Mediterranean Gardening France

www.mediterraneangardening.fr

SEPTEMBER 2026

Dear members and friends

ACTIVITIES IN FRANCE

Sunday 27 September, Caunes-Minervois, Aude
A day dedicated to learning about marble (plus a chance to visit Le Jardin Champêtre)
Organised by Chantal Guiraud


Photo: Le jardin des marbrières

The morning walk along the 'chemin royal du marbre', from Caunes to Puicheric, takes us through ancient quarries, including one currently being worked, and along a partly shady trail to see monumental sculptures and bas-reliefs.

In the afternoon, we'll visit the Écomusée and the Abbaye, to learn about the geological origin of the marbles, the history of their exploitation and see some contemporary sculpture.

Our visit coincides with one of the Open Garden afternoons (14h00 – 18h00) at the specialist perennial nursery Le Jardin Champêtre, in Caunes-Minervois, so if you have time after the museum visit this is not to be missed.
For more information and to book, contact Chantal Guiraud.

Friday 2 October, Le Beausset, Var
A garden visit
Organised by Jacqueline Potter


Photo: Jacqueline's garden

A morning visit to Jacqueline Potter's garden, now coming to the end of its third summer. Some areas have been watered, others not at all, and so far, very few plants have been lost, amazing considering that the garden is still young and that many areas still have very little shade.

The garden visit will be followed by a simple lunch, which will provide the opportunity to talk about the programme for the coming months – please come with your wishes and ideas for future outings and garden visits.

The following day, Saturday 3 October, marks the start of Gondwana – La Fête des Plantes Méditerranéennes, at the Domaine du Rayol in Rayol-Canadel-sur-Mer. This year's theme is Seeds. There will be specialist nurseries, local artisans and producers, as well as guided garden visits, workshops and various activities.
If you would like to join the visit to Jacqueline's home, please send her an email.

Thursday 8 October, Noves (Bouches-du-Rhône) and Avignon (Vaucluse)
A morning with Marc Nucera and a visit to the Ecole d'Avignon
Organised by Hedwige Lauwaert and Nanouk Pelen


Photo: Marc Nucera's garden

In the morning we will meet at Le Terrain, Marc Nucera's garden and atelier in Noves, where he will give us a talk and show us some of his work. Marc is an acclaimed tree sculptor, who has worked for more than 30 years. In September 2011, he showed us around a few of the gardens in which he had worked; you can read the review in 'Past activities'.
After lunch at a restaurant in Avignon, we will visit the Ecole d'Avignon, a renowned school for advanced studies in restauration and rehabilitation of period buildings and architectural decoration.

We will be shown around the school by a bilingual guide and hear how the students and professionals learn how to use traditional methods, tools and techniques following current sustainable guidelines.
To book, please contact Hedwige Lauwaert or Nanouk Pelen.

Monday 5 – Tuesday 13 October
Waterwise gardens in Languedoc and Provence
Organised by Mediterranean Plants and Gardens


Photo: La Louve, Bonnieux

A linear tour from Carcassonne to Marseille to look at ways in which gardeners and designers are trying to create interest in Mediterranean gardens in the autumn season. Visits will include Imogen and Kate's garden in Caunes-Minervois, a hotel garden designed by James Basson, Olivier Filippi's garden, La Louve and a number of private gardens. The tour will end with a train journey and a guided walk along the coast of the Côte Bleue, near Marseille.
For more information and to book, go to the MPG Upcoming Events page.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Saturday 17 – Sunday 18 October
Garden Fair. Lagoa, Algarve, Portugal
Organised by Mediterranean Gardening Association Portugal



An annual event organised by our partner association, MGAP, with a large selection of nurseries selling Mediterranean plants, seeds, olive oils, garden tools etc, and an MGAP stand with books and bulbs for sale, and garden advice from local experts.

Throughout both days, there is a programme of talks, in English and Portuguese, on Mediterranean plants and aspects of gardening in a Mediterranean climate.

For more information see the MPAG website.

From Mediterranean Plants and Gardens
Monday 5 April – Tuesday 13 April 2027
Spring in the Peloponnese– GREECE



Ophrys argolica



Onosma frutescens

Guided by Yiannis Christofides, author of The Illustrated Flora of Cyprus, the tour is based mainly in Gytheio, a historically important town which retains its Greek character, unspoilt by tourism. Members will visit two Unesco World Heritage Sites: Bronze-age Mycenae (one of the major centres of Greek civilisation and a military stronghold which dominated much of southern Greece in the second millennium BC) and Mystras (a beautifully preserved medieval Byzantine city). These archaeological sites also harbour wild flowers. Cost: 680€ approx. per person sharing a room, 1100€ per person single occupancy, including transport within Greece, accommodation, guiding (in English), breakfasts, four dinners, three picnic lunches.
Contact Heather Martin hm@medpag.orghm@medpag.org

„

OTHER DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Plant fairs and open gardens

4 - 6 September	Murabilia	Lucca, Italy
6 September	Journée des plantes d'Uzès	Uzès, Gard
19/20 September	Journées du patrimoine	Throughout France
26/27 September	Le Jardin Champêtre – open garden and nursery	Caunes-Minervois, Aude
2 – 4 October	Festival International Orchidées à Fontfroide	Narbonne (Aude)
3/4 October	Gondwana, la Fête des Plantes méditerranéennes.	Domaine du Rayol, Var
10 October	Jardin du Réal, Fête de l'Automne	Puget Ville (Var)
17/18 October	Le Jardin Champêtre – open garden and nursery	Caunes-Minervois, Aude
25 October	Festival des Plantes en montagne noire	Fontiers-Cabardes (Aude)

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 on the Hortus programme, contact **Chantal Maurice.**

New on the website



Katharine entourée d'*Anemone fasciculata*

Katharine's garden memories

This is not strictly a garden diary, more of a collection of memories: of gardens of childhood, of visits to faraway lands to walk and to botanise, and of the writer's own gardens.

Katharine Fedden, one of our founder members, was born into a creative and cosmopolitan family and has written a collection of essays about her fascinating life.



Le jardin de simples, La Gardie

L'Assemblée Générale, Anduze, Gard

The 2026 AG, organised by Roland Leclercq and Chantal Guiraud, took place in the magnificent landscape of the Cévennes. We visited the Musée des Vallées Cévenoles, the Chêne Vert pottery in Anduze, the Parc Tour Vieille in Alès, the Bambouseraie in Générargues and the Jardin de La Gardie, near Rousson.

Roland Leclercq, Christine Daniels, Peter Guillery and Nigel Skinner have compiled photo-filled accounts of the visits.

Gardening in the Aveyron in a rapidly changing climate

Liz Godfrey writes:

When I first thought about the title for this article, the word rapidly didn't appear, but my experience this last winter and summer has made me revise it. At the time of writing (the beginning of August) such a lot has changed.

I started the garden from scratch in 2011. Four parts, of which three are finished, a mediaeval type 'carré des simples', a 'jardin du curé' (I live in a presbytère) and a potager. The fourth part will be grass and trees but still needs levelling.

The summers then were cooler and we had occasional rain. The winters were colder, with more snow. The original planting survived happily until roughly five years ago, but then the dryer hotter summers started having an effect.

I opened my garden for charity at the end of May, for the third year running. In comparison to previous years, it should have been opened two weeks earlier.

I don't water on principle. I believe that in general our plants should be appropriate for the climate - and a big rethink is going to be necessary if this year is going to be the norm.

At the time of writing the garden is half burnt and half dead! A generalisation of course but after discussion with my gardening friends, not far from the truth.

The bad news

The plant that has surprised me the most is lavender. In particular, 4-5 year old *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Anna', 'Elizabeth' and 'Hidcote'. Some were affected by the unusually heavy rain at the start of the year (which resulted in serious floods nearby). Others died later, due to the dryness of the spring and summer. Friends have had the same experience. I have replaced some lavenders with *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walkers

Low' which has survived everything so far, and also with a white one, *N.* x *faassenii* 'Alba'. *Lavandula* x *chaytoriae* 'Richard Gray' has so far been unaffected.

Some thyme plants have been affected but they may revive with rain.

Another disappointment is *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nana'. It is struggling, and I'm not sure why. It is happy in Corfu, where it has plenty of rain in the winter but none in the summer, and summer temperatures are equivalent or higher than here. It may be that it dislikes being in full sun.



Pittosporum tobira 'Nana' in full sun



Another one, with partial shade in the afternoon

Hemerocallis leaves are turning brown very quickly and the heat has affected the colour of the flowers. Even agapanthus leaves are browning early and the flowers are smaller.

Some trees have lost their leaves very early, *Eleagnus augustifolia*, deciduous magnolias, *Cornus* 'Eddie's White Wonder' and *Chitalpa tashkentensis* in particular, but *Heptacodium miconioides* takes everything thrown at it.

The good news

Peonies, roses and clematis all seem fine, although some leaves are turning earlier than usual. Sedums seem good too, rosemary is thriving, as is *Viburnum tinus*. I planted some grasses last year as a trial, *Stipa tenuifolia*, *Festuca glauca, Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln' and *Muhlenbergia capillaris* – so far so good.

Arbutus unedo and *Arbutus andrachne* (I planted the latter after I had seen it at the AGM in Hyères) are both looking good. Recently planted *Pistacia lentiscus* is thriving, but those of you further east have probably been growing it for years.

The surprise is wisteria. We have three, a standard and two climbers. They are growing like weeds. I've just pruned the biggest one for the third time. I would have appreciated a slowdown!

Over the last 4 weeks we have had several days at over 40°C, and in the last 6 weeks, only 5cm rain. We are lucky, we have not had any watering restrictions so I can still water my pots, my tomatoes (it's too hot and sunny for them) and my citrus.

Once sufficient rain arrives it will be interesting to see what recovers and what doesn't, but I may have to wait until next spring to get the full picture. This coming winter will be an opportunity to rethink.

It seems to me that whilst our summers here are becoming more like those of the Midi, our winters may still be different, which will affect plant choice – we will see. I would be interested to hear other people's experiences.

Please send your thoughts and experiences of gardening during this summer's extended period of heat to Roland Leclercq and Christine Daniels, with photographs if possible. We will publish a selection of comments in the next newsletter and create an article on the subject for the website.

Heteropterys glabra.



Heteropterys glabra



Flowers of *Heteropterys glabra*



Heteropterys glabra with little watering

Pierre Bianchi writes
I have been growing this plant for about a dozen years without any trouble. I planted it one autumn, digging a hole five times the volume of the pot, added some organic matter, watered it intermittently for a year, and then more or less forgot about it, as watering the part of the garden where it is planted is not easy. It loses its foliage in summer, but does not hold it against me, and rewards me with a display of small, lemon-yellow flowers in spring, followed by bright, cheerful red fruits in early summer.

I had forgotten its name. I could not find it anywhere in my books on Mediterranean plants and dry gardens, which do not mention it, but managed to identify it again thanks to a forum where one of the French suppliers posts. Once the name was found, I could look up information about it online (see the Webography at the end of the article).

Heteropterys glabra originates from a region in northern Argentina where there are many plants suited to Mediterranean climates with mild winters. This region includes northern Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and southern Brazil. The plant is something of an exception as it is not very sensitive to frost.

Description
The extent of its growth depends on the amount of water it receives. My plant, which I have grown under harsh conditions, is a small, rounded shrub measuring just under a metre in all directions, but I have read that it can grow to around 1.50m and sometimes more.
It can be somewhat climbing in nature, sending out long shoots that cling to surrounding vegetation or a wall. The leaves are oval to lanceolate and a bright green. The flowers are small and lemon-yellow.
It is the fruits that are the plant's main attraction, so much so that both its botanical name (*pterys* = wing) and its common name, 'redwing', highlight the distinctive nature of its red fruits. The seeds grow in pairs, each with a red wing extending from it, much like the samaras of maple trees. These fruits are highly visible for around two months, before turning brown and drifting away. In my dry environment, I have never seen any self-sown seedlings.
Cultivation
Under my conditions, growth is slow, more generous watering would speed up growth.
The plant tolerates heavy soils on clay subsoil provided they are well-drained, also alkaline soils, drought and cold down to at least -12°C. It can be grown in North Carolina parts of which are USDA zone 7B (to -15°C). It prefers light soil in full sun or partial shade and will thrive best if watered thoroughly three times a month during the summer.
Where can you find it?
Plants:
I only know of two suppliers: Dino Pellizarro and the Rochevieille nursery.
.
Seeds and seedlings:
This year I harvested seeds and supplied them to the MGF seed bank.
Semences du Puy currently has it in stock.

Sowing is said to be easy in autumn or early spring.

If you grow this plant, please do share your experiences with us, as it is currently very rarely seen.

Webography
A description by a North Carolina nursery, Plant Delights Nursery.
A video about the climbing form of the plant

Mycobacterium vaccae, the secret to gardener's mood



Mycobacterium vaccae
Photo: Simon Park

Chantal Guiraud writes:
I've always wondered why I love weeding my flowerbeds so much. I could spend hours and hours doing it… And one day I stumbled upon an article written by scientists revealing that gardening evokes a feeling of fulfillment and well-being. These researchers discovered a bacterium in the soil that helps us reach nirvana.
Mycobacteriums are bacteria, and *M. vaccae* is capable of bringing us happiness. It's easy to experience this: simply breathe in the soil and touch it with your hands and feet. This bacterium actually activates the release of two neurotransmitters: serotonin, synthesized in the gut, and dopamine, synthesized in the brain.

Dopamine affects emotions, especially those related to pleasure. And serotonin regulates our mood, as well as our sleep, our memory, and even… our libido.
The results of tests conducted by neuroscientists Dorothy Matthews and Susan Jenks are astonishing: mice exposed to the bacteria were less nervous and navigated a maze twice as fast as mice without the bacteria.

In short, this bacteria makes you happy and smarter! So get gardening and stop washing your hands!

Mediterranean Gardening International

Reminder:
MGF is part of an umbrella association called Mediterranean Gardening International (MGi).
MGF members are welcome to join activities organised by these associations.

The newsletters of the partner associations can be found at the following web addresses:
Mediterranean Gardening Association Portugal:
https://www.mediterraneangardeningportugal.org/ (click on Latest News Update)
Cape Horticultural Society, South Africa
https://capehorticulturalsociety.co.za/about-us/ (Click on Newsletters)
California Horticultural Society, USA
https://calhortsociety.org/bulletins/
Mediterranean Plants and Gardens (UK) https://www.medpag.org also has a newsletter, which is accessible to members only.
Our associate groups in Canada and Chile don't have newsletters but both their websites feature interesting blogs:
Okanagan Xeriscape Association, Canada
https://okanaganxeriscape.org/blog/
Mediterranean Gardening Chile
https://medgardenchile.wixsite.com/mg-chile/blog (bilingual Spanish/English, mostly about native plants).
Mediterranean Gardening Margaret River
2026 Events Calendar now available from Pamela Edwards.

AND FINALLY

When we are concerned about the deterioration of our living environment, when the trio of tarmac, concrete and cars takes on the colour and smell of the sewer, we should draw inspiration from plants, from their simplicity and their dignity; the future of the planet would be less bleak. (Francis Hallé, 1938–2025, botanist, writer)

Best wishes
Roland Leclercq
Newsletter editor
Please send contributions to this newsletter to Roland Leclercq