



# Mediterranean Gardening France

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

**SEPTEMBER 2019**

Dear members and friends,

## PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES IN FRANCE

**Saturday 24th August, Saint-Quentin-la-Poterie, Gard. A visit to le Jardin des Oules (visit planned on June 29 postponed due to weather conditions).**



Originally created at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Léonce Pascal, Maire of Saint-Victor-des-Oules, this walled garden was left abandoned for many years before being bought by a Parisian family who decided to restore it. They brought in a team of specialists, including François Michaud, *ingénieur horticole* at the Jardin des Plantes de Montpellier, who was charged with researching the design and planting scheme, with a view to the restoration being as faithful as possible to the original. In addition, a number of works of contemporary sculpture have been installed.

More information on the garden at <https://lejardindesoules.com/>

Chantal Guiraud has arranged for us to have a private visit to this garden and Julia and Graham Petty, who live nearby, have invited us to eat our picnic lunches in their garden. To book a place, contact [Chantal Guiraud](#).

**Tuesday 15th October Venterol, Drôme**

**Planning meeting for 2020 activities in the Vaucluse, Drôme and Bouches-du-Rhone**



Jan Morgan and David Ash, who live in Venterol (between Valreas and Nyons) have kindly offered to host this planning meeting.

Jan writes:

“We'll start at 10.30 with tea and coffee before discussing ideas for 2020. Our home, Domaine St Michel, is being restored to being a bio-domaine after several years of neglect. Our vines are on a hillside. We have created olive terraces (the famous Nyons *tanche*) and are also creating dry gardens near the house.

We need more plants, so are offering lunch and our wine. We hope you'll bring plants. In the afternoon we'll give a guided tour of our vineyard and the gardens which we are creating. We follow permaculture principles, so hope you find ideas to take with you.”

To book, contact [Jan Morgan](#).

**Friday 18 October, 10.00, St Hippolyte du Fort, Gard**

**A walk with a botanist to learn about trees**



Katharine Fedden has arranged for us to have a walk with botanist, Yves Maccagno, who specialises in trees. He has been working on the census of the biggest trees of the Gard for 12 years and has published two books on this subject. His third book is available to download:

(<http://lestetardsarboricoles.fr/wordpress/2018/01/30/livre-arbres-remarquables-du-gard-tome-iii>).

PHOTO : *Quercus ilex* in St Hippolyte du Fort

The morning will be spent looking at trees in St Hippolyte, then we will take a short drive to a picnic spot and after lunch have a further walk and see an exceptional tree. Flat terrain but good shoes needed.

To book a place, contact [Katharine Fedden](#).

### OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

#### Plant fairs and open gardens

6/7/8 Sept	Murabilia	Lucca, Italy
8 Sept	Journée des plantes	Uzès (30)
14/15 Sept	Journées du patrimoine	throughout France
22 Sept	Salon du livre de jardin - Domaine d'Orvès	La Valette-du-Var (83)
29 Sept	Portes Ouvertes, la Soldanelle	Rougiers (83)
4 - 6 October	Orchidées à Fontfroide	Narbonne (11)
5 - 6 October	Gondwana, Domaine du Rayol	Le Rayol- Canadel (83)
13 October	Foire aux plantes, Bambouseraie d'Anduze	Généragues (30)
23 - 24 November	Les Journées de l'Arbre de la Plante et du Fruit	St Jean du Gard (30)

**25 April - 3 November 2019, International Garden Festival Chaumont-sur-Loire**

***Le Jardin qui chante* – a garden designed by MGF members Julia Fogg and Any Evason**



The theme of the 28<sup>th</sup> edition of the Chaumont-sur-Loire Garden Festival is 'Gardens of Paradise'. Twenty-five gardens have been specially created in the parkland around the chateau and can be visited until 3 November.

MGF members Julia Fogg, landscape architect, and Anny Evason, artist, have designed one of the gardens which they describe as a Persian Pairidaeza. They write "Behind a thick plant curtain lies an orchard providing refreshing cool air and a pleasant place to rest, lying on cushions, looking up at the sky through

the foliage and observing the nests of exotic birds in the branches. On the ground, the protective wicker sanctuary echoes these cosy shelters.”



Read the full text and see more photographs of the garden on the [Chaumont Garden Festival website](#).

## INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

For a full list of international events, go to the [MGF website](#).

### 25 February to 5 March 2020, Wild flowers and holy sites, ISRAEL



This is a Mediterranean Plants and Gardens tour in Israel led by Oron Peri who has recently led trips to Jordan and Tenerife, and is the author of *Bulbs of the Eastern Mediterranean*. Participants will stay in hotels on the coast in Haifa, on Lake Galilee in the city of Tiberias, by the Dead Sea, in Mitspa Ramon and near Jerusalem. The cost of the trip is expected to be £1,440 for those sharing a room. This includes all accommodation, main meals, guiding and transport within Israel. See the [MPG website](#) for details.

Contact: [Heather Martin](#)

Photo: Part of the Samaria desert (MPG website)

## NEWS AND INFORMATION

### Mediterranean Gardening France website

The [WHAT'S NEW?](#) page has a summary of material added recently.



### [Gardens of the Italian Riviera / Les jardins de la Riviera italienne](#)

Here you'll find a collection of articles about the places visited on the MGF May trip to Liguria. There are reports on famous gardens such as the Hanbury, the Villa della Pergola and Boccanegra, articles about the attractive towns of Dolceacqua and Bordighera and an introduction to Clarence Bicknell, an English botanist and illustrator who arrived in Bordighera in 1879 and spent his life collecting and recording the plants and rock engravings he found in the Ligurian hills.

Photo: Villa Boccanegra





### [A visit to gardens in Vallauris and Cagnes-sur-Mer](#)

Jacqueline Potter has written an account of a visit to two very interesting private gardens in the Alpes-Maritimes.

Photo: The Zanini garden In Vallauris



### [Pre-AGM trip to Catalonia](#)

A report about two days of walks, garden visits, and delicious food and wine organised by André Guiraud, Jennifer Hastings and Kevan Kristjanson. We were based in Platja d'Aro, on the stunning Catalan coast.

Photo: The Jardí Botànic de Marimurtra, Blanes



### [May 2019 - The Annual General Meeting 2019, Céret, Pyrénées-Orientales](#)

Gill Pound and Sue Shearer have written about the two gardens we visited as part of this year's Annual General Meeting:

- Pierre and Chantal Bianchi's garden filled with unusual and exotic plants
- The butterfly house and Mediterranean garden at the Tropique du Papillon

## **Waterwise Gardening**

A new heading has been created in the Gardening section to bring together good ideas about waterwise gardening. In one article, Michèle Bailey has pulled together suggestions from members about ways to re-use [household water](#), and in another has written about harvesting rainwater and best practice in the use of [water in the garden](#). David Bracey has contributed his thoughts on [conserving soil moisture in a Mediterranean garden](#).

You will find these articles on the newly organised [Gardening](#) page. To make it easier to find the gardening advice you are looking for, we have grouped the articles under sub-headings:

Garden Design

Gardening techniques and problem solving

Propagation

Pruning and plant care

Soil, compost and mulches

Waterwise gardening

Seeds

## MGF Seed Collection

In the summer 2019 update, Chantal Guiraud has added 86 taxa to the seed list. These include a very welcome consignment of 39 different species (four of them pictured) from our partner association, the California Horticultural Society.



*Asclepias currassavica*



*Brahea armata*



*Lilium pardalinum*



*Triteleia laxa*

Have a look at the updated seed list [here](#) and send your order to Chantal either by post (see website for address) or [email](#).



Chantal noted that there are seeds of 42 different types of salvia on the latest list. To help you choose between them, she has created a spreadsheet which gives details of flowering time, flower colour, hardiness, form, size, origin, position in garden and much more. The spreadsheet, *Les salvias de la liste de graines 2019*, can be found in the [Plant List](#) section of the website.

Photo:  
*Salvia* 'Allen Chickering'

## An article about the use of fertilisers and soil improvers in Mediterranean gardens

Do plants respond to manure and fertiliser in a Mediterranean garden? Good question. Most of our current knowledge on this subject is anecdotal, gained by trial and error or through information shared by members of Mediterranean gardening societies.

Native Mediterranean-climate plants have evolved over millions of years to grow, flower, seed and germinate in poor soil. Mediterranean soils are generally well-weathered. Most nutrients have been leached due to very heavy rain. Soils are mainly derived from parent limestone rocks, lack organic matter, are gritty/stony, free draining and alkaline. Under these circumstances, garden plants will react positively to a low rate of fertiliser application made in the autumn.



*Sedum rubrum* growing in poor, rocky soil near Pont du Gard



*Aphyllanthes monspeliensis*, thyme and cistus also flourish here

It is irrelevant whether the fertiliser is inorganic or organic, at least as far as the plant is concerned. A plant cannot distinguish the origins of the material. It is either N nitrogen, P phosphate or K potassium. There may be a case to use micro-nutrients such as iron, manganese or magnesium under high pH (alkaline) conditions when these elements may be 'locked-up', but we would only use them on fruit trees which show signs of chlorosis.

The use of well-rotted manure as a fertiliser is probably worthless as it is low in nutrients. It may be used as a surface-applied mulch to conserve soil moisture but working the stuff into the soil would destroy soil structure and allow loss of moisture. Moisture is the main limiting factor to healthy plant growth in the Mediterranean Basin and it needs to be conserved.

It is also worth noting that organic mulches such as well-rotted manure and garden compost will dry to a solid crust in the summer heat then decompose rapidly. Better to use woody waste, shredded or cut into small pieces and then spread onto the soil surface of flower beds and around trees in a thick layer, up to 20cm. It compacts quickly. Shredding one's own garden waste and using it as a mulch which will rot down over the years will add organic material and structure to the soil. In addition to conserving water, a good layer of mulch helps keep weeds to a minimum which also stops competition for water.

For really heavy clay soils one can use river sand to improve soil structure as well as shredded woody material.

Sowing a legume in the autumn may be good husbandry and of some value in capturing nitrogen or as a green manure. Sainfoin (*Onobrychis*), sulla (*Hedysarum coronarium*) and vetch (*Vicia sativa*) are possibilities.

Further reading:

*The Nature and Properties of Soils*, Fifteenth Edition, Ray R. Weil and Nyle C. Brady, Pearson  
*Plant Life in the World's Mediterranean Climates*, Peter R. Dallman, University of California Press

Text: David Bracey, Gill Pound and Michèle Bailey

### **David Bracey writes**

« The Institut de Recherche pour le Développement, (IRD) based in Montpellier has reported that essential oils and citronella do not work as mosquito repellants, at least in the real world. Dr F Simard goes on that bracelets and ultra sound machines are scams. He does not recommend traps which use of CO<sub>2</sub> to attract mosquitoes. They may attract 50 but there are another 500 who will find you. ».  
Dr Simard went on that the only insect repellants which work are based on DEET, KBR3023 and IR 3535. (all synthetic materials)» .

This article was based on an article in « The Connexion » August 2019.



## My favourite plant

You are welcome to send a picture of your favourite plant, accompanied by a short text, to be published in the newsletter. Contributions should be sent to [Roland Leclercq](#). This month, *Trycirtis hirta* (proposed by Elisabeth Graud).

### *Trycirtis hirta*



Its vernacular name is Toad Lily, *hirta* means small, erect hair. It is part of the family *Liliaceae*, 60-80 cm tall, has strong stems with axillary flowers, lanceolate leaves, slightly hairy. It originates from Japan, with many varieties.

It disappears in winter and starts growing in the spring. Its autumn bloom in October is very beautiful. There are various colors, pink and yellow, white, etc ...

This plant is easy to grow. It likes wet soil and shade, and is at home when facing north in our region, give it a little water in summer. It supports limestone soils.

It colonizes easily and is multiplied by division in spring.

Its main interest is during the flowering period. I have had it in my garden, facing north, since 1998 (Photos).



## 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 July Newsletter (contributed by Roland Leclercq) was *Lygeum spartum*



*Lygeum spartum* (esparto grass) is endemic in several countries: Morocco, Spain, Southern Italy and Crete. This sturdy grass tolerates limestone, remains green all year round, is very resistant to dry weather and hardy (-15 ° C or more). The leaves can be used to make mats and baskets. The flowers appear in July and have this strange shape shown in the photo.

Photo: *Lygeum spartum*

The new “What is it?” is below (proposed by Roland Leclercq). You can find a clue in the website (“What is it?”). Answer in the next newsletter.



### What's new in the [members' Forum](#)

Here are some of the new topics being discussed on the members' forum.  
To see them, log into the member area and click on ACCESS THE FORUM

*Advice/Broken tree branch*

*Plant identification/White climber white flowers*

*Album/MGF AGM 2019 pre-trip (go through the album MGF AGM pre-trip)*

### The quote of the month

In Provence, the sun rises twice, in the morning and after nap (Yvan Audouard, French writer)

Best wishes

Roland Leclercq

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