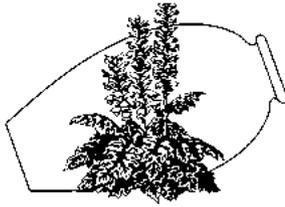


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THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN



THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN

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mediterranean climate regions of the world

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The Mediterranean Garden Society is a non-profit-making association which acts as a forum for everyone who has a special interest in the plants and gardens of the region.

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Passiflora caerulea
drawing by Freda Cox

(M)EDITORIAL

Many years ago our school history curriculum included The War of Jenkins' Ear. The intervening decades have quite erased all recollection of Mr. Jenkins' identity, or how his ear came to be a *casus belli*. In fact this episode might have remained buried in the dusts of the past were not memory prompted by the present affair of Wheeler's Nose. Many of you will be aware that David Wheeler is editor of the British gardening journal *Hortus*, and it seems more than likely that hostilities will be declared in horticultural circles as a result of editorial comments in the recent autumn issue.

The rhinal connection is simple: David Wheeler's nose is afflicted by hayfever (other sufferers in search of relief should read the editorial) and this has not unnaturally engendered an antipathy towards grasses. However, his dislike of the family goes beyond its allergenic properties. He is particularly scathing about 'ornamental grasses' – which he considers a 'contradiction in terms' – and regards gardens 'with eruptions of striped, variegated (and probably even spotted) grasses' as 'blighted'. The larger feathery kinds of grasses he feels 'properly belong on the Patagonian uplands' (an opinion shared by many Australian and Californian conservationists). All this is strong stuff, and we now await the inevitable counterblasts.

It is interesting how the most inoffensive plant (even those which do not induce a runny nose) can elicit polemic reactions from otherwise tolerant people: from 'I simply couldn't be without it' to 'I can't stand it at any price!' In gardening, one man's hate is another man's passion. Your own editors are a good case in point. Indeed, it is just as well we are editing *The Mediterranean Garden* and not a Mediterranean garden, for while there is little difference of opinion when words are concerned (though we have been known to quibble over the odd preposition) a trip round any nursery reveals a quite drastic divergence in preferences for plants.

Any garden designer who has actually considered the client's wishes (rather than telling them what they ought to grow) will have run up against the same problem. Gardens will rarely turn out exactly as they were originally planned, since what the

owner wants, and what the designer would personally prefer, do not coincide. But whose garden is it, anyway? This question is just as relevant to those of us who create our own gardens. We may not call in a professional consultant, but we are continuously bombarded with well-meant advice from friends, TV experts, plant sellers – and journals! How easy it is to plant something which seemed like a good idea at the time (so many people having recommended it), only to have to admit finally that you just *do not like* the thing! The only certain consolation is that your neighbour will covet it – so you can give it away and try an alternative.

It follows that there can be no such thing as the definitive Mediterranean garden, but a whole range of approaches which nevertheless each take into account the special conditions under which we grow our plants (relax in the sun, dine al fresco – and whatever else we do in the garden). Water – or lack of it – is a major factor, and this obviously encourages us to select drought-resistant subjects; but even this is not an inviolable rule. As Heidi Gildemeister has pointed out, water economy can also be achieved by grouping plants in such a way that irrigation is restricted to a particular area of the garden; water consumption can be reduced by sheltering plants from drying winds, and so on. Potentially, we have great scope when it comes to choosing plants which *we* want to see growing in *our* garden (if only we can find them...) Ingenuity and experience will show us just how far we can go.

The arguments are more likely to revolve around how far we *should* go. To what extent ought we to adapt to nature, and how much is it desirable to bend nature to our will? (The perennial garden debate.) Take the matter of greenery, for example. David Wheeler recounts how he was notably put off by a grass which, besides being conspicuously graminaceous, was naturally brown in colour. Brown, he feels, is not a hue which he can accept as indicative of a healthy plant. A sentiment which would surely be echoed by the majority of gardeners, not only in temperate regions, but here. So what is the reaction to a garden which is mostly shades of brown – or at least with very little green in it? Which is precisely what the Mediterranean garden would be, if left to its own devices, for several months of the year.

This recalls a conversation which took place on a hillside above Athens in early autumn, as the first cyclamen were discreetly decorating a dry slope of rocks and sparse dead vegetation. In scientific terms we were looking at a 'far degraded ecosystem', yet even a scientist was moved to point out that this landscape had its own peculiar beauty. This in turn prompted the question: why do we always insist that our gardens be predominantly green? After all, there are other perfectly good colours in the spectrum. The many tints of ivory and straw, the golds and ochres, the russets and tobaccos – to name but a few. Then again there is the infinite variety of texture and form to be found in dry vegetation: the tangled *découpage* of leaves, or the delicate sculpture of seed heads. And there can be few scenes of more breathtaking beauty than a swathe of tall bleached grasses caught by the rays of the setting sun (but in the abandoned plot next door, not in the garden...) Why is it that dried plant material is prized by the flower arranger, but tidied up by the conscientious gardener?



LA MORTOLA

Joanna Millar

The Hanbury Botanic Gardens at La Mortola on the Italian Riviera, about two kilometres from the French border, have been described as a 'dream garden'. La Mortola was a dream conceived and executed by Thomas Hanbury, a successful tea broker and businessman in the Far East. He had always envisaged returning to Europe and creating a garden on his retirement, and it was while on leave from Shanghai in 1867 and staying at Menton that he saw, from a boat, the dramatic south-facing promontory of La Mortola, on which stood the old palazzo of the Genovese Oregos.

He immediately made enquiries and by the autumn of that year not only was the property his, but he was already designing and planting with the aid of his older brother Daniel, a renowned botanist and pharmacologist. The land he had acquired covered about 112 acres, with a drop of nearly 300 feet to the dazzling Mediterranean below. Although the palazzo had stood there for over 300 years, no garden of importance existed. There were a few terraces, a few shabby staircases – and clumps of wild myrtle from which the property must have derived its name: *mirto* or *mortella* being the Italian for myrtle.

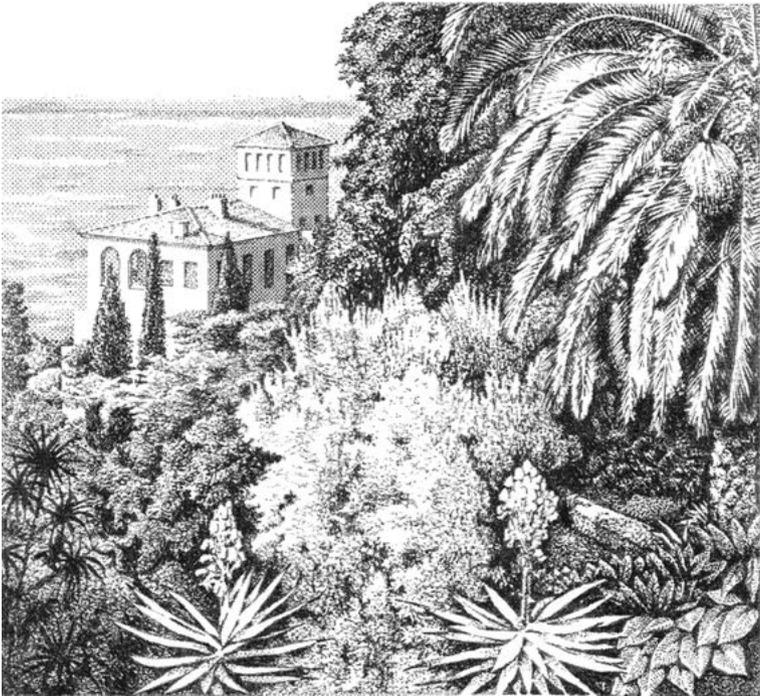
The garden flourished and soon plants were being sent, or collected by the Hanburys themselves, from the four corners of the earth. These included great collections of cacti and agaves from South Africa, Australia and South America, with a strong emphasis on medicinal species which reflected Daniel Hanbury's knowledge of and interest in pharmacology. Notable scientists such as Gustav Cronemayer, Kurt Dinter and Alwin Berger contributed to the development of the garden. The first plant catalogue drawn up in 1889 listed 3,500 species; this total had reached 5,800 species when the third catalogue was issued in 1912.

The Hanburys were 'Lords of the Manor', if one can so describe them, and general benefactors. Thomas Hanbury founded the local school, and practically the entire population

of the village depended on either the house or the garden for their livelihood. In 1892 he founded the Botanical Institute at the University of Genoa which bears his name, and organised the publication of two books on the natural history of the Riviera: *Riviera Nature Notes* by Comerford-Casey and *Rambles on the Riviera* by Strasburger.

In 1903 he presented to the Royal Horticultural Society the original 60 acres of land on which Wisley, the Society's display, experimental and teaching garden, was established.

Sir Thomas, as he had now become, died in 1907 and a period of stagnation ensued when the garden was run by a series of curators – until 1920 when his son Cecil, with his dynamic wife Dorothy, came to live at La Mortola and to direct the house and garden. They were aided by her brother, Bertram Symons-Jeune, a landscape gardener.

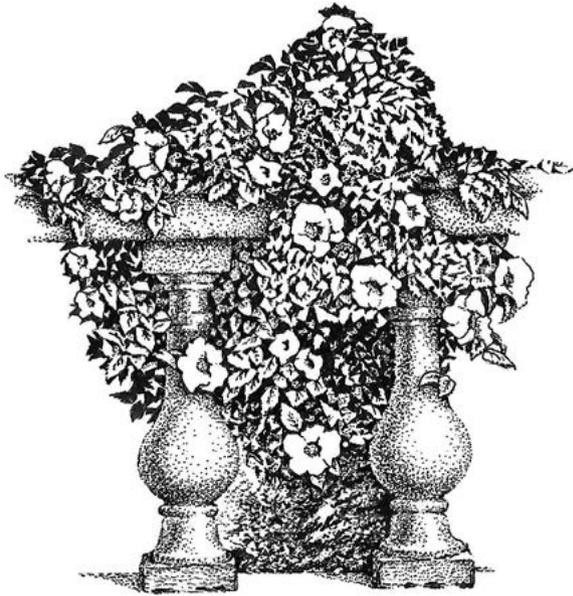


The property had suffered from the effects of the First World War and the young Hanburys set about restoring the house and gardens to their former glory. They made many improvements and new plantings, and the garden became as celebrated as it had been in its earlier days. At the height of this renewed activity it boasted 7000 different species of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. It was under their care that the long entrance avenue of cypresses was planted, the long curving wisteria-clad staircase was constructed sheltering a pool with its legendary Japanese dragon from Kyoto, and the elegant little temple with its ironwork cupola was created.

At the outbreak of the Second World War the Hanburys departed for England and the property was once again plunged into ruin. The gardens and village were the scene of much fighting, as the scarred façades of some of the houses still bear witness to this day. It was also here, in 1941, that Mussolini and Franco had a secret meeting.

With the return of peace back came the Hanburys, and it was due to Lady Dorothy's vigour that the garden was restored once more to something like its previous condition. But life had changed. It was no longer easy to find staff, and in 1960 Mrs. Hanbury-Forbes (as she had become on remarrying after her husband's death) sold the garden to the Italian State with the warranty of possession in perpetuity. For some years the garden was managed by the International Institute of Ligurian Studies, but recovery was hampered by lack of funds. Things fell into a state of disrepair, paths were unweeded, plants died, and there was even talk of the whole site being turned into a building plot. The Institute had to withdraw in 1983.

But help came from the International Dendrology Society, later joined by the Royal Horticultural Society, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, and various Italian organisations. A vital role was played by the late Mr. Richard Norman, a renowned gardener and plantsman. As a result, a group of British and Italian horticulturalists, botanists and conservationists joined together to form the 'Amici dei Giardini Botanici Hanbury' (Friends of the Hanbury Botanical Gardens) under the presidency of Signor Gian Lupo Osti, and finally in 1987 the University of Genoa shouldered responsibility for the garden.



Rosa laevigata

There is now a real feel of excitement and advancement. Students are being trained, plants are being clearly labelled, new projects are being developed and the gardens are once more taking their place among the great and famous botanical gardens of the world.

Some of the original planting still exists: the *Casimiroa edulis* of 1867, *Pinus canariensis* of 1870 and the *Araucaria cunninghamii* of 1872, all planted or sown by Daniel Hanbury, as well as the 300-foot-long pergola, reputed to be the longest in Europe, covered with various members of the Bignoniaceae family: *Pandorea*, *Pyrostegia*, *Campsis*, *Phaedranthus* [now *Amphilophium*], *Jacaranda*, *Tecoma*, *Bignonia* [now *Podranea*] and *Macfadyena* [now *Dolichandra*]. You can see the large citrus grove which Thomas Hanbury and his brother planted in the lower reaches of the garden, with specimens of lemons, oranges and the 'shaddock' grapefruit, each one of which may weigh up to 3lbs.

There are special areas of interest: the succulent garden wherein grow all manner of agaves, aloes and yuccas; and the 'Foresta Australiana' which, as the name implies, is planted with trees and shrubs from Australasia: *Eucalyptus*, *Callistemon*, *Melaleuca*, *Acacia* and *Brachychiton*. The 'Viale delle Cicadee' has both male and female cycads – the food, so we are told, of the dinosaurs. It was supposed to take them two days to digest those tough, horny leaves – which perhaps accounts for the fact that they are extinct today. There are roses in profusion tumbling out of trees, climbing over pergolas or growing in borders: *Rosa laevigata*, white and yellow Banksia roses, 'Mermaid', 'Félicité et Perpétue', 'Noelle Nabonnand' (the Nabonnands were famous rose growers from Antibes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries). There are new plantings of modern roses by Meilland of France and David Austin of England and, of course, the single white-flowered 'La Mortola' itself, with its beautiful grey-green pointed leaves.

Other plants of note are: *Sorbus domestica*, *Cheirostemon platanoides* [now *Chiranthodendron pentadactylon*] (from Guatemala), *Pittosporum undulatum*, *Senecio petasites* [now *Roldana petasitis*], *Entelea arborescens* (from New Zealand – its wood is lighter than cork), *Musa sapientum* [now *Musa* × *paradisical*], *Strelitzia alba*, *Agave franzosini*, *Puya spathacea*, *Dasylyrion serratifolium*, *Aloe mitriformis* [now *A. perfoliata*], *Encephalartus altensteinii*, *Acacia abyssinica*, *Koelreuteria integrifoliola* [now *K. bipinnata*], *Diospyros kaki*, *Passiflora mixta*, *Salvia gesneriiflora*, *Salvia interrupta*, *Campsis* × *tagliabuana*, *Lobelia laxiflora*, and an unusual tree convolvulus – *Convolvulus floridus* (from the Canary Islands).

Half-way down, the garden is bisected from east to west by the Via Aurelia, one of the four main roads leading from Rome, along which passed such famous people as Catherine of Siena, Machiavelli, several popes, Charles V, and Napoleon en route to one of his campaigns.

A part of the garden which has recently been restored and reopened, much to my own pleasure, is the well-labelled herb garden. And then there is the truly delightful 'Giardino dei Profumi' with species of salvia, geranium, lavender, a glorious *Beaumontia*, and roses cascading over the old walls – not to be missed.

For those who wish it there are charming and well-informed guides who can lead you through this wonderland to its foot, where you can take light refreshments to prepare you for the long haul back.

* * * *

The author and editors would like to thank Dott. Gian Lupo Osti for his assistance in preparing this article, and the Amici dei Giardini Botanici Hanbury for the loan of photographs from their archives. If you are interested in supporting the work of the Hanbury Botanical Gardens and enjoying the benefits of membership of this association, please write for further information to:

Amici dei Giardini Botanici Hanbury,
Corso Montecarlo 13 bis
18030 La Mortola (IM)
Italy.

HANBURY BOTANIC GARDEN'S NURSERY

Grace Kiernan

If the truth were but known, it would be no exaggeration to say that cuttings taken from the Hanbury Botanic Garden can be found growing in small gardens all over the world. Indeed, how many visitors to La Mortola can honestly claim that they did not leave the grounds without at least one snippet of a plant hidden in their pockets?

I for one plead guilty. At this very moment cuttings, taken some years ago, are growing happily in my own garden. I admit it, I am a Mortola Thief. But I was not always so, for Mortola once boasted a small nursery where visitors could legitimately buy the plants they coveted. A *Rosmarinus officinalis* I bought in the 60s still covers a rockery wall in Surrey.

Today there is no nursery at Hanbury Botanic Garden. There has not been one for many years, so I could not help wondering when Joanna Millar got her cuttings of *Rosa laevigata*?

Was it during the 50s when I first visited the garden? When the owner, Lady Dorothy Hanbury, still lived at the top of the property? Or was it when it had been sold to the Italian State and left abandoned for many years? When bushes, trees and flowers grew uncared for, uncultivated, yet somehow still managed to flourish and intermingle with the weeds in a riot of colour and perfume.

Then, no one could have claimed that the garden was in perfect order. But it did not matter. The confusion was part of its very spellbinding beauty. Towering, unpruned, trees met in a tangle of branches and leaves to form a welcoming shield from the rays of the glaring sun. Acacias, eucalyptuses, cypresses, pines, Judas trees, jacarandas and Japanese cherries speckled the paths and borders with shadows of light and dark, and patterns of green and gold.

Terrace walls were covered in dense carpets of creeping and hanging plants: mesembryantheums, rosemaries, convolvulus

* *The Mediterranean Garden*, no.2, Autumn 1995, 'Domaine du Prieuré' by Joanna Millar.

– to name but a few – while pergolas were a jumble of clematis, jasmines, wisterias and bignonias, their beauty and profusion breathtaking: a sight never to be forgotten.

The Eucalyptus Forest planted by Thomas Hanbury in 1876 was as yet untouched by the chainsaw and its lofty trees waved and sighed against the deep blue of a Mediterranean sky. Paths criss-crossing the shady valley beckoned invitingly. The tennis court, shadowed by old pine trees and overlooked by the Satyr fountain, was marked with lines of white marble. Undeniably grass and weeds covered the paths, pools were dry and choked with debris, fountains silent and everywhere the signs of neglect and abandon were obvious. But at the same time the inspiration and love that Thomas, and after him Dorothy, Hanbury had poured into this magnificent garden could still be felt. Its magical loveliness continued to exist for all to see and enjoy.

It is true that as there was no nursery, visitors could not legitimately buy plants, but at the same time no one could be blamed for taking a small cutting or removing seeds from such profusion and abundance. Not theft, but plant conservation, surely?

Now that Hanbury Botanic Garden is under the management of Genoa University it is tidier. Trees have been pruned, hedges clipped or uprooted. Vast spaces have been cleared of weeds and unwanted plants, and paths are well kept. Terrace walls have been rebuilt and the chainsaw put to good use. But sadly the magic has been lost. Thomas and Dorothy Hanbury would recognise their garden with some difficulty; and there is still no nursery.

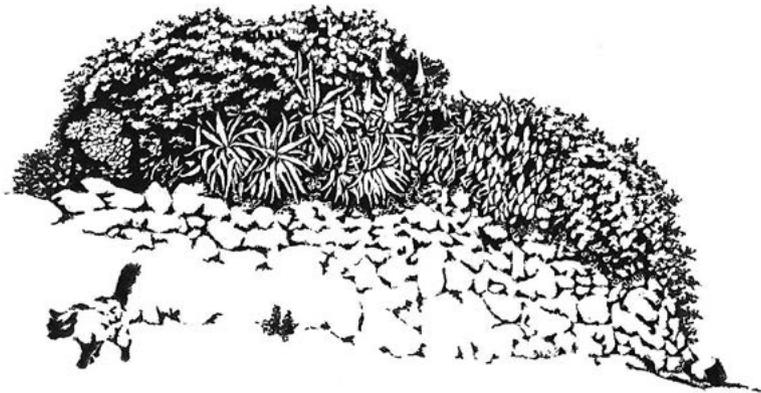
I sincerely hope that, in the not too distant future, the garden's past magnificence will be restored and that it will regain the mystical enchantment it once possessed. When that happens, I hope too that I shall be able to buy plants from a well-stocked nursery – and the Mortola Thief will cease to exist...

SUNSHINE ON A STEM

Tom Wellsted

The Mexican tulip poppy does not grow here as described in many learned books and essays. Strictly a perennial, it is usually grown as an annual in the UK and USA. Here it grows as a woody-based perennial and may not even flower in its first year but, once going, it starts to flower in spring and goes on and on until stopped by too much cold weather. It stands up to drought, to occasional flooding, to much wind and survives over winter enduring frost of several degrees. Regularly. The only setback here has been through the agency of a neighbour's child who, mistakenly, thought that the plants were ideal to slash down with a stick. The plants survived.

The sheer brilliance of its yellow flowers makes other plants, described as having golden or bright yellow blooms, look like clay models for a gold coin. Believe me, to have these dancing heads, on stems of some 45-60cm tall, for so much of the year is to possess real treasure. The 7-8cm-wide yellow flowers are centrally set with a thick boss of deeper coloured,



Ibiza

almost orange, anthers. Through this boss grows the paler yellow stigma topping the green ovary. This ovary eventually lengthens to about 10cm, turns brown and, when fully ripe, bursts to scatter the seeds. Large, deeply divided, blue-green leaves set off the flowers beautifully and give rise to the specific name of *Hunnemannia fumariifolia*. The young stems start blue-green too, ripening somewhat purplish and maturing to a light woody brown. While some leaves may persist over winter, most die back, as do younger stems. The plants can then look a bit of a mess but take trimming back quite well. My plants are of the form known as 'Sunlite' in which many of the flowers have extra petals but are not, to me, really double.

It is a plant easily raised from seed but, resenting root disturbance, should be sown where it is to grow, or in pots. Sun and sharp drainage suit it and so make it worth trying in a Mediterranean garden. My original seed was kindly sent, many years ago, by Thompson & Morgan, who still list it in their 1996 catalogue.

A SELECTION OF SALVIAS: STRONG IN THE SUN...

Tim Longville

Since even in my garden on the quite mild but very windy and spectacularly wet shore of the Solway Firth in north-west England many salvias make a splendid and very varied show, from my book-larnin' knowledge of the range of Mediterranean conditions, many more could do even better with you. Here are some possible candidates, with thumb-nail sketches of their characteristics, both in terms of appearance and in relation to climate. (My suggestions about hardiness are, obviously, guesstimates, which attempt to extrapolate from my own experience and what books tell me to what I gather are the most common Mediterranean conditions.)

Salvias come both from the Old World and the New, with more sturdy work-horses from the first (many of them Mediterranean natives, of course) and more operatic show-offs from the second. I'll deal with the old-world heavies first.

The closely related *Salvia argentea* and *S. aethiopsis* are both found throughout south-west Europe, North Africa and parts of the Mediterranean and both are essentially bold foliage plants, with attractively felted grey leaves, making vast rosettes up to four feet across. Forget the flowers, which in both cases are seriously under-powered. (The miserable off-white specimens of *S. argentea* are particularly disappointing.) Both species will stand at least ten degrees of frost, though in my damp climate plants occasionally rot. Beware of slugs – and of foul-smelling leaves. Propagation is easy from (the copiously produced) seed. 'To be frank' (that dreadful and dreaded phrase), these plants have seldom lived up to their advance publicity as far as I'm concerned – and I've now stopped growing them. On the other hand and 'to be fair' (a phrase almost as dreadful, since it always indicates damned faint praise), I *have* seen them looking well in other, larger, drier, slug-free gardens. Occasionally.

Salvia cyanescens has no advance reputation, since it is an uncommon plant in cultivation – I think unjustly. It comes from Turkey and is another plant with felted grey leaves, though in

this case they are quite small and narrow and the flowers, held on long arching stems over a period of several months, are a pleasant pale lilac-blue. Books say it will survive down to -8°C but to do that it needs to be kept dry (and I suspect starved, in poor gravelly soil). Here, if left outside, it doesn't wait for even a hint of frost before rotting. I suspect this would do much better in most Mediterranean gardens than it does with me. At its best and in full flower it is a strikingly handsome plant and more 'refined' than most Old World representatives of the genus. It sets lots of seed but germination isn't easy. Division is possible, with care.

(For those of you who don't know the trick or the book detailing the procedures involved in it, let me recommend for germination [a] gibberellic acid [GA-3], and [b] Professor Norman C. Deno's *Seed Germination, Theory & Practice*, which you can get from him at 139 Lenor Drive, State College PA 16801. This invaluable book gives germination procedures for the seed of literally thousands of species. It explains their requirements in clear language, easily understood by even the most scientifically challenged. *Verb. sap.*, believe one who knows whereof he speaks. GA-3, in particular, produces remarkable results with some normally obstinate species. For example, I gave a friend seed of *S. cyanescens*. Sowing it in orthodox ways, she had absolutely 0% germination after two months. Using GA-3, she had 100% germination in 24 hours. Case proved.)

Salvia forsskaohlei, again from southern Europe and Turkey, is a huge rumbustious plant, absolutely bone hardy (to at least -15°C), dying back in winter, making a big clump of roughly hairy leaves from which snake out apparently endless arms liberally covered for months on end with striking purplish-blue and white flowers. It is a bit like The Monster from the Dark Lagoon but, since it will grow in the most inhospitable corners (I have one plant growing in deep, dry, root-infested shade beneath a sycamore: it doesn't turn a hair) and since it does have a definite macho style and presence, there's much to be said for it. It is easy from seed or by division (though you will virtually need dynamite to do the job).

Salvia candelabrum is a particular favourite of mine. A Spanish native, it's effectively an evergreen shrub (more accurately, an

evergrey shrub, since the leaves are the colour of old pewter, when the late-medieval equivalent of Jeeves had spent more time bingeing than buffing), making a mound to a metre or more in all directions. The leaves are shapely (quite narrow; vaguely lanceolate) and pleasantly smelly when crushed or even brushed against (we have *S. candelabrum*-flavoured dogs for most of the year). Again, this species has long, arching flowering stems with sizeable flowers of a rich purple with white markings. It's hardy to at least -10°C , stands our Solway Firth wetness and salt winds without complaint, and is easily reproduced by cuttings, division or seed. Both a workhorse and an aristocrat, it demands and deserves plenty of space to be seen at its considerable best. *S. interrupta* and *S. ringens* are similar but I think (you will gather I'm biased), rather less effective.

There are other shrub-like species, which I haven't personally tried but which sound as though they might well be of interest, particularly in the Mediterranean: *Salvia pomifera*, *S. potentillifolia* and *S. blancoana*, for example. Does anyone already grow these and if so what do they think of them as garden plants?

My final Old World choice, *Salvia canariensis* (which comes from? Well done at the back there) is a much more delicate creature, usually surviving only an odd degree or two of frost, at least in this garden. However, since it's very easy from cuttings (it does set seed but not many and germination isn't easy) and since it's both attractive and unusual (in both senses: it looks unusual and it's unusual to see it, certainly in the U.K.), it is certainly worth growing. It makes an upright, spreading bush to something like three feet in all directions, with young stems covered in furry white tomentum, grey-green leaves, pink flowers and (the main attraction) long-lasting pink calyces. It looks effective for at least six months and might well repay exploration for use in Mediterranean gardens. As I write, in mid-December and after a couple of nighttime tickles of frost, it is still vigorously in flower.

Apart from a few well known species, such as *Salvia sclarea* (and *S. sclarea* var. *turkestanica*), *S. nemorosa* and its named forms and the hybrids of which it is a parent, and *S. glutinosa*, Jupiter's Distaff, most of the other Old World species, so far as I know them, are, frankly, weedy. Some are rare but they are rare for

the best of reasons: who in his or her right mind would want to grow them? Let me, by way of example and warning, mention *S. verticillata* and its white form, *S. verticillata* 'Alba', both of which are low, lax, sprawling, undistinguished in flower and ferocious self-seeders. My advice: steer clear.

There are something over 500 New World species, most of them from Mexico, so my selection is ruthless – and ruthlessly personal.

The best of the lot and one of the best of all examples of 'coloured hay' (Russell Page's sniffy description of what the rest of us call herbaceous perennials) is *Salvia elegans*, the Pineapple Sage. Names here (as often with the New World species) are often dangerously confused. *S. elegans*, for instance, is often confused with what used to be *S. rutilans* and is now properly *S. elegans* 'Scarlet Pineapple'. (Yes, I know: I feel exactly the same myself – although of course my choice of phrase to express my feeling was much more discreet than yours.) If you make that confusion of names, by the way, you may well find yourself with a body on your hands: *S. elegans* is hardy to something like -6°C (it usually, for instance, survives in sheltered corners in this garden) whereas 'Scarlet Pineapple' will only stand the barest whisper of frost. (Speak to it coldly about its absurd new name and it would probably drop dead on the spot from sheer mortification.) 'Scarlet Pineapple' is supposed to have more intensely pineapple-scented leaves. It is certainly later-flowering. For my money, *S. elegans*, which makes a beautiful bush to around three feet, densely clothed with dapper little leaves (quite smelly enough, thank you), fresh green with an almost blueish cast, which is then profusely studded with intensely red little flowers from May until November (or later if there's no real frost), is a model of what an herbaceous plant ought to be and do. I hardly ever go past it without telling it so. All right, it doesn't set seed. Hardly any of the South American ones do (so I shan't go on saying it). On the other hand, it comes with embarrassing ease from cuttings (almost all of the South American ones do, so I shan't go on saying that, either).

Then, of course, *Salvia patens*. Simply for the flowers. Why people grow the pale blue, pink or white forms passes my understanding but my saint-like pity for human frailty

prevents me from saying so. Usually. Grow, please, the type. The blue. *The* blue. The rich, the deep, the velvety, the royal, the imperial. The blue. Let me confess, the plant's growth is not distinguished (elderly relatives would say, 'Don't slouch, child) but it's easily disguised behind some friendly smaller neighbour. What's more, although it's from Mexico it will take a surprising amount of cold (it has always survived in this garden, which means it has certainly taken -8°C). If you're nervous, though, you can always either collect seeds (which, just to be awkward, I suspect, it sets profusely), take cuttings or, since it's tuberous, even lift it and store it like a dahlia.

Then a trio of small-scale plants, all of them perhaps at their best in containers. *Salvia discolor* is Peruvian and will only take a mere hint of frost (no seeds: easy cuttings) but is worth growing both for its handsome leaves (pale green and leathery, with almost white undersides, and strongly aromatic, though I'm never quite sure of the smell: is it blackcurrant?) and for its strange, almost black flowers. In a border, these can easily seem like 'black holes' and just disappear, so its best home, particularly given its general lax but elegant droopiness, is certainly in a container of some sort. *S. oppositiflora* is another Peruvian but this time a spreading ground-hugger with little fresh-green crinkly leaves and six months of furry orange flowers. It will take only the tiniest amount of frost but is, yes, easy from cuttings. *S. cacaliifolia*, from Guatemala and neighbouring states, is a sprawler with distinctive triangular leaves and good deep blue flowers, also taking only a degree or two of frost but easy and quick from cuttings. This one, as well as being a fine container plant, is very effective working its way through small, front-row shrubs.

My last selection from among the small but perfectly formed is what I think of as The Microphylla Gang. This bunch forms a posse of inter-related shrubby plants from Texas and New Mexico: *Salvia microphylla* itself and all of the forms and subspecies around it (you will sometimes come across *S. microphylla* as *S. grahamii*: beware!); *S. greggii* and the many named hybrids between those two species which go under the general name of *S. × jamensis* (pronounced – with a great deal of guttural flourish, if you will, as *harmensis*, after the village of Jame in

Mexico near which some of the forms were found in the wild by Compton, Darcy and Rix on their 1991 expedition). All of these make small bushy plants which will stand a surprising amount of frost (certainly to around -6°C) and most have a long-lasting profusion of flowers in some shade of (or related to) red. They are pretty toys but in my experience they don't have much substance and I'm inclined to think them rather overrated. Heavy soil and a wet climate are clearly not ideal conditions, though: in the Mediterranean I suspect they would perform much more powerfully.

Finally, a few from among the giants of the genus. I don't in fact grow all that many of these now, partly because this is a small garden and I hoard my space, partly because many of them, although intensely showy in flower, grow so rapidly they leave their strength behind them and are easily destroyed not just by a gale but even by one of our almost weekly trial-runs for a gale – and I am no longer of an age or build (was I ever?) to enjoy crawling around in a border attempting to stake up the wreckage.

Only two regularly survive the winter outside here. *Salvia uliginosa*, the Bog Sage, is unusual in definitely preferring wet conditions, at least during flowering. It is hardy to at least -8°C (but don't let it get *too* wet in winter: some specimens have been known to succumb in my very convincing Solway version of a bog) and can be propagated either by cuttings or, since it spreads gently by underground stems, by division. It grows to around 5 feet and, though it naturally bends like a limp sufferer from adolescent 'green sickness', it always rights itself, even after our wildest Solway gales. The flowers are a clear sky-blue and are profusely produced from late summer onwards. *S. guaranitica* [now *S. caerulea*] (which you may also still find as *S. ambigens* or as *S. caerulea*) is not quite as tall, is stiffer, sturdier, has deeper blue flowers, and, although from Brazil and adjacent states, is supposed to be hardy to -10°C (though I've lost more of it than *S. uliginosa* and the temperature here has never been below -8°C since we've been here). Both are good, colourful plants, particularly since they flower so late in the year.

Salvia fulgens, the Cardinal Sage (you guessed: also known as *S. cardinalis*), is a vigorous upright bushy plant, generally

to around four feet in this garden though taller in warmer and drier ones, with great quantities of extravagant (and extravagantly hairy) bright scarlet flowers from July onwards. It won't take more than three or four degrees of frost. It doesn't like our damp maritime climate but it's so absurdly colourful I can't resist growing it.

Salvia confertiflora is, in terms of its overall effect, the most imposing salvia I grow. It makes a big bush (up to five feet or so) densely clothed in individually big leaves, hairily green above and hairily tawny below. Up from this solid mass (solid enough to stand a good deal of wind) zoom equally solid unbranched 'spikes' of closely packed flowers. Individually the flowers are small but the overall effect is large. The calyces are rich brown, the flowers are vivid deep orange. A word of warning: the leaves have a peculiarly disgusting smell if rubbed or even brushed. Let's not try to be genteel. Stale cat pee is what it is. This Brazilian will hardly take any frost but is one of the easiest from cuttings – and a cutting taken in the autumn of one season will be a five or six foot flower-filled monster by the end of the next.

Last of all, *Salvia involucrata*. I shouldn't grow this. It is regularly destroyed by wind and grows here, when it survives at all, in the most slack, limp-wristed, graceless way imaginable. What's more, it won't survive outside (though it's *supposed* to take down to -6°C) and it isn't (by salvia standards) particularly easy from cuttings. So why *do* I grow it? Because of the flowers. In a genus of astonishing flowers, this species has perhaps the most spectacular of all: huge, in whorls of half a dozen or so; vivid lipstick pink; with an inflated corolla tube like an about-to-burst balloon; and with sizeable green-and-pink tinged bracts haloing the actual flowers. There's even a form ('Bethellii') with a terminal never-opening bud which sits on the end of the rest of the inflorescence like a grotesque bed-post knob. Bizarre? Yes. Grotesque? Perhaps. Irresistible? Well, certainly if you have the taste (or the lack of it) for the larger than life and seriously over the top. If there's such a thing among plants as 'trash with style', this is where it is.

Throughout, I've directed my comments towards winter hardiness rather than towards capacity to withstand summer drought and high temperatures because I assume that, given

their places of origin, few if any of these plants will be discombobulated by two or three dry months of temperatures in the 90s or above. (One or two 'specialists', such as *S. uliginosa*, come under 'Exceptions Proving Rules'). Certainly when, during the remarkable summer of 1995, even Cumbria got somewhat close to that situation, all the species I grow imitated Milne's Tigger when he discovered honey: 'Ah, so *that's* what Tiggers like.'

This is only a toe poked into the vast pool of salvias. If you'd like to submerge yourself more fully – or at least to take the temperature more accurately –, there isn't at the moment a monograph devoted to the genus (there *should* be but that's another story). There is, though, a very useful booklet, with brief descriptions of 200 or so species and lots of colour photographs, by one of the UK National Collection holders, Christine Yeo, whose nursery also stocks the largest selection I know of. The booklet, simply called *Salvias*, costs £4.95, excluding post and packing (I don't know what she charges to post a copy to Europe). Her catalogue costs £1.00. You can get both from: Pleasant View Nursery, Two Mile Oak, Near Denbury, Newton Abbott, Devon TQ12 6DG. The Nursery telephone number is 01803 813388. I've just been told that there's now a *second* salvia pamphlet. No doubt, as with buses, the third will be along in a moment... The second one is by Beryl Davies and is available from The Garden Curator, Probus Gardens, Probus, Truro, Cornwall TR2 4HQ, price £2.50 + 75p P.& P. for the UK. I suspect the publication of two separate pamphlets will mean less rather than more chance of a full-scale monograph in the foreseeable future, which is a pity, but at least between them the pamphlets should provide enough information and a sufficient range of possibilities to satisfy most interested but non-specialist gardeners.

I hope I've tempted those of you who don't know them to try some of these very varied beauties – and I'd be fascinated to hear how you get on.

See also *The New Book of Salvias* by Betsy Clebsch, Timber Press, 1997, published after this article was written. Ed.

...AND USEFUL IN THE HOME



Megan Toms

Browsing through an old book of mine entitled *The Magic of Herbs* (by David Conway, published by Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1975), I made a mental note to put to good use the abundant fresh herbs that grow profusely in my garden.

Mental notes in my case tend to be forgotten as quickly as New Year resolutions. However, I have experimented a little this summer with one herb in particular: sage (*Salvia officinalis* – though I could equally well have used the *Salvia triloba* [now *S. fruticosa*] which grows everywhere on the hillsides round here). A friend had given me a packet of sage seeds which I ‘filed away’ in the kitchen drawer for a couple of years. I came across them last autumn and decided to give them a try. To my delight they germinated easily, despite being past their sell-by date. Most of the sturdy little seedlings were given away to friends, but I planted four of them at the front of a newly-made shrubbery, in a raised bed of poor stony soil in full sun. They soon formed healthy well-shaped little shrubs ready for use. I didn’t bother to harvest and dry the leaves, but simply nipped off a few fresh ones when needed.

A popular use for sage in this part of the Mediterranean is to make a pleasant tisane. Simply wash a sprig or two, cover with boiling water, and give it five minutes to infuse. Honey may be

added according to taste. It's a refreshing alternative to tea and much better for the digestion.

If tisanes are not to your liking there are many alternative uses. A sprig hung up in the wardrobe will keep the moths at bay and certainly smells more pleasant than mothballs.

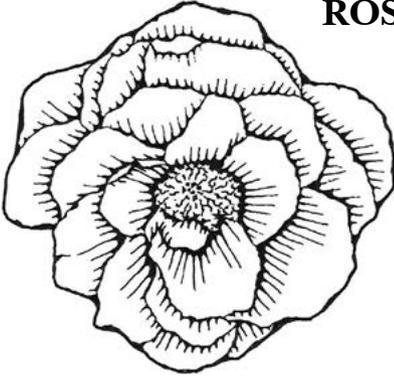
It is, however, in the realm of natural beauty treatments that sage really comes into its own. It is an ingredient in a wide range of beauty preparations, many of which are time-consuming and complicated in the making. Luckily, for those of us who lead busy lives, there are other simpler ways in which sage can be put to use. For example, a freshly picked leaf rubbed over the teeth and gums provides an instant tooth cleanser and breath freshener. (I found the after-taste very pleasant but couldn't muster the self-discipline to go out into the garden three times a day to clean my teeth.)

Alternatively, sage is one of the many herbs that can be used as an ingredient in a facial steam. To prepare a steam bath, put a handful of fresh leaves (cut or bruised if you have the patience) into a bowl and add a litre of boiling water. Using a towel, make a tent over your head and the bowl and steam away for 10 or 15 minutes, remembering not to get your face closer to the steam than is comfortable. When you have finished, rather than throw away the infusion which is left in the bowl you can use it as a hair conditioning rinse. It adds body and lustre and if used in a very concentrated form will darken hair.

However if, like me, you have blonde hair and swear by chamomile rinses, you can always add the infusion to your bathwater. A combination of sage and rosemary is said by aromatherapists to be very soothing – but something of a luxury in summer in the Mediterranean where water is precious.

But if you have to forgo that indulgence, there is always the consolation of being able to pop out on Christmas Eve and snip off a few leaves to make your own sage and onion stuffing.

ROSES THAT DO WELL



Marjorie Holmes

Reading the review of Trevor Nottle's 'Roses for Every Garden' (*The Mediterranean Garden*, No.2) prompts me to add some comments on roses which I find do well for me in Corfu.

Absolutely top marks go to 'Iceberg'. It goes on and on with about a three-week break between terrific *floraisons*. Don't bother with the climbing variety, which is not as floriferous – plant ordinary 'Iceberg' against a wall and it will reach three metres.

Of the hybrid musks, 'Felicia', 'Penelope' and 'Cornelia' are the best – especially the first two. 'Buff Beauty' is very lovely too, and more of a climber with me. All of these appreciate rich planting and only light pruning.

'Fred Loads': a difficult colour to accommodate but a splendid fellow! A huge free-standing upright grower needing no support. On its own among shrubs or in a woodland setting it is very effective.

'Queen Elizabeth' never fails.

'Sally Holmes' (no relation) is another top of the pops, but you need plenty of space. A vast spreading shrub with wonderful bouquets of up to thirty single flowers opening from conical peach-coloured buds. In early summer and autumn when the weather is cooler the flowers are a most delicate peach pink, but the effect is usually white. Not fussy about soil, but it evidently enjoys my heavy clay.

Rosa bracteata (the MacCartney rose – parent of 'Mermaid') is another rose that requires space. It roots all over the place and

will cover a vast area if left to its own devices. It was just about the first thing we planted, on a bare bank which reflected heat like a furnace, and it has built itself up into a great dark canopy. NO watering, NO fertilising, NO attention – apart from the occasional savage hacking back – and flourishing in quite the hottest part of the garden. What more could one want? The blooms are like big white cistuses; the leaves small and thickly growing – somewhat *rugosa*-like. Horribly thorny! I bought it from Hilliers and I think it's quite hard to find now.

(Ed.: Can anyone suggest a supplier?)

'Bloomfield Abundance' looks like a giant 'Cécile Brunner', with great airy panicles of miniature roses. A wonderful gap filler and the only one, apart from *Rosa bracteata*, that is 100% disease-proof. It grows anywhere, on any soil.

Among the climbers, 'François Juranville' is a stunner, wonderfully scented – like 'Albertine' but better: the petals fall into a delicate pink carpet, instead of turning into dried-up paper balls. I have it over a 10m × 5m pergola at the end of the pool and you can't imagine anything more lovely. It flowers only in May to early June – but what a flowering! I have *Mandevilla* climbing through it in summer.

'New Dawn' is another climber/rambler which never fails, and is a consistent flowerer.

'La Mortola' is a giant with lovely drooping pale greyish leaves – very tough yet graceful.

The yellow banksia rose seems to do particularly well in Corfu but takes a long time to get going.

The only hybrid teas I have are 'Fragrant Cloud', 'Korresia' and 'Just Joey'. I was seduced by their colour and/or scent, but they are grown among other things, as all my roses are. There is also a very lovely dark red local one grown from cuttings, which has a long flowering spell.

The humidity of Corfu, especially in hot weather, makes roses victim to every known ailment. I am fighting back by pruning fairly hard in late November and trying to pick off dead leaves – it's not cold enough in winter for a complete leaf fall, and the diseases stay on the plant. Then the first spraying should take place just as the leaf buds begin to show but *before* any sign of leaf. Twice again at 10-14 day intervals and *voilà!*

No more spraying for the rest of the season unless there is an emergency – just the occasional squirt now and then. Rust is a dreaded plague, though – as usual the hybrid teas are the worst affected. I read once that ‘the proximity of conifers is conducive to rust’, so as my garden is full of cypress trees I haven’t much chance... Still, the early spraying has made life much easier.

The Old Roses are not to be recommended here – they hate the heat and catch everything going. Salonica grows the best: the climate there is perfect.

HOME-GROWN VARIETIES

Derek Toms

At the end of this article you will find an appendix of over 200 Mediterranean plants which are, or have been, cultivated in temperate gardens. The list is certainly not exhaustive – it was compiled by simply leafing through some seed lists and one or two popular gardening reference books – so don't be surprised if your own personal favourite is absent (but write and tell us about it).

Before you wade through all that botanical Latin (which I trust you will), a few comments are in order. The justification for printing such a list is, of course, to draw attention to the kind of plants that could be more widely grown – and more widely available – in the Mediterranean. Some of them are indeed commonly planted here, though I doubt whether my local nursery could supply more than a dozen species, and even by shopping around I would not be able to find the majority of them in Attica. The irony is that the British gardener, by ordering from good seed merchants such as Chilterns or Thompson & Morgan, or buying from a well-stocked nursery like Beth Chatto's, can easily acquire a high proportion of our native plants.

That is, *more or less* native plants. The fact that a plant in a seed catalogue bears the same name as one which grows on your nearest hillside does not mean that they are identical. Sorry about that, but botany does seem to be riddled with pitfalls for the innocent gardener. Let's go back to the sixteenth century. It was during this period that Mediterranean plants first began to arrive in northern European gardens in significant numbers – though some had undoubtedly been grown by monks long before that. This means that you might have to go back through many generations of the forebears of a plant on sale today before tracing it back to its wild ancestor. Even plants which have been grown in gardens for much shorter periods may differ somewhat from individuals in a wild population. The difference, which may or may not be obvious to the eye, lies in the genotype.

The genetic variability inherent in wild plant populations is difficult to transfer to cultivation – but it is this variability which holds the key to the ability of a species to adapt to different environments. Apparently similar plants growing on opposite sides of a mountain may in fact have developed subtle adaptations which enable them to make the best of their respective habitats. If a few plants (or even a single specimen) are collected from the wild, their genes may not correspond to the commonest genes in the plant community. As successive generations are bred from these parents, a new garden strain develops. The absence of natural pollinators in the garden environment may also encourage self-fertilisation, with the result that natural variability is reduced, and the cultivar becomes distinct from the typical wild species. These are some reasons why attempts to reintroduce garden plants into their native habitats do not always meet with the success we might expect.

So when the nurseryman or the seedsman offers a plant as a ‘species’-type, the true botanist may shake his head – and we gardeners would also do well to treat the description with caution. Most plants in the average catalogue will, however, be clearly labelled as ‘cultivars’. (They’re easy to spot since they have fancy names which are not in italics.) These may be derived either from genetic mutations, or from hybridisation between two separate species.

Yes, but what is the practical significance of all this for the Mediterranean gardener? Where commercial production is concerned, it means that the Mediterranean subjects we purchase, whether as seeds or plants, are the result of cultivation – and usually deliberate breeding – with a long history. If the source is a northern European company, then the plants they offer will have been selected primarily for the temperate gardener. Fortunately, many of these are quite capable of adapting to the very different conditions of the Mediterranean – but there is no guarantee that this will be so. And would we not be better off with strains which had been developed specifically for the Mediterranean climate and soils?

We may not be too bothered by the fact that our nurseries do not stock certain local species – in my own garden I have a

number of prized plants which have just sown themselves. Then again, *I* can always introduce plants from the wild. This is fine up to a point, but not the complete answer. To begin with, my garden is a quite different environment from the hillside, and not every wild plant will be happy here. The soil might not contain the right bacteria, or the eclectic collection of plants in the border might be too competitive. On the other hand, the wild plant might not be exactly what I am looking for. Most Mediterraneans flower briefly in spring – but I want strains which flower longer, or later, to give my garden more summer interest.

The problem is not merely that we need greater commercial availability of Mediterranean plants. What we really need is a regional plant-breeding industry comparable to that which exists in northern Europe, geared to the requirements of the Mediterranean gardener. Ah well, it's always good to know what you want, even if you can't have it.



Arbutus unedo

Trees

Abies cephalonica

Acer monspessulanum

Arbutus unedo

A. andrachne

Ceratonia siliqua

Cercis siliquastrum

Chamaerops humilis

Citrus spp.

Cotinus coggygria

Crataegus monogyna

C. azarolus

Cupressus sempervirens

Elaeagnus angustifolia

Eriobotrya japonica

Ficus carica

Fraxinus ornus

Laurus nobilis

Melia azedarach

Morus nigra

M. alba

Myrtus communis

Olea europaea

Pinus halepensis

P. pinaster

P. pinea

Pistacia lentiscus

P. terebinthus

Platanus orientalis

Populus alba

P. nigra

Punica granatum

Quercus coccifera

Q. ilex

Tamarix gallica

T. pentandra [now *T. chinensis*]

T. tetrandra

Grasses

Cynodon dactylon

Festuca glauca

F. punctoria

Helictotrichon sempervirens

Lagurus ovatus

Stipa gigantea

Medium Plants, Shrubs, Climbers

Acanthus mollis

A. spinosus

Aristolochia altissima

Arum dioscoridis

A. dracunculus

[now *Dracunculus vulgaris*]

A. italicum

Asphodeline lutea

Ballota acetabulosa

B. pseudodictamnus

Capparis spinosa

Centranthus ruber

Cistus albidus

C. ladaniferus [now *C. creticus*]



Euphorbia characias

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| <i>C. monspeliensis</i> | <i>G. equisetiformis</i> |
| <i>C. salviiifolius</i> | [now <i>G. umbellata</i> |
| <i>Clematis cirrhosa</i> | ssp. <i>equisetiformis</i>] |
| <i>C. flammula</i> | <i>G. hirsuta</i> |
| <i>Colutea arborescens</i> | <i>Halimicistus sahucii</i> |
| <i>Cynara cardunculus</i> | <i>Halimium libanotis</i> |
| <i>C. scolymus</i> | <i>Hedera canariensis</i> |
| <i>Cytisus albus</i> | <i>H. colchica</i> |
| <i>Digitalis grandiflora</i> | <i>H. helix</i> |
| <i>Echinops ritro</i> | <i>Hedysarum coronarium</i> |
| <i>Echium plantagineum</i> | <i>Helleborus corsicus</i> |
| <i>Erica arborea</i> | [now <i>H. lividus</i> ssp. <i>corsicus</i>] |
| <i>Eryngium campestre</i> | <i>H. cyclophyllus</i> |
| <i>E. creticum</i> | <i>H. foetidus</i> |
| <i>Ferula communis</i> | <i>H. orientalis</i> |
| <i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> | <i>Hesperis matronalis</i> |
| <i>Galega officinalis</i> | <i>Jasminum fruticans</i> |
| <i>Genista acanthoclada</i> | <i>Jurinea mollis</i> |
| <i>G. cinerea</i> | <i>Lamium maculatum</i> |

Lathyrus tingitanus
Lavatera arborea
[now *Malva arborea*]
L. cretica
[now *Malva multiflora*]
Linaria purpurea
L. triornithophora
Lonicera caprifolium
L. periclymenum
Malva sylvestris
Marrubium vulgare
Medicago arborea
Melilotus alba
[now *M. officinalis* ssp. *alba*]
Nerium oleander
Nicotiana glauca
Onopordon acanthium

Paliurus spina-christi
Phlomis fruticosa
Pyracantha coccinea
Ricinus communis
Rosmarinus officinalis
Ruscus aculeatus
Salvia argentea
S. candelabrum
S. haematodes
Silybum marianum
Smyrniium olusatrum
S. perfoliatum
Spartium junceum
Verbena officinalis
Viburnum tinus
Vitis vinifera

Lower-Growing Plants

Achillea chrysocoma
Adonis annua
A. vernalis
Aethionema grandiflorum
A. iberideum
A. saxatile
Agrostemma githago
Alyssum saxatile
[now *Aurinia saxatilis*]
Anagallis arvensis
A. monelli
Anchusa azurea
Anthemis tinctoria
[now *Cotis tinctoria*]
Anthericum liliago
Antirrhinum majus
Arisarum vulgare

Armeria corsica
[now *A. leucocephala*]
A. maritima
A. plantaginea
Artemisia absinthium
A. dracunculus
A. maritima
Aubrieta deltoidea
Bellis perennis
Campanula garganica
C. rapunculus
Catanche caerulea
Cerastium tomentosum
Cerintho major
C. retorta
Cheiranthus × *cheiri*
[now *Erysimum* × *cheiri*]

Chrysanthemum coronarium
 [now *Glebionis coronaria*]
C. segetum
 [now *Glebionis segetum*]
Cladanthus arabicus
Convolvulus tricolor
C. cantabricus
Crepis rubra
Delphinium ajacis
 [now *Consolida ajacis*]
Dorycnium hirsutum
Ecballium elaterium
Erodium chrysanthum
E. corsicum

Euphorbia biglandulosa
 [now *E. nicaensis*]
E. characias
E. cyparissias
E. myrsinites
E. wulfenii
 [now *E. characias*
 ssp. *wulfenii*]
Fedia cornucopiae
Geranium lucidum
Geranium molle
G. sanguineum
G. tuberosum
Glaucium flavum



Tolpis barbata

Helichrysum italicum
H. stoechas
Hibiscus trionum
Hyoscyamus albus
Lavandula stoechas
L. spica [now *L. angustifolia*]
Limonium sinuatum
Linum narbonense
L. campanulatum
L. usitatissimum
Lithospermum diffusum
 [now *Glandora diffusa*]

L. purpureocaeruleum
 [now *Buglossoides*
purpureocaerulea]
Lobularia maritima
Malcolmia maritima
Mandragora officinarum
Matthiola bicornis
 [now *Matthiola longipetala*
 ssp. *bicornis*]
Medicago lupulina
Melissa officinalis
Morisia monanthos

Nigella damascena
N. hispanica
Onosma echioides
O. taurica
Origanum dictamnus
O. × hybridum
O. laevigatum
O. rotundifolium
O. vulgare
Paeonia arietina
P. officinalis
Papaver rhoeas
P. somniferum
Pteris cretica
Ranunculus asiaticus
Reseda lutea
Ruta graveolens
Salvia officinalis
Santolina chamaecyparissus
S. neapolitana
Saponaria calabrica
S. vaccaria [now *Vaccaria*
hispanica]
Scabiosa atropurpurea
Sedum caeruleum

Senecio cineraria
 [now *Jacobaea maritima*]
Silene coeli-rosa
S. pendula
S. vulgaris
Specularia speculum
Stachys officinalis
Teucrium aroanium
T. chamaedrys
T. flavum
T. fruticans
T. rosmarinifolium
 [now *T. creticum*]
Thymus × citriodorus
T. herba-barona
T. serpyllum
T. vulgaris
Tolpis barbata
Tragopogon porrifolius
Tuberaria guttata
Verbascum creticum
V. spinosum
Vicia cracca
Vinca major

Bulbs & corms etc.

Allium neapolitanum
A. sphaerocephalum
A. triquetrum
Anemone blanda
A. coronaria
A. hortensis
Asphodelus albus
A. microcarpus
Chionodoxa gigantea
 [now *Scilla luciliae*]

C. luciliae [now *Scilla luciliae*]
Colchicum autumnale
Crocus flavus
C. laevigatus
C. sativus
C. versicolor
Cyclamen coum
C. graecum
C. neapolitanum
 [now *C. hederifolium*]

<i>C. persicum</i>	[now <i>Leopoldia comosa</i>]
<i>Fritillaria acmopetala</i>	<i>M. commutatum</i>
<i>F. graeca</i>	<i>M. racemosum</i>
<i>F. libanotica</i> [now <i>F. persica</i>]	<i>M. neglectum</i>
<i>F. messanensis</i>	<i>Narcissus papyraceus</i>
<i>Gladiolus byzantinus</i>	<i>N. poeticus</i>
[now <i>G. communis</i>]	<i>N. serotinus</i>
<i>G. segetum</i> [now <i>G. italicus</i>]	<i>N. tazetta</i>
<i>Hepatica triloba</i> [now <i>Anemone</i>	<i>Ornithogalum arabicum</i>
<i>hepatica</i>]	<i>O. nutans</i>
<i>Hermodactylus tuberosus</i>	<i>O. umbellatum</i>
[now <i>Iris tuberosa</i>]	<i>Pancreatium maritimum</i>
<i>Hyacinthus orientalis</i>	<i>Sternbergia lutea</i>
<i>Iris pumila</i> ssp. <i>attica</i>	<i>Tulipa clusiana</i>
<i>I. unguicularis</i>	<i>T. praecox</i> [now <i>T. agenensis</i>]
<i>Leucojum autumnale</i>	<i>T. saxatilis</i>
<i>Lilium candidum</i>	<i>T. sylvestris</i>
<i>Muscari comosum</i>	



Iris pumila ssp. *attica*

DAFFODIL – NARCISSUS

Freda Cox

A large genus of hardy, bulbous perennials with lance-shaped leaves. Attractive flowers from white to deepest yellow and orange, with a central ‘trumpet’ or cup – which can be divided – and surrounding petals. Many are sweetly perfumed.

Daffodils were originally said to be white. Persephone loved wandering in the flowery meadows of Sicily. One day, placing wild lilies in her hair, she fell asleep in the grass. Pluto, god of the Underworld, saw her and carried her off to be his bride. As he touched her, the white flowers turned to golden yellow. Persephone’s mother, Demeter, was distraught and decreed that earth should become barren and mankind perish unless Persephone was returned. The gods implored Demeter to relent but she refused. Eventually Zeus commanded that Pluto release Persephone, but Pluto gave her a pomegranate to eat, thus making the marriage indissoluble, and Demeter realised that she was beaten. To compromise, Zeus agreed that Persephone could spend two thirds of the year with Demeter and a third with Pluto. Demeter accepted this and restored fertility to the earth, but each year when Persephone returns to the Underworld the earth mourns; it grows cold and plants sleep in the ground until Persephone returns to her mother, when spring bursts forth and flowers cover the earth once more.

In Stuart England, wild daffodils were so popular that the first ever protective legislation for wildlife was passed in an effort to preserve them.

‘Daffodil’ is a modification of the old name ‘Aspodel’. Plants have also been called ‘Asphodel’ or ‘Affodil’.

Narcissus, a Greek youth, spurned the love of Echo, a mountain nymph. Hiding away in lonely places, she died of a broken heart, leaving behind the ‘echo’ of her voice which we still hear in such places today. The gods punished Narcissus by making him fall in love with his own reflection in a pool of water. Enamoured of his great beauty, he leaned too far, fell in and was drowned, leaving nothing but a beautiful flower floating on the water.

Narcissi are Chinese symbols of good fortune and emblems of winter and the New Year. They are called the 'sacred lily of China'. In Japan, they are symbols of joy and mirth.

Although poisonous, the bulbs have been used medicinally for centuries. A paste of the juice mixed with honey was used by European peasants to ease swollen joints and bruising. Galen, a Roman surgeon, made a salve to 'glue together great wounds, cuts and gashes', while Roman soldiers carried the bulbs as an essential part of their first aid kit.

The name Narcissus derives from the Greek 'Narke' – stupor, because of the stupefying effects of the flower's scent and the plant's poisonous properties.



Freda Cox

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT HEIDI GILDEMEISTER'S SUGGESTION OF A MEDITERRANEAN PLANT FINDER

Hugo Latymer

In the first edition of *The Mediterranean Garden*, Heidi Gildemeister proposed that it should establish a publication based on The Plant Finder, the dictionary of where to buy what plants so well known in the United Kingdom. Something along these lines would certainly foster and please the plant enthusiasts among us and supply a valuable tool for finding unusual plants, so the proposal should be explored. But there are a number of factors working against a comprehensive scheme of that sort.

1) One must recognise that as an 'aficion' plantsmanship (sorry! plantpersonship) is developed to a far greater extent in the United Kingdom than perhaps anywhere else on earth. This has been due to the English climate and to the country's prosperity at the height of the plant discovery boom of the Victorian age. Thousands of new plants were brought back to England from China by such firms as Veitch, and the British climate made their establishment easier than in most places.

2) The Mediterranean is not kind to many plants because of the need to water all summer and because of the lack of aerial humidity.

3) Indigenous plants that can, by definition, take the summer drought are not easily sold. 'Why should I buy that lentisk? It is all over the hillsides'. They are therefore not stocked by nurseries to the extent that they should be and *Cedrus atlantica* and *Eucalyptus globulus* are planted instead of *Pinus pinea* and *Celtis australis*.

4) The tradition of formal gardens has been stronger on the continent than in England, so encouraging the production of box, bay, yew and other constructional shrubs, rather than the herbaceous borders and shrubberies so prevalent in the U.K.

5) There is no commercial incentive to nurseries to stock unusual plants. (I think I may be the 'nursery owner' of Heidi's article! At least I am fully in sympathy with him.) Over the years we have stocked *Distictis buccinatoria* [now *Amphilophium*

buccinatorium], *Virgilia oroboides*, *Eucalyptus gomphocephala*, *Ceanothus* 'Trewithan Blue', *Metrosideros excelsa*, *Melaleuca nesophila*, *Tabebuia chrysotricha* [now *Handroanthus chrysotrichus*] *Daphne odora*, two *iochromas*, *Schotia brachypetala* and many more interesting and suitable plants and have hardly sold one, greatly to the benefit of my friends but not to me...

All this means that the demand for a fully-fledged Plant Finder, though great enough in the UK to support the very considerable expense of making and maintaining it, is not, to my mind, sufficiently extensive at the moment in Spain or, I would suspect, in France or Italy.

However, Heidi's idea of keeping a Register of Nurseries that offered unusual or indigenous plants seems to me to be a perfectly practical step. Members could be asked to send in brief details of any nursery in their area that offered plants outside the usual run, rather like this:

RIVIERA: Pepinières Michele Dental, 1569 Route de la Mer,
F-06410 Biot/Cannes. Tel. 3393656332

Holmskioldia sanguinea

Hedera digitata [now considered a synonym of
H. helix]

Epiphyllum oxypetalum

Hoya carnosa

Aptenia lancifolia [now *Mesembryanthemum*
lancifolium]

Lantana yellow prostrate

Iochroma coccinea

Hibiscus cristata [now *Anoda cristata*] white

Hibiscus schizopetalus

Datura [now *Brugmansia*] yellow

Begonia dregei (seed)

Rose 'Kew Rambler'

Pavonia racemosa [now *P. paludicola*] (yellow)

Hibbertia scandens

Mentha requiemii

Grevillea × *semperflorens*

Hibiscus huegelii

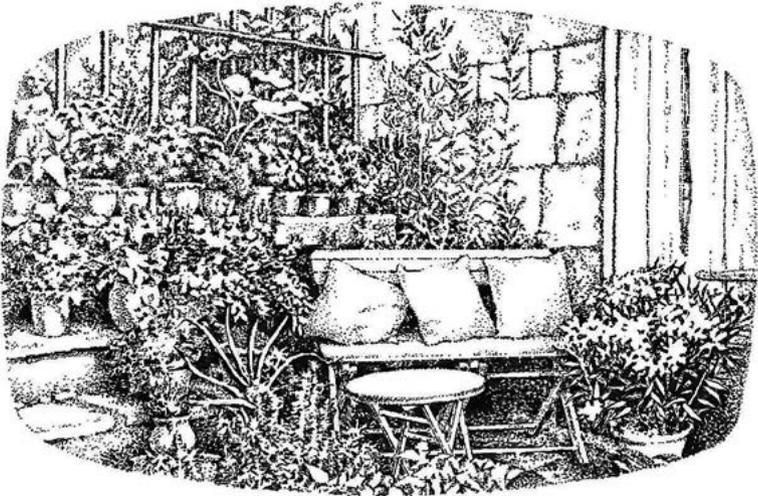
various fragrant pelargoniums.

But I fear the list would be neither long nor exciting except for two or three nurseries along the Riviera or near Florence and Rome.

Initially the list might be merely of nurseries that commonly held plants which are not available from the general run of nurseries and garden centres or which are indigenous or held in quantity, with the unusual plants listed (though I can foresee difficulty in deciding what is 'unusual'). Later, if the list grows, one might start cross references by plants, as in *The Plant Finder*.

Heidi has a computer... But if she does not have the time to start something like this, I would offer my services to redeem my reputation as a 'Commercial Gardener'.

However, I fear that it will be more practical in the short-term future to bring in your rarities by post from England or Holland, especially now that regulations have relaxed.



Mediterranean plants - in S.W. England!

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN PALERMO ON GREEN SPACE IN MEDITERRANEAN CITIES

Piero Caneti

Up to now we have been felling the woods and forests around our cities in order to make room for roads and buildings. We have increased traffic to such an extent that urban centres have become less and less livable in; at last, though, we have come to realise that green space is indispensable for the survival of the cities' inhabitants. Better late than never. Unfortunately, damage caused to the environment is already such that to plant trees in a city has become an extremely difficult enterprise, especially in a mediterranean climate. Within the framework of the bicentenary of the Botanical Gardens of Palermo, an international conference was organised on the theme of the Establishment and Management of Green Spaces in Mediterranean Cities; among the aims of the Conference was the exchange of experiences and techniques – sometimes highly sophisticated – to tackle this problem. After an informal opening speech by the Mayor of Palermo, Leoluca Orlando, the whole day (27th October) was devoted to most interesting talks. I would like here to make preliminary mention of some of the subjects discussed. The Proceedings of the Conference will soon be published and will be obtainable from the Department of Botanic Sciences, Via Archirafi 38, 90123 Palermo, Italy.

Guiseppe Barbera stressed the need to sensitise nursery gardeners and to increase the availability of indigenous plants, while Francesco Raimondo emphasised that botanical gardens, ever since they came into existence, have contributed to the introduction and diffusion of beautiful exotic plants which have been employed in private and public gardens to such an extent that they have made a pronounced mark on green spaces developed by man. But how to continue the work of our 18th and 19th century predecessors today, when the soil of our cities consists of a mixture of varied debris and the air is burning with reflected light and polluted by exhaust fumes?

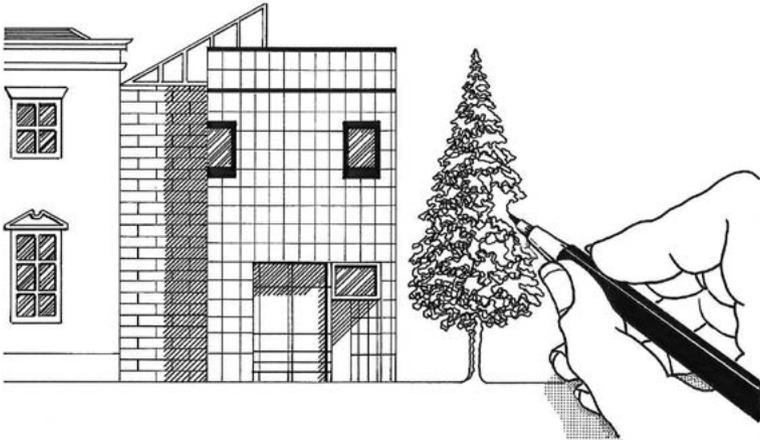
Benito Valdès Costrillon of the University of Seville has shown that it is possible, even in the most difficult conditions, to create new parks which make waste areas habitable – as was done on the Guadalquivir island when Expo 92 was held in Seville. In the space of five years, using the knowledge of good technicians from all over the world, unstinting financial resources, together with a natural and extremely important resource – the water of the river – the miracle of lowering the summer temperature by 5°C was achieved. This was the effect on the climate after 250,000 plants were planted on an area of approximately 200 hectares. Most of these were indigenous plants bought from various suppliers worldwide and kept for several years in a huge nursery specially built for this purpose on the island before being transplanted. The banks of the river, on the other hand, were renaturalised only with poplars, willows and other local riparian shrubs. The use of very advanced irrigation systems and in some cases of micronised water (planters suspended in order to create shade in the wide alleys between the pavilions) encouraged a very rapid and luxuriant growth. Today the results can be witnessed by everybody.

And now, from the Spanish desert to the Israeli desert. With one huge difference, though: the almost total lack of water. The architect Shlomo Aronson has illustrated some of the projects which have been realised in an environment hostile to human life: stones, wind, sun. Yet with suitable plants – carob, olive, rosemary, lavender, etc. – he has succeeded in transforming desolate plains and valleys into a landscape full of hope, so that the future of his country, already apparently characterised by the most serious water crisis of the century, has a clear path to follow. It is not so much a question of avoiding easy prophesies of disaster as of formulating practical propositions in order to save an entire community.

The city of Marseille, squeezed between mountains and sea, managed to solve the same problem several years ago by constructing canals which bring abundant precious water from the interior. Today, as Jean-Pierre Mayna, Director of the Municipal Gardens, declared, the city's green spaces are among the most respected advantages that the citizens possess, where they go *en masse* to relax when the weather is good,

enjoying the direct contact with nature which has been made possible by man's intervention. In order to maintain this public benefit, the administrators of the city have encouraged various initiatives to educate the population: publications, exhibitions, but above all practical lessons open to young people in five model farms created precisely for this purpose. The experience of Marseille is among the most advanced; in contrast, that of Athens, unfortunately, presents the opposite side of the coin, being an emblematic example of backwardness. One must give credit, though, to Dimitris Papadimas for acknowledging at the Conference the aspects of a reality which is well known to everybody, common indeed to most Mediterranean cities where the lack of green spaces is chronic and all attempts to combat it are met with insensitivity, lack of financial resources and improvisation.

A very stimulating conference, precisely because it has presented the diversity of the countries looking on to the *Mare Nostrum* and also because, for the first time, plants were considered with a view to the climatic conditions under which planners have to work.



SWINGS AND ROUNDABOUTS

Louis Marcelin-Rice

Being French by birth, British by adoption (and conditioning) and having lived mostly in Italy with a home base in Provence for nearly a quarter of a century qualifies me, I hope, to contribute some personal non-botanical observations on recent swings in environmental awareness that are to do with roundabouts. All this may at first appear remote from *The Mediterranean Garden*, but my purpose is to give credit where I think it is due, namely to some inspired local planning authorities, landscape architects and nursery gardeners... for the kind of roundabouts I refer to are the plethora of newly installed *ronds-points** one finds all over the part of Provence I know well: the Provence of Marcel Pagnol, south of Aix-en-Provence, between Marseille and Toulon.

This is a land of wild Mediterranean oak and Aleppo pine forests, dry *garrigue* and numerous grey and ochre rock promontories, reminiscent of Cézanne. The terraced hillsides and fertile valleys between perched or hilltop villages are for the most part cultivated as vineyards, olive groves, peach and almond orchards. This is not the Côte d'Azur. The harsh Mistral sweeps it from the north-west and its aridity has, so far, somewhat preserved its genuine character. It has the lowest rainfall in France. Only in the early 1970s was it thought worth building a motorway linking Marseille and Toulon and the link-up with the Aix-Nice autoroute, to the east of Toulon, was only completed last year!

Until recently, the network of roads, other than *routes nationales* and *départementales*, was a fabric of country lanes determined by the contours of the hilly terrain. Many of these little roads are still privately owned and jealously guarded by their landlords. The latter, local authorities or both, have traditionally displayed an innate talent for placing road signs

* To my knowledge, France only possessed one *rond-point* until all this began, that of the Champs-Élysées, second only to *L'Etoile*, the "hub" of France.

to their domaines or towns in such a way as to jeopardize the life of any driver trying to read them, or to see on-coming traffic.

During the 1980s and early 90s, something happened. Whether due to European directives or to the French government's decentralisation policies, which gave greater autonomy to the *élus locaux* in gathering and administering their funds, I know not. The fact is that the meeting of two or more roads, however minor they may have been, and mostly remained, became a pretext for the construction of a *rond-point*. Just as the construction of the motorway had in the 70s, the scale of public works involved threw environmentalists and *viticulteurs* alike into paroxysms of anxiety and ire at the damage that was being done to the countryside and the vineyards respectively. During the construction period, roads in this part of Provence began to look like Etruscan necropolises under excavation. Domed tumuli punctuated one's progress from Marseille to Aubagne, for instance, along what had previously been several kilometres of straight road, shaded by plane trees. Every lover of this tiny region thought a wave of megalomaniacal medieval rivalry had swept this generation of very democratically elected mayors, and judging by some recently reconstructed or newly-built *monuments aux morts**, feared the worst.

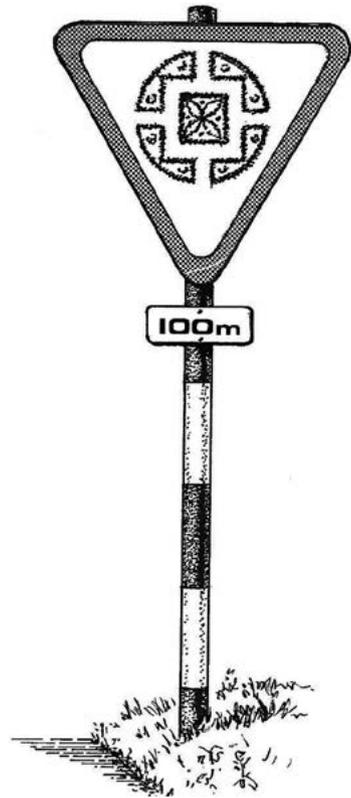
As self-appointed spokesman for the above-mentioned fearful lovers, I simply want to testify to the unmitigated success of the operation. I have no idea whether it was planned from the start, but each finished roundabout I saw last summer in the region has turned into a masterpiece of – dare I say it? – French panache in Mediterranean gardening.

The planting of each one is different in theme: from shrubs such as rosemary, lavender, thyme, verbena and sage or wormwood to rushes, grasses and reeds. Some are entirely herbal and scented while others are more visual in their impact. They are nearly all thematic in the sense that they are designed to express something significant about their natural site in the environment using local species. The most interesting and impressive one I have seen in this respect is quite definitely the

* Erected or restored in honour of the 50th anniversary of the *Libération* celebrations.

large circular vineyard planted around a small olive grove at the foot of the charming village La Cadière d'Azur, the epicentre of the Bandol wine-producing valleys, near the medieval village of Le Castellet. Both the grapes and the olives are harvested for production purposes.

The road signs are now better placed at this five-road junction, but drivers' lives might perhaps be threatened by the distracting charm and beauty of the roundabout as they swing round it.



THE GARDEN IN WINTER

Jenny Bussey

POT PLANTS

We nearly all acquire one or more of the pot plants grown for the Christmas trade: African violets, azaleas, cyclamens, poinsettias, etc. These are mass-produced in computer-controlled conditions in vast greenhouses in Holland and Belgium, then transported to supermarkets and garden centres all over Europe. Apparently the average life of one of these plants is three weeks. They are not cheap, so how can we keep them alive and thriving?

The compost in which they are growing is usually peat- or fibre-based, which is free-draining. This means that they can easily become dry in a warm room and then the rootball can only be thoroughly wetted again by standing the pot in a bucket of tepid water for about 1/4 to 1/2 an hour – adding a few drops of washing up liquid will break down surface tension and aid water uptake.

To prevent the soil drying out, stand the pot in a deep saucer with a one-inch layer of small pebbles in it, into which you pour water up to the base of the pot. The plant will absorb what it needs, but will not become waterlogged, which is as bad for it as drying out completely. This method also increases the humidity level around the plant, which it will appreciate.

This type of compost does not hold nutrients well either, so it is advisable to add half-strength liquid feed to the water every time you give it. All these plants need good light levels to flower well, but avoid direct sun through a window.

When they finish flowering in the spring, they can be stood outside in a shady spot, but make sure that the rootball is kept just moist at all times. Poinsettias should be cut hard back and they will make new growth which will flower the following winter. Azaleas will also make new growth which can be pinched back to keep the plant in a neat shape. Cyclamens should be allowed to die right back and left to rest for a couple of months in the summer. Start watering and feeding these plants again in September to have them in flower by Christmas.

THE FLOWER GARDEN

This is the time to clear up the remains of summer flowers, and all this material can be added to the compost heap or shredded and used for mulching. Shrubs which flower in the summer should be pruned before the end of February and, again, the prunings should be shredded for mulching material. However, diseased plant material is best burnt when thoroughly dry to avoid spreading problems. After pruning, deciduous woody plants can be sprayed with a winter wash to kill off overwintering pests and fungal spores, thus preventing trouble in the spring.

We may find there are gaps in our plantings and this is the best time of year to plant trees and shrubs. Dig the soil over well, incorporating as much well-rotted compost or manure as possible and a handful or two of bone meal. The planting hole must be deep and wide enough for you to be able to spread the roots out well. However, most evergreen plants resent root disturbance and these should be soaked well before planting, carefully taken out of their pots and put straight into the prepared hole. Stake plants if they are tall, large or bushy and liable to be affected by the wind. Firm the plant in and water well immediately after planting. Depending on rainfall, you should water weekly to help the plant establish itself – less water will be needed if you put a deep mulch around the plant. Watering will have to be continued regularly throughout the first summer to ensure success. A drip system is most economical with water but you need to have an outlet every 12-18 inches around the outside spread of the plant to ensure an even distribution of moisture.

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

Towards the middle or end of February you can start sowing seeds indoors of summer-fruiting vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers, aubergines, peppers, courgettes, etc. Your own compost mixed with some sifted soil or peat (substitute) in small pots gives them a good start – they are all greedy feeders. Do not overwater and give them good light so that they make sturdy, bushy plants ready to be planted out at the end of March or in April.

THE FRUIT GARDEN

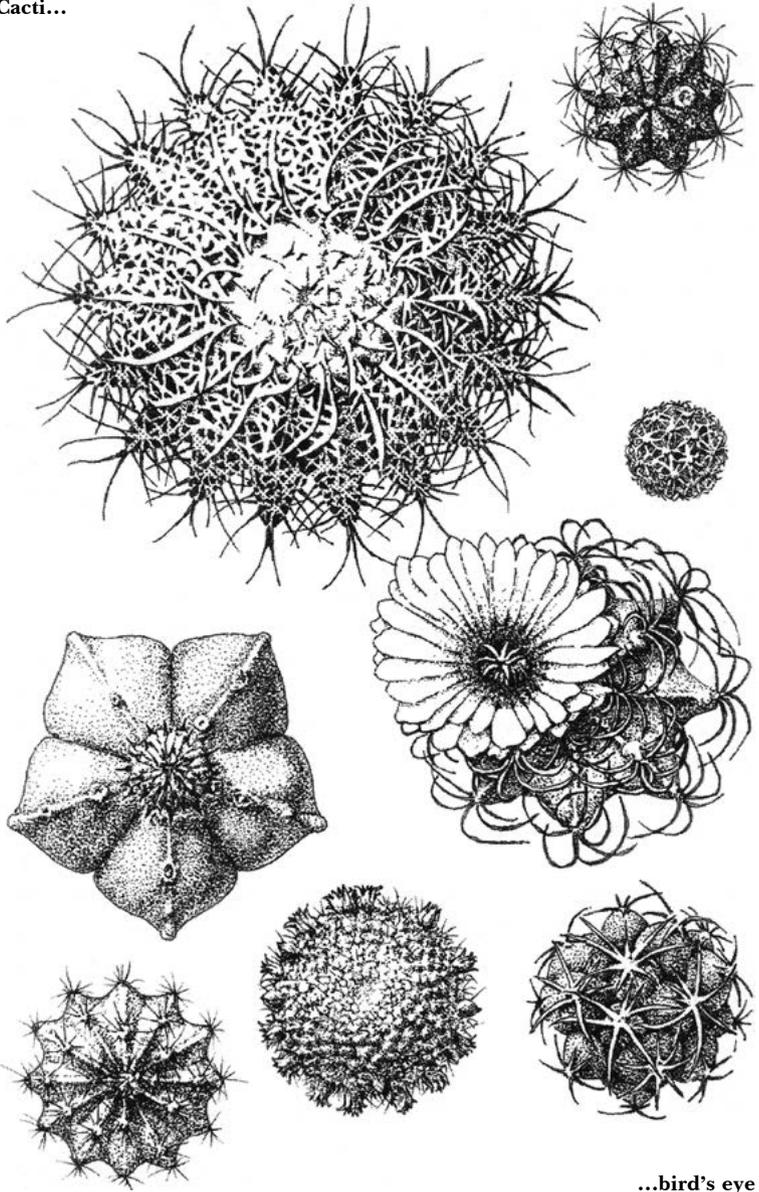
Most deciduous fruit trees and bushes can be planted now but enquire locally about what does well in your area. Trees are usually available bare-rooted at a much lower price than pot-grown plants. They normally 'take' very well, even when the roots have been cut right back to within a few inches of the trunk. The first year they will grow new roots and you may not get much top growth, but do not worry as the next year they will race away.

Many fruit trees need a period of frost, or at least cold night temperatures, to develop flowers. However, there are some varieties which need less cold than others. Another consideration is whether cross-pollination is necessary, so that two or more varieties need to be planted. Also take into account their water needs, especially when fruit is developing, and be sure that you can provide sufficient water at that time of year. It is worth spending time doing your homework before buying to make sure you will get good results in years to come.

To get the best fruit production you will need to give each tree plenty of room to grow, without competition from other plants. However, for household consumption, smaller or less fruit is acceptable and one can underplant with soft fruit or other plants that have similar watering requirements.

Mature trees should be pruned while dormant, aiming to balance the fruiting branches with the nutrient-obtaining possibilities of the root system. Well-spaced branches where the air can circulate and the sun enter the centre of the tree will prevent attacks by pests and diseases, lead to efficient pollination of flowers and therefore good fruit set, and help ripening. A winter wash will reduce pests and diseases and should be done before the buds start to swell.

Cacti...



...bird's eye

SUNDRIES

PLANTNET

PlantNet is the title of the recently founded Plant Collections Network of Britain and Ireland. Although based in the British Isles, this could include collections of Mediterranean plants and would be of interest to any of our members there who have, or are trying to build up, such a collection. The main aim of PlantNet is to act as a forum for the exchange of information and ideas from a wide range of people working with plants. Up until now they have been accumulating a mailing list and laying the foundations for the organisation, which will be officially launched at an inaugural conference in Oxford, 26-29 March 1996. For further details, please write to: Timothy Walker, PlantNet Convener, University of Oxford Botanic Garden, Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AX. Tel/Fax 01865 276920.

GARDEN LITERATURE AND SPROUT

Garden Literature indexes over 100 periodicals containing articles of interest to garden professionals and all those who appreciate plants and gardens. It covers garden, general interest, scientific and specialised periodicals and is easy to use, with articles arranged alphabetically by author and subject and article contents described.

Sprout is a special issue of *Garden Literature* for gardeners and small to medium-sized libraries. It covers a baker's dozen of the leading gardening magazines published in the US and the UK and uses the same highly-praised indexing system. It indexes every article under several subjects (including plant names) as well as author; it uses terms gardeners use; it gives common names of plants as well as scientific names; it includes charts, maps, photographs and other illustrations.

For more information contact: Garden Literature Press, 398 Columbus Avenue, Suite 181, Boston MA 02116-6008. Tel. (617) 424-1784 Fax (617) 424-1712.

THE SARAJEVO BOTANIC GARDEN

The Sarajevo Botanic Garden, established in the nineteenth century, has been badly damaged in the recent war and the important collection of regional plants is seriously at risk. Support is urgently needed in order to preserve the plants and herbarium specimens. Offers of help or requests for further information should be directed to: Bosnia and Herzegovina Heritage Rescue, 12 Flitcroft Street, London WC2H 8DJ (Tel/Fax 0171 240 7966) or Ms. Azra Secerbegovic, School of Horticulture, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AB (Tel. 0171 737 3334).

NEW NURSERIES IN ITALY

Piero Caneti notes the establishment of a new nursery specialising in perennial plants and small shrubs for the Mediterranean garden. Novelties include *Anigozanthos flavidus*, *Dietes iridioides* and *Teucrium siculum*. For an illustrated catalogue, send L 10.000 to: Vivai Piante, Capitanio Stefano, Contrada Conchia 298, 70043 Monopoli (Bari), Italy. The WWF Oasis at Fregene propagates autochthonous plants both from seed and by cuttings. Plants are not for sale but may be exchanged for other plants, even exotics. For information contact Sig. Fabrizio Dono, Tel. 06/66560104.

FÊTE DU CITRON, MENTON

The 63rd Lemon Festival will be held in Menton between 17 February and 5 March 1996. For more information contact Elisabeth Martin or Rachel Dordor, Telephone 92 10 50 21, Fax 92 10 50 06.

BOOK NOTES

I found Peter Worsley's list of books on Californian plants both interesting and useful. Apart from the Jepson Manual, the other great Californian classic, which is not just intensely informative but also autobiographically revealing, warm, witty, wise and very well-written (by a native Cumbrian, too, dammit) is Lester Rowntree's *Hardy Californians* (originally published by Macmillan in 1936; reprinted by Peregrine Smith in 1980). Only slightly less interesting – and every bit as informative – is her *Flowering Shrubs of California* (Stanford U.P., 1939). Both are well worth the effort and expense involved in laying hands on them. It would be a civilised and good deed if someone were to reprint them, particularly *Hardy Californians*.

Civilised good deeds reminds me to add: a civilised good deed which commemorates a great plantsman is The Theodore Payne Foundation For Wildflowers & Native Plants, from which you can get access to a substantial seed list of Californian natives (particularly good value if you want quantities of a particular plant or if several friends or a club can share between themselves), and to a wide range of books on Californian natives. (Two I've especially enjoyed and which don't figure on Peter Worsley's list are *Gardener's Guide To Californian Wildflowers* by Kevin Connelly and *Complete Garden Guide to the Native Perennials of California* by Glenn Keator – because both authors discuss their chosen plants very much in terms of their garden use as well as their habits and habitats in the wild.) You can also have access to generous, friendly and expert advice and help, both on problems of cultivation and on sources for rare plants. The Foundation's address is: 10459 Tuxford Street, Sun Valley, CA 91352. Tel. & Fax 818-768-1802.

Tim Longville

LETTERS

In issue No. 2 of *The Mediterranean Garden* David Fairhall asks the vexed question: Is it worth attempting to make compost in our climate?

Speaking as someone who has a garden on Mallorca, it seems that, at least on this island, there is no tradition of compost making. One possible reason might be that people who had small gardens until recent times probably also kept chickens or a pig to use up their household refuse material. Moreover, many Mediterranean trees, such as the olive, pine and evergreen oak, do not shed the large amounts of leaves that deciduous trees produce in the autumn in temperate climates.

Although Yve Menzies, in *Mediterranean Gardening*, speaks about improving the soil, she does not consider the possibility of compost making. Similarly, Hugo Latymer, in *The Mediterranean Gardener*, 'would not recommend trying to compost ordinary garden material' as 'in hot, dry conditions you are more likely to find cinders than humus when you open the pile, unless you are prepared to water it almost daily'.

For a long time I accepted that view, but lately I have heard others expressing different opinions. Browsing in a second-hand bookshop, I came across *A Guide to Gardening in Southern Africa*, published by C. Struik, Cape Town and Johannesburg, 1975. Dudley R. D'Ewes, the author and a Cape Town gardener, says that he finds compost making a useful and worthwhile enterprise. He considers as suitable material for the heap anything that was once part of any growing thing, from old tomato plants to manure and urine. He describes his technique as orthodox, and he adds that every gardener will in time work out his/her own system which will depend on conditions and on the material available.

In this respect I find Heidi Gildemeister's method enlightening and encouraging. In an article in *Country Life* (June 1995) she explains the way she improved the soil in her garden over a period of 20 years, by 'the gradual method of mulching repeatedly with recycled farmyard, garden, and household waste'. This was done with the help of a mechanical shredder in order to break down the garden waste, and apparently the

mulches once made are stored over several sites in the garden.

My final conclusion is that compost making must be ‘worth attempting’ in the Mediterranean, but one has to adapt to the particular circumstances of the area and climate. At present I cannot speak of my own experience, but hope to be able to voice it in due course.

A. Martorell
London, UK

Tom Wellsted is clearly my sort of gardener: I too grow the *Acnistus/Dunalis* he mentioned in the Summer issue – though it doesn’t grow to 4m in Cumbria! I wonder if he knows a way to tell, before flowering, which plants are going to be white-flowered and which ones blue? In the Autumn issue he discusses *Sutherlandia frutescens* but doesn’t mention *S. montana*. *S. frutescens* won’t survive outside here, but I’m told that *S. montana* is a touch hardier. I can’t confirm this because this is the first year I’ve grown the plant, but what I can say is that it makes a substantially bigger, sturdier, bulkier bush than *S. frutescens*. This growth habit might make it more suitable than *S. frutescens* for Tom Wellsted’s hedging experiment. And for those areas where *S. frutescens* proves impossible, *S. montana* may prove a viable alternative.

Tim Longville
Maryport, Cumbria, UK

I am wondering if there is anyone out there who can give me some advice on how to care for olive trees. We have planted more than 20 Kalamata and Amphissa varieties on a hillside on the island of Andros. The oldest are now about six years old and seem to be flourishing, but the olives they produce invariably have tiny worms. We have sprayed with miscellaneous pesticides at intervals, but obviously have not found the right formula. A Greek book we bought on the subject enlightened us by instructing olive growers to “spray with the correct pesticide at the appropriate times”. I kid you not. We’d appreciate some more precise guidelines.

Also, although an enthusiastic gardener I am uneducated in botanical language. Other member friends have expressed the same illiteracy. Would it be too much to ask you to translate the Latin names into more familiar terms as well?

*Diana Farr Louis
Kifissia, Greece*

THE CONTRIBUTORS

JENNY BUSSEY founded the Costa Blanca Gardeners' Circle in 1990. She is Chairwoman of their committee and edits their monthly newsletter.

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DEREK TOMS is a garden designer and artist who began his Mediterranean gardening in Turkey, but now lives in Greece.

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TOM WELLSTED has been involved with garden publishing for many years, as a journal contributor, book editor and author (his books including *Vegetable and Herb Growing* (1977) and *Patio & Window Box Gardening* (1986)). He now lives and gardens in Provence.

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Pattie Barron, for her 'Mediterranean' terrace in Bath, U.K.
(p. 40)

Don Matthews, for *Arbutus unedo* (p.29)

Joanna Millar, for *Rosa laevigata* (p. 7)

Sandy Pratt, for a corner of his garden in Ibiza (p. 12) and
planting *Phoenix dactylifera* (this page)

Megan Toms, for various native Mediterranean plants.

The Mediterranean Garden only exists because you have offered
your contributions. Please help us to continue by sending your
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