For a year, all I could see was a surface filled with sad, sparse clumps.

## Year 2. *Zoysia* is lazy.

Growth is slow and the surface is not completely covered. Careful weeding must continue.

## Year 3: *Zoysia* is wonderful



Bumpy ground cover

*Zoysia* has finally covered everything, forming an attractive, bumpy ground cover. Weeding is a memory: hardly any weeds can grow between the tightly packed roots. There's no need to mow the lawn: trampling is enough to keep the grass down. Children love this grass, which tickles the soles of their feet when they run barefoot. Cats are happy to scratch their claws in.

## Year 6: *Zoysia* does as it pleases.



Three years later, *Zoysia* has continued to grow and is spreading in places where it is undesirable, forcing me to do the hard work of pulling out the roots. In other places, however, I take advantage of its ability to spread, for example to occupy the gaps between the stone slabs.

**In conclusion:** I love the bumpy appearance of this ground cover, its tolerance of alkaline soil, the very low maintenance and its longevity. I also like its beautiful green colour from May until the beginning of winter, which got me the comment from a visitor: "what a good idea to have installed an artificial lawn". What I don't like is the laborious installation work in the 1st year, the yellowing in winter, its tendency to spread inexorably (I've installed 25cm-high barriers, but it manages to climb over them if you're not careful) and you still have to water it once a week in summer (in the Hérault region). During a period of water restriction, it doesn't die but turns yellow.

## AND FINALLY

In the garden, there is no mourning, that's the luck of gardeners: they are concerned with the present moment and think about future seasons. Pascal Cribier (Gardener and landscape designer, 1953-2015)

Best wishes

Roland Leclercq

Newsletter editor

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