

## Organising an event for Mediterranean Gardening France

### Come up with an idea

This could be anything that people interested in Mediterranean gardens and plants might enjoy – garden and nursery visits, practical workshops, talks, a shared experience of a public event, a botanical walk, an overseas trip...

Then ask one or two friends if they would be willing to share both the pre-planning and the organisation on the day. This makes everything more fun.

### Initial planning

- What is the best time of year for the visit/activity? It's easy to find things to do in May and June, when gardens are at their best, but we also need outings in early spring and in autumn.
- Will the outing require an overnight stay for most members or is easily manageable in a day?
- If the activity won't take all day, is there something else in the vicinity?
- Are there places which will be suitable for lunch, either restaurant or picnic?

### Check list

1. Before making any firm commitments, contact the area coordinators to make sure that the event and proposed timing doesn't conflict with anything else that is being arranged:  
Occitanie: [Chantal Guiraud](#)  
Vaucluse / Drôme / Bouches-du-Rhône: [Nanouk Pelen](#), [Hedwige Lauwaert](#)  
Var/Alpes-Maritimes: [Jacqueline Potter](#)
2. Contact anyone key to the event (garden owners/speakers/teachers for a workshop /pépiniéristes etc) and make sure that they are free and the date is convenient. If the visit is to a private garden, make a personal visit to meet the owner, check that the garden is worthwhile and look at availability of parking and topography of the site. Agree a maximum number of participants with the owner and check whether there is a cost per person. For talks and workshops, ask what fees/expenses the expert would like.
3. If the event is to be indoors, find a *salle polyvalente* or function room which can be hired for the day and agree prices. MGF is a registered association, with insurance, and this can often lead to a lower price, especially if the event can be in the name of a local resident.
4. Find out how any necessary equipment can be obtained. MGF has a projector, screen, folding table and flipchart easel which can be borrowed.
5. Plan out the timings for the full day. If people will have long journeys best not to start before 10.00am.
6. Decide whether lunch will be picnic or restaurant. If picnic, think about where people will be able to eat if it rains. If restaurant, agree a price for a set meal for a group, if possible, with wine and coffee included. Be prepared to negotiate. When planning the menu, ensure there is a vegetarian option and avoid pork. If the event is to be at a members' home, dishes for sharing are a good idea. In this case agree with the member what they will provide (e.g. plates, paper cups, water, wine).
7. Decide where people will park their cars.
8. Get directions to the venues, either written or a map, and if possible, GPS coordinates.
9. For a two-day visit, or if it is likely that many people will travel from afar, source accommodation for overnight stays. The best starting point is to ask local members to recommend places. Usually a B&B or a modest hotel will suit most people.
10. Work out a price for the event (not including accommodation, which members should pay for individually). For garden visits, this is straightforward. Where a lecturer, expert or guide is involved, having ascertained likely costs, discuss pricing with a member of the management committee.
11. For all types of event, decide whether numbers are limited, and if so, what is the maximum.
12. Discuss with the garden owner/walk leader whether dogs are allowed.
13. Where we have been offered a garden visit at no cost, and the host is not an MGF member, we normally give a thank you gift, e.g. a book, a bottle of wine or a subscription to MGF. You will need

to organise this (keep receipts for the treasurer's records) and the cost will be reimbursed from MGF funds.

### Communication with members

1. Write a short résumé of the event and send it to the newsletter editor, ([Roland Leclercq](#)) and the website editor, [Christine Daniels](#) . Make it clear if the garden has a lot of steps, or if a certain level of fitness is required and for walks mention the total length and whether climbs are involved. Members will be asked to contact you to book a place and to provide their mobile phone numbers.
2. Acknowledge each booking and confirm to each person that they have a place. At the same time, tell them the likely costs of the event. If it includes a restaurant lunch and there are menu options, ask participants to make their selection and inform them of the price of the lunch.
3. Keep a list of participants and their contact information. If there is a limit on numbers and the event is popular, open a waiting list.
4. Prepare an information sheet for participants. This should include start, lunch and finish times, directions and parking information and any equipment or special clothing required (e.g. drawing materials, stout boots, waterproofs). If participants are to bring their own lunch tell people whether this is an individual picnic or a dish for sharing. If the latter, tell people what will be provided by the host.
5. Ask one/two of the participants to prepare a report, with photographs, for the MGF website.
6. Two weeks before the event, send out the information sheet and ask people to confirm that they will be attending.

### Communication with service providers

One week before the event write to garden owners, restaurants, experts, speakers etc. to confirm previously agreed arrangements and let them know the number of participants.

### At the event

Welcome everyone on arrival, checking names against the attendance list. Ask a friend to collect the money for the day, if applicable, thus leaving you free to make announcements and to follow up any missing or lost people. At the agreed start time introduce the host and remind everyone of the itinerary for the day.

Pay garden owners, experts and food providers, as per your agreement, and check that they are happy.

Ensure that timings are roughly followed, especially if a restaurant lunch is involved. Gather people together at the end of the visit/event and say thank you to the host, giving a gift if applicable.

Before leaving, check that all equipment is gathered up and taken away and ask the host to have a quick check around to see if members have left anything behind.

### After the event

Send a thank you note, by post or email, to private garden owners and experts who have given talks or led workshops and walks.

Liaise with the person doing the write-up to ensure it is sent to the website editor ([Christine Daniels](#)).

Send any receipts for expenses by email to the treasurer, [André Guiraud](#).