



# Mediterranean Gardening France

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

**JULY 2022**

Dear members and friends

## PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES IN FRANCE

**Thursday 1 September, 10.00 – 18.00, Marseillan, Hérault**

**A day out based around the theme of vines and wine**

The day will start at the Bagnas Nature Reserve, property of the Conservatoire du Littoral. Birds are the major interest of the site, but our guide will also discuss the flora specific to these wetlands. Then we will head to Robinson Beach in Marseillan to picnic there if the weather permits or have lunch in a guinguette.



In the afternoon we will visit the Vassal estate to see its unique collection of vines. On this strip of land, or rather sand, between the Etang de Thau and the Mediterranean, known as Lido, grow about 4000 different grape varieties from all wine-growing countries. The collection aims to conserve and safeguard the genetic heritage of vines at an international level.

Photo: INRA hybrids growing in the sand

Next, still in Marseillan, we will have a guided tour of the Noilly-Prat cellars, including a historical tour of the house, wine tasting, a demonstration of the aperitif on ice and a guided tour of the brand museum.

Price for the full day: 21€ per person, including

- Réserve naturelle du Bagnas: 6€ per person
- Domaine de Vassal: no charge
- Caves Noilly Prat: 15€ per person

To book a place for this outing, contact [Chantal Guiraud](mailto:Chantal.Guiraud@medgardeningfrance.org)

**Thursday and Friday 20/21 October**

**A two day trip to the Drôme to view autumn colours**



On the Thursday we will visit the zen garden of artist and garden designer Erik Borja, inspired by his love of Japanese garden design. We will visit the gardens at our leisure and picnic during our visit. There is a possibility that Erik Borja will be available to give us a lecture on his garden; this is to be confirmed nearer the time.

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

For those wishing to stay overnight there are several hotels in or near Mirmande, one of the « plus beaux villages de France »

Hôtel la Capitelle à Mirmande, [www.lacapitelle.com](http://www.lacapitelle.com)

La Treille Muscate à Clionsclat, [www.latreillemuscate.com](http://www.latreillemuscate.com)

There is also bed and breakfast accommodation in both villages. We will organise dinner in one of the two hotels for those who wish to join.

The following day there will be a guided visit to a natural reserve nearby, [www.lagaredesramieres.com](http://www.lagaredesramieres.com), before heading south to the village of La Garde Adhémar and its municipal Jardin Botanique, with two herb gardens, laid out on terraces overlooking the Rhône valley.

To book a place, please contact Hedwige Lauwaert, [hlauwaert@gmail.com](mailto:hlauwaert@gmail.com) or Nanouk Pelen, [noux@mac.com](mailto:noux@mac.com).

## INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

### Tuesday 1 to Tuesday 8 November

#### A botanical visit to the Peloponnese, Greece



This trip, organised by Mediterranean Plants and Gardens, will visit sites with rich natural flora, including autumn-flowering geophytes (autumn crocuses, colchicum, sternbergia, cyclamen, anemones, snowdrops and tiny daffodils), some in wild places and others in unspoilt villages, in the medieval castle town of Monemvasia and on the slopes of Mystras. A visit to the house and garden of the late Patrick Leigh-Fermor will be included. Participants will stay in Nafplio, Kardamyli and Gythio. The botanical guide is Oron Peri, plant breeder and author of “Bulbs of the Eastern Mediterranean”.

To register interest, complete the [website form](#).

Contact: [Heather Martin](#)

## OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### Plant fairs and open gardens

2 – 4 September	Murabilia - mercato del giardinaggio di qualità	Lucca, Italy
17/18 September	Le Jardin Champêtre – open weekends, visite libre 16h00 – 20h00	Caunes-Minervois, Aude
17/18 September	Journées du patrimoine	Throughout France
1/2 October	Gondwana	Domaine du Rayol, Var

### Hortus Programme

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

### New on the website



Sandra Cooper wrote the report on our first outing in 2022.

The [visit to Château Pérouse](#) included the geophyte collection, the polytunnels, the experimental garden and the River Garden.



The April 2022 update to the [Château Pérouse Garden Diary](#) focuses on its geophyte collection.

Amongst many stunning bulbs presented to us by Jan Willem Vos, this *Babiana rubrocyanea*, from South Africa, was most people's favourite.

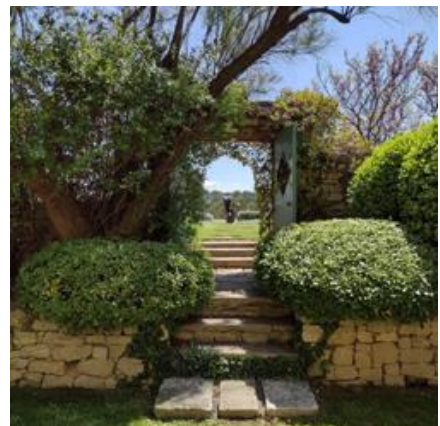


David Bracey has written about his experiences of gardening at his homes in Fontarèches and Uzès, in the Gard. He and his wife started their first garden in 1999, on what was a building site, at a time when there was very little information available about gardening in hot, dry conditions. Read his garden diary [here](#).



Hedwige and Paul's garden

Frances Horne and Jennifer Hastings have contributed a photo filled report about our late April visit to [gardens in Le Barroux](#). Both the garden of Hedwige Lauwaert and Paul Kiekens and that of Tony Stone were looking wonderful in the spring sunshine.



Tony's garden





The 2022 Assemblée Générale was held at Pont du Gard. Minutes of the meeting are available in the 'Members' section of the website.

After the meeting we had a fascinating tour of the aqueduct and some members visited the Mémoires de Garrigue trail. A [report and photographs](#) are in the 'Past Activities' section.



#### Cistus, the rose of the garrigue

In April this year, Roland Leclercq, Annie Nivière et Elisabeth Gratraud gave a talk on cistus to [Hortus](#) members.

They have now collated the material into two articles and the first one, [Part 1, Overview](#), has been published on the MGF website. The second part, Cistus in the garden, will follow soon.



Visits in May to la Campagne Sainte-Marie and a members' garden in Fayence, Var

Reports and photographs by Hedwige Lauwert and Peter Clarke are now [on the website](#).

Photo: Carla and Hermans' garden

### Seed List Update

As usual at this time of year, Chantal Guiraud has updated our seed list, which is shared with our partner associations in Mediterranean Gardening International so gives members access to plants from all around the Mediterranean-climate world. We particularly thank Alfredo Unda, in Chile, for contributing seeds of several interesting plants:



*Alstroemeria ligata*



*Cryptocarya alba*



*Eriosyce subgibbosa*



*Sophora macrocarpa*

Other attractive new additions:



*Bauhinia yunnanensis*



*Geranium maderense*



*Gladiolus cunonius*



*Xanthoceras sorbifolium*

You can see the full seed list on the [MGF website](#) where there are instructions about how to order. Please also think about collecting seeds from your garden to send to Chantal so that our collection is constantly renewed with fresh seeds.

## Other information

### Focus on *Capparis spinosa*, the caper bush



*Capparis spinosa* (Herculaneum, Italy)



*Capparis spinosa* (Loupian, Hérault, France)



Grown over walls, *Capparis spinosa* can form a straggly spiny shrub, with long and hanging shoots that best reveal the buds and flowers. The white or pink flowers (June-August) are very attractive with their numerous purple stamens. The flower-buds, capers, pickled in vinegar, have been used as a condiment for at least 2000 years.

The plant hates water: it must be planted preferably on top of a wall, in poor, stony soil, perfectly drained, remaining dry in summer. It is said that you have to plant three to get one right. *Capparis spinosa* 'Inermis' is spineless. The first photo was taken in Herculaneum (Italy) by David Bracey and the other two by Roland Leclercq in Loupian (Hérault, France) near Olivier Filippi's nursery.

### **An article on « Le Jardin champêtre » in the magazine Gardens Illustrated**

MGF friends, Imogen Checketts and Kate Dumbleton, own Le Jardin Champêtre, a garden and nursery, in Caunes-Minervois. The article on their garden (Le Jardin Champêtre: Reimagining Mediterranean planting in a garden in France, by Noel Kingsbury and Claire Takacs) can be read [on line](#)



## à la une.....featured topic



David Bracey writes

This year, for the first time, *Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy' and *Cotinus coggygria* have shown signs of *Verticillium* wilt. This is a vascular disease which blocks the xylem and prevents the uptake of water leading to death. Usually, upper branches die first. There is no cure.

## FROM OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

### Mediterranean Plants and Gardens (MPG)

#### The Delos garden at Sissinghurst Castle, Kent, UK

Christine Daniels writes:

In June, I joined a group from our partner association MPG for a private tour of Sissinghurst Castle garden and its recently created Delos garden. Head gardener Troy Scott Smith began by leading us around the main garden with its breath-taking displays of roses and perennials then Helen Champion, head of the Delos garden, explained the origins of the new Mediterranean garden.



Sissinghurst Castle garden



The Delos garden

The garden was originally planted by Vita and Harold Sackville-West in the nineteen thirties, following an inspirational trip to the island of Delos in Greece. Unfortunately, the plants did not thrive due to the poorly drained clay soil on their chosen site and the experiment was abandoned. Eighty years later it was decided to try again. Dan Pearson was commissioned to design the garden and Olivier Filippi called in to advise on planting and the necessary soil conditions. The new garden was completed in spring 2020 and is now well-established. You can see more photos and read a short report on the [MPG website](#).

## A PLANT THAT I HATE

You are welcome to send a picture of a 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](#)

## ***Ambrosia artemesifolia* (Common ragweed or Ambroisie à feuilles d'armoise)**



*Ambrosia artemesifolia* ( © Observatoire des ambrosies – FREDON France)

Gil Pound writes

Some members have recently become aware of this plant and the fact that it is a considerable nuisance and it was felt that it would be useful to disseminate information about it more widely.

**So, what is it?** A member of the *Asteraceae*, it is an annual plant that grows very rapidly to about a metre or so high, as its Latin name suggests it looks very like *Artemisia vulgaris*. The plant was introduced into Europe in the 1860s from North America and has spread particularly widely since World War Two.

**And why is it a considerable nuisance?** It poses health risks to human beings, the pollen causes allergic reactions including rhinitis, asthma, sinusitis, conjunctivitis, coughing ... French government figures suggest that up to three million people react to the pollen and that it costs the health service up to 186 million euros a year for treatments. The plant can also cause allergic reactions on the skin, spots, itching etc. The plant also competes with crops so it is a problem for farmers as well as competing with native vegetation when it escapes into the countryside. It is deemed such a pest that the 15<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> June are designated as the *Journées de lutte contre l'ambroisie* and is the subject of a number of *Arrêtés préfectoraux* concerning the need to eradicate it.

**Where does it grow?** Common ragweed tends to be found on recently disturbed land, along roadsides, in cultivated fields, wasteland, construction sites etc In France it is particularly prevalent in the valleys of the Rhone and the Loire but is becoming more widespread in the Mediterranean too.

**What should we do about it?** It is the pollen which produces the allergic reaction so the important thing to do if you find ragweed in or near your garden is to prevent it from flowering, as an annual which propagates solely from seed it can be cut and recut to the ground to prevent it from flowering and setting seed.

[http://nature.jardin.free.fr/plantes\\_envahissantes.pdf](http://nature.jardin.free.fr/plantes_envahissantes.pdf)

<https://ambrosie-risque.info/>

### **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 “What is it?” of the April newsletter (proposed by Erwan Jehanno) was *Astragalus tragacantha*. This endangered species has adapted to the extreme wind, salt and aridity of the Calanques coastline by forming a cushiony shape, small hairy leaves and spines. Locally named ‘mother-in-law cushion’, it is endemic to the limestone coasts of Provence and is protected.



The new “What is it?” is proposed by David Bracey. . Answer in the next newsletter.



#### AND FINALLY

The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now\*. Chinese proverb

\* Editor note: wait for autumn, it's better.

Roland Leclercq  
Newsletter editor

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