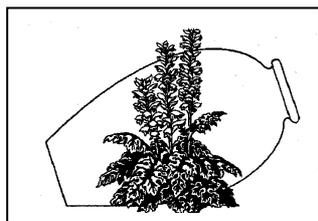


THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN SOCIETY

Portugal Branch

Newsletter No. 10

July 2008



Welcome to members and friends in Portugal of the Mediterranean Garden Society. If you know of any others who may be interested in Mediterranean gardening please pass this along to them and remember all are welcome to attend our events.

Queremos dar as boas vindas aos sócios e amigos do Mediterranean Garden Society em Portugal. Se souber de alguém que esteja interessado em jardinagem mediterranea agradecemos que passa a palavra, ou o favor de dar um destes boletins informativos, e nao esquecer que todos estão convidados a participar nos eventos por nós organizados.

LIST OF FUTURE EVENTS – Details below

2008/09	Event	Coordinator(s)
Sept 9 th 2008	Roses for the Mediterranean Climate talk by Michael Marriott of David Austin Roses	Rosie Peddle Tel. (00351) 289 791 869
Nov. 2 nd 2008	Bring & Buy! Plant Sale Seed/Seedling Exchange Eastern Algarve	Rosie Peddle
6-11 th Sept 2009	International Lavender Conference, Cambridge Botanic Garden, UK	More info and contact details below

Roses for the Mediterranean Climate

Tuesday, September 9th, 2008 at 11.00am at the Convento Sao Jose, Lagoa, Algarve
Algarve Bons Jardins Garden Group event - MGS members & friends invited



Michael Marriott - **One of Britain's leading rose-growers**, has been surrounded by roses for the past 25 years. In his day job as technical manager at David Austin Roses he lives and breathes the global brand synonymous with English roses, and his Shropshire garden contains an ever-changing range of dozens of varieties at any one time. His plot is no formal showpiece, however. It's a living tapestry alive with birds and insects; a real-life example of how gardening with nature can work both aesthetically and productively.

"There are two groups of roses in my garden," he says. "Some that I know are very reliable and very beautiful, such as 'Francis E. Lester', Golden Celebration, Queen of Denmark and The Mayflower, and others I have acquired from various places that I don't know and I'm interested to see how they grow. My garden is almost a testing ground. If they do very well then I suggest that they go into the catalogue, if not I dig them out. There are 60 or 70 varieties in the garden; I count them in my head if I can't sleep." But it's not just the roses that inspire Michael: "I like anything with a bit of chlorophyll in it," he says. www.davidaustinroses.com visit this web site for more info.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/main.jhtml?xml=/gardening/>

The Mediterranean Garden Society AGM 2008, in Monterey, California will feature California's leading horticultural authorities and visits to exclusive and private gardens, and will be held between Thursday 9 October and Sunday 12 October 2008 at the Casa Munras Hotel in Monterey, California, USA.

<http://www.mediterraneangardensociety.org/agm-2008.html> for more info and to download the registration form, click on link. For pictures of gardens in the area of the AGM http://gimcw.org/mgs/CA_No/200810.cfm

Plant Sale – Bring & Buy ! Sunday November 2nd 2008 11.00am onwards will be held at the home of Rob and Rosie Peddle near Moncarapacho on the Eastern Algarve. Light refreshments will be available. It is hoped that members and friends of the MGS will gather to swap seed, seedlings and plants. November is the start of the planting season – if we have had some rain ! Come along with your spare plants, seed and seedlings and exchange or buy rare and unusual plants from your fellow gardening enthusiasts ! I hope to have one or two specialist nurseries involved and will confirm details nearer the date. Please get in touch for any more information. Rosie Peddle 289 791 869 email rosie@thebtf.net

International Lavender Conference - Cambridge Botanic Garden, UK



6 to 11th September 2009

The conference is intended to appeal to all those interested in Lavender and with the aim of highlighting current research and advances in our understanding of the genus. It will cover taxonomy, breeding work, oils and their uses. A programme of lectures and workshops will be supplemented with visits to lavender farms and nurseries offering the chance to discuss some of the more practical aspects of growing Lavender and marketing its products.

Download the brochure and register your interest at <http://www.botanic.cam.ac.uk/Lavender%202009.html>

The planned talk by Dr P J Placito on the Indigenous Plants of the Algarve has had to be postponed indefinitely as we have received the good news that Dr Placito and David Mabberley are currently working hard on a complete revision of the book '***Algarve Plants and Landscape***'. David Mabberley is now Keeper of the Library and Herbarium at Kew Gardens in London and Kew Publications has agreed to publish the revised edition of this important book. We will keep in touch with the authors and bring you more news of progress.

DISCOVERING NEW PLANTS - WHERE ON EARTH DO YOU FIND THEM?

News of a wonderful talk for anyone visiting London this August.

Ernst van Jaarsveld, the renowned South African botanist, garden writer and plant hunter - currently **Curator of the Kirstenbosch Conservatory** - reveals his secrets on this unique occasion. Ernst will give two talks with an interval for tea. First, an exciting tale of botanical exploration followed by a talk on South African ***Plectranthus***, commonly known as spurflowers, now becoming popular house plants in the UK. Ernst's brilliant and authoritative book on this subject was published in 2006.

DATE: Wednesday 27th August 2008 **TIME:** 2pm - 5pm

LOCATION: Brewin Dolphin, 12 Smithfield Street, London, EC1A 9BD (Near Holborn Viaduct)

TICKETS: Free (but essential) & available with full directions from:

Diana Miller, 13 Western Road, Liss, Hants GU33 7AG Tel (0044) 1730 893220

E-mail diana.miller@lineone.net

Peter Franklin, 72 Burdon Lane, Cheam, Surrey SM2 7BZ Tel (0044) 208 643 1115

Special delivery - Portugal order !

Olivier & Clara Filippi and their nursery will be familiar to many MGS members. This nursery in the south west of France specialises in plants for dry gardens and has a large range of plants, bulbs, shrubs, trees etc. They hold the French National Plant Collection of *Nerium oleander*. You can access their catalogue on line via the web site. The web site is in French but botanical names are used throughout. Details of the new English edition of his book are given below.

We successfully placed a group order and received an excellent service with delivery to southern Portugal in December 2005. ***I am once again proposing that people living in different regions of Portugal could get a joint order together and arrange delivery to a single address.*** As the order will be collated in time for the recommended Autumn planting season there is still plenty of time to select items for a joint order. Please let me know if you wish to take advantage of a '**special delivery order**' for Portugal from this specialist nursery. Please contact Rosie Peddle for more info.

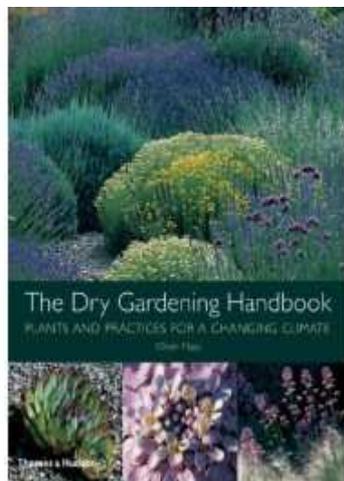
Message from Olivier,

"Yes, we do send plants to Portugal, it is probably best to group several orders with your friends and to have plants shipped by carrier. By carrier delivery is easier because you can call the carrier (we would give you all the necessary details) and have precise information on where the order is and when it will be delivered.

If you have a severe drought problem, my main advice would be to plant in September/October: Planting conditions will be much better, and in the end you will be much happier with the result. Best wishes, Olivier Filippi"

Pépinière Filippi, RN 113 34140 MEZE FRANCE
Tel : 0033 (0)467438869 Fax : 0033 (0) 467438459

Web site. www.jardin-sec.com
Email. olivier.filippi@wanadoo.fr



The Dry Gardening Handbook: Plants and Practices for a Changing Climate

by Olivier Filippi

Hardcover: 208 pages **Published by** Thames & Hudson Ltd (4 Aug 2008) in English

ISBN-10: 0500514070 **ISBN-13:** 978-0500514078

Synopsis from Amazon.co.uk

"A garden that can withstand summer drought and does not require watering is the dream of all gardeners conscious of the need to preserve natural resources, and who wish to create a garden in harmony with the environment. That dream can become a reality with the help of this

indispensable new reference volume, which provides concrete answers to the questions surrounding a dry garden. Abundantly illustrated with more than 400 original photos, this is a vital book for novice and experienced gardeners alike. "

Winter courses on a variety of topics including wild flower walks and digital photography will once again be held at the Hotel Garbe, Armação de Pera, central Algarve and are open to non-residents. Contact Vicky Good hotelgarbe@mail.telepac.pt or tel. 282 320 260 for more information.

Clematis for the Algarve (Mediterranean Gardens)

An article written by Mike Brown based on his talk given at the Clematis Day is in the current July Journal. Clematis Day was held on 12th February and was a joint event with the Bons Jardins Garden Group based on the Algarve. About 45 people took part in a full day of activities concentrating on Clematis. Mike gave us an illustrated talk in the morning with a fascinating insight into the members of the Clematis family which he recommended for growing in a mediterranean climate. These included many species and their modern hybrids. After a simple lunch we were all involved in a practical workshop session where Mike demonstrated taking cuttings, sowing seeds and planting methods.



Clematis 'Alionushka'

There were many plants for sale, none of them available commercially on the Algarve. Mike also brought along a large selection of seeds. This was used during the workshop and distributed to those attending. It will be very interesting to hear of the results but it may take some time as Mike reminded us that some clematis seed can take three years to germinate !

We are very grateful to Mike and to Anne for coming to the Algarve and encouraging us to try something different. Many thanks to all those who made the day such a success.

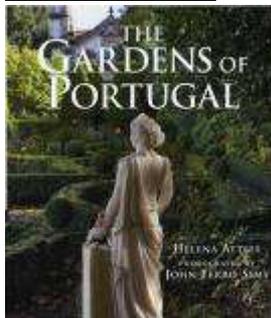
Following this message received from Ana Duarte Rodrigues I have confirmed to her that I am willing to act as a contact for MGS members in Portugal for this important research. She is a researcher at Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas/ Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Her PhD project is on **GARDEN SCULPTURE IN VILLAS AND PALACES OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES IN PORTUGAL**. If you have any comments or would like to participate in this research, please get in touch with Rosie Peddle.

At her faculty they aim to extend research into a new area related to a major research guideline on Sintra (WORLD HERITAGE SITE) in our Art History research Unit. The main goals of this project is to make the inventory of this neglected heritage in cooperation with IGESPAR (the Institute that takes care of heritage in Portugal), to study GARDEN ORNAMENT AND NON-ORNAMENTAL GARDENS from Antiquity to present day from Northern to Southern Portugal and the relationship with European models with the collaboration of Universidade de Évora which has a recognised tradition in Landscape architecture and then to promote this artistic field with courses, conferences, publications, exhibitions.

We would like to have Portugal MGS as a Partner:

1. For advice, to learn from your experience.
2. To have contact with other Mediterranean Garden Society members.
3. To have some of your expert members participation in our conferences and publish in our journal.

NEW BOOK on *The Gardens of Portugal* by Helena Attlee



Hardcover: 192 pages **Publisher:** Frances Lincoln Publishers

ISBN-10: 0711226938 **ISBN-13:** 978-0711226937

Synopsis

The gardens of Portugal are among the most cosmopolitan in the world. The product of Portugal's long seafaring history, they bring together ideas from East and West in a style that is, in both design and planting, confident, flamboyant, exotic, and distinctly Portuguese. In the golden age of Portuguese exploration the glazed tiles and distinctive water tanks of the Moorish style were combined with the open loggias and box parterres of the Italian Renaissance, and gardens were decorated with statues and reliefs of dolphins, sea horses, anchors and other maritime motifs. From China, Japan, Africa, Australia and the Americas, Portugal's seafarers brought new seeds and plants such as camellias and rhododendrons that flourished in the mild climate. This book describes some twenty-eight gardens, stunningly photographed by John Ferro Sims.

Chelsea F. S. – definitely in the Premier League for gardeners !

Participation at Chelsea Flower Show – May 2008



The UK Branch of the Mediterranean Garden Society had been asked to provide volunteers to answer questions on plants for changing climates by the UKCIP*. It is a little while since my last visit to Chelsea F. S. (Flower Show) so the chance to see this horticultural spectacular again this year was very attractive. The UKCIP/MGS stand at the show was aimed at alerting gardeners to the impact of climate change. A display of drought tolerant plants and lawn substitutes together with the latest forecasts for the UK weather in the 2050's provoked much comment. The stand was awarded a Bronze Medal. The MGS volunteers came from Majorca, Italy, Spain, France, Portugal and, Nottingham. Well, it can be very dry up there sometimes.

Pictured Richard Lamb (UKCIP) & Joan Head (MGS UK).

The whole of the Continuous Learning section at the show was dedicated to how climate change is affecting gardens. Writtle College from Essex had a display titled 'Driest County – Floral Bounty' and many of the plants used would be familiar to Algarve gardeners. Oleanders, abutilon, heliotrope, salvias and euryops all featured.

Fortunately, time was allowed during the week-long show for a thorough look round at all the other exhibits. The show has been re-organised in recent years to take account of overcrowding. Numbers are limited on each day and all the main facilities have been increased – especially the seating. The extra day on Saturday also allows many to visit who cannot get to the show during the week. This is also the day for the famous 'sell off' when you can see folk struggling to get huge delphiniums through the doors on tube trains ! Last year's visitor numbers for the week were 147,000 – who said gardening was boring ?

This year many stands were showing drought tolerant plants from the various mediterranean climate zones around the world. Australian plants, in particular, featured heavily throughout the show. A show garden dedicated to the colours, textures, plants and materials of Australia was extremely popular. The plants were all Australian natives and featured iconic plants such as *Macrozamia moorei* trees and *Xanthorrhoea* species typical to the Western Australian bush. The garden also featured masses of red and yellow *Anigozanthus*, (kangaroo paw orchid) which can also be successfully grown here on the Algarve.



Plants from other countries with a similar climate to ours are slowly becoming available on the Algarve and are ideal for our dry gardens. Callistemon (the bottle brush) is an Australian plant already seen quite commonly here. The nursery which holds the UK National Plant Collection was at the show with a small but stunning selection from the 72 varieties held.

Although the show is based firmly at Chelsea it has a wide international content and the displays in the Great Pavilion were a wonderful way to travel the world through flowers and plants. Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, Barbados Horticultural Society, Jamaica Horticultural Society, Mauritius and the Cayman Islands were all represented by large colourful displays of tropical and semi-tropical flowers and fruits. Grenada's particularly mouth watering as it featured a wide range of their spices. Kirstenbosch and City of Durban represented South Africa with

stunning displays of native flora. Again, many of these plants, strelitzas, proteas, cycads and gazanias, can be grown in most areas of the Algarve.

The first impression when entering the Great Pavilion is undoubtedly one of the greatest 'Wow' moments for any gardener. Displays of flowers in peak condition are piled high all around to encourage orders for the exhibiting nurseries. This is the show where we cannot buy plants to take home. There was a specialist palm nursery with the attractive steel blue form of the Algarve native dwarf palm, *Chamearops humilis*. Nurseries were showing their many varieties of alstroemerias, aquilegias, fuchsias, peonies and iris. The narcissus, tulips and lilies have been subject to much attention and special preparation to get them ready for the show. Bulbs in particular being held in cold store until the exhibiting nursery judges them ready for the light and warmth needed to produce perfect flowers in time for the show.



It may not be possible to buy plants at the show but there is a large area called the Eastern Avenue dedicated to garden related items we can take home with us. I have never seen so many weird coloured Wellington boots before – the Duke himself would have found it difficult to choose between fuchsia pink daisies and bright green frogs ! There are also gardening bookstalls, tools, hats, tractors and conservatories to look at – but probably best to get the last two delivered ! The Georgian mini-mansion for chickens caught lots of attention. Interesting for someone from the Algarve was the wonderful selection of latest design garden furniture, BBQ equipment and the very trendy firepits. My own favourite was the 1.5 metre diameter perfect sandstone sphere – it

looked like a small planet had come to earth – complete with coloured rings !

A first for me was the link between the show and top fashion designers, the show logo being a sketch of a spectacular bronze and gold day lily (*Hemerocallis* 'Grace and Favour') by Manolo Blahnik, more famous for his exotic shoe designs. The floral design area had picked up the theme with some great looking larger than life floral handbags which must have been great fun to put together. The more traditional centre piece was a huge rugby player made from house leeks and succulents – no prizes for guessing this was the work of Cardiff City Parks ! A great selection of show gardens this year included a very familiar looking garden with tall palms, formal stone edged water rills, neatly trimmed trees and low hedges. No, not the Alhambra, but a vision of a London public garden in a future with a warmer and wetter climate. This was a potent demonstration of how climate change will affect UK gardening of the future.



There was also the inspirational 'From Life to Life, A Garden for George'. As noted in the show catalogue, not many knew that George Harrison was a keen and passionate gardener. His wife, Olivia, was instrumental in the design of this lovely garden which symbolised George's journey through life. From grey urban Liverpool, progressing through colourful planting to a calm and mossy woodland area and then to a marbled terrace surrounded by perfumed plants with a shade-giving Indian style pavilion ideal for meditation. This is the garden I would have liked to bring home with me in my suitcase ! **pic A Garden for George**

*United Kingdom Climate Impacts Programme

Rosie Peddle May 2008

ENERGIES IN THE GARDEN

4º Festival Internacional de Jardins de Ponte de Lima – 4th International Festival of Gardens This year the show is dedicated to the theme “Energies in the Garden”, and brings together a set of eleven new creations, also included is last year’s garden winner – The Ostrich Garden.

New creations of designers from different professional areas have been selected from the forty-three applications received from twelve nationalities.

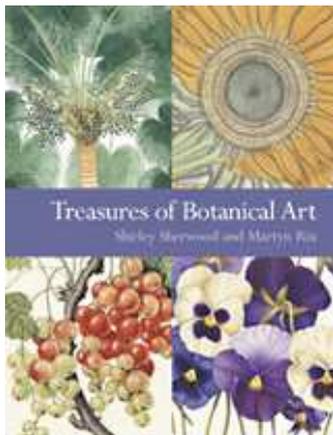
With regard to this year’s theme, we want to highlight the opportunity to appeal to the visitors awareness on environmental problems and to such important issues as alternative energies and energy exploitation. This event is a major lesson in environmental preservation, accepting that all interventions will allow profound reflections, at the same time as opening interactive possibilities with new and ‘vanguard’ tendencies for public spaces, more precisely in gardens.

City Hall of Ponte de Lima comunicacao@cm-pontedelima.pt
Committee of the International Garden Festival of Ponte de Lima

News from MGS – It is worth checking out the new items on the MGS web site, under the heading **Information Resources** <http://www.mediterraneangardensociety.org/information.html> there are interesting articles on cultivation of olives, plant portraits and a list of some toxic plants. All are illustrated. There is also the excellent seed scheme list available on line.

Garden at Sparoza, “our lovely garden assistant, Jane Shaw, finished her 10 months and after enjoying a farewell dinner party arranged by Sally she is now back in England, although hoping to move on to California. Unfortunately our plans to have a Chinese garden assistant for next year have finally fallen foul of the immigration laws, so again I ask you to let us know any ideas you may have for help for Sally and if necessary get the job description from John Rendall. Sally is looking into the possibility of taking short-term helpers this time although this will mean that their fares cannot be paid. So if any of you has a young person from the EU in mind who has good gardening experience, lots of enthusiasm and a will to learn please contact John Rendall for the job description.

The Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art is Now Open



Kew is delighted to announce that The Shirley Sherwood Gallery of Botanical Art is now open to the public. It is the first gallery in the world to open year round dedicated solely to botanical art.

The gallery will showcase art from Kew’s unique historic collections as well as Dr Sherwood’s contemporary collection of botanical art. The two collections, which complement each other, will allow Kew to show to the public many of its largely unseen treasures and there will always be a changing selection of contemporary works on exhibition from the Shirley Sherwood Collection. The new gallery will become the world centre of botanical art. <http://www.kew.org/events/shirley-sherwood-gallery.html>

The book to accompany the exhibition *Treasures of Botanical Art: Icons from the Shirley Sherwood and Kew Collections* by Shirley Sherwood and Martyn Rix is available at the gallery, in the Kew bookshop or online at www.kewbooks.com Paperback £24.95 Hardback £29.95

Trees The theme of the second exhibition is *Trees* and will open to coincide with Kew’s celebration of the *Year of the Tree*. From May visitors will also be able to encounter the Rhizotron and Xstrata Treetop Walkway enabling them to walk through the tree canopy amongst some of Kew’s oldest and largest trees.

Admission to the gallery is free and is included with an entry ticket to Kew gardens

MGS Provence Branch garden tour April 2008 - Report

Tour de Force – impressions of a visitor from the south

Human beings (generally speaking) are a sociable lot; but, if you are a keen gardener, it can be a solitary existence. A two minute trip to the re-cycling bin in the shed with an empty wine bottle can so easily turn into hours spent away from the washing-up – I'll just give these newly potted up seedlings a quick drop of water, and check those cuttings have enough air, seed pots with the promise of new fresh green shoots need checking, and this bit of new growth needs tying in. We all know the feeling..... I am used to being caught in my nighty at 11.00am with secateurs in one hand and a bucket of grit in the other.



The opportunity to share our experiences is one of the major attractions for joining any garden group and for those of us daft enough to try gardening in mediterranean climate zones I would say it was essential. When news of the five day tour organised by the Provence Branch of the MGS reached the far south of Portugal I seized the chance to spend some time with fellow sufferers. There are many aspects to consider before deciding if it is worth leaving home and garden – time of year, good company, quality gardens to see, and plant buying opportunities. All of these came together in a most agreeable and rewarding way

during the ten days I managed to wrench myself away from my own garden. Hard work on the part of the organisers put a fantastic programme at our disposal and, for me, a whole new part of France was revealed. Space does not allow a full report on the gardens visited so what follows are just my own personal impressions. **Pic Val Rehme garden**

Some of the gardens had legendary status, some were open to the public and others were quiet and private retreats. Most interesting for me were those that showed the passion of their owners for choosing good plants and putting them in wonderful association with each other. The garden of Pierre and Monique Cuhe was particularly inspiring in this respect. Overall, the mix was fascinating and never failed to engage us all in discussion – sometimes a bit too much discussion, which proved that organising gardeners is a bit like trying to herd cats ! I enjoyed seeing some old favourites from home such as *Scilla peruviana* and many different cistus but mixed with tree peonies, fabulous salvias and shrubs such as lilac; which I could not dare to grow. The fresh green spring colour in trees and wooded areas as we drove around was a lovely sight and so very different from the usual greyish evergreen tree cover of the Algarve. Everyone remarked on the good timing chosen for these garden visits, and the few April showers certainly did not spoil the week. We had a tight schedule to fit in three gardens a day and even the delicious picnic lunches were taken while sitting looking at the garden surrounding us. No time to waste and definitely the right priorities for this particular group of 'keenies'.



Pic Clos de Peyronnet

The maturity of most of the gardens chosen was also very important. For many of us, gardening in warmer climates is a fairly new undertaking and to see the results of forty years effort is an extremely educational exercise. I will not easily forget seeing the huge growths of the Rosa banksia tribe, overflowing in blossom – both white and double yellow varieties. Where these had been pointed up a Cypress they had literally taken the whole thing over and, for some looked, frankly, wrong. I was busy trying to remember where the heck I had planted them at home and wondering if I had given them enough room !!

Many of the gardens were on sloping ground and it was very interesting to see the different use and treatment of terracing. In some gardens steep steps dramatically shifted between the levels and in others one was hardly conscious of the gently sloping ramps which led between the beds and borders. I heard the very apt observation of the Cuche garden that we seemed to walk on one level while the garden went up and down around us ! Terracing certainly allows for creation of vistas and the views from some of the gardens were typically mediterranean with hillsides of low houses and cypress trees. In the Domaine d'Orves we moved easily from the formal beds and ponds around the house to the wooded slopes behind. In this garden, as in others, we were accompanied by the sound of water flowing out of the hill and channelled through the garden. At the magical Clos du Peyronnet the water lay still, in ponds reflecting the sky, and also running down the slope to the sea view beyond. During the week we saw skilful use of shade, water and sloping ground to create distinct areas with special character. A real lesson in 'design your space before your plant it'.



There were signature plants which just seemed to be at their absolute peak wherever we went. Ceanothus, Fremontodendron, *Rosa banksia* and Cistus. Seeing *Sparmannia africana* double form was a personal first. The agave related *Beschorneria* on a gigantic scale were throwing flower buds out at all angles. The tree peonies were ravishing, as were the roses everywhere. La Follette in particular seemed to combine well with other shrubby plantings. Many gardens had the deep blue *Scilla peruviana* showing large colourful buds, ours at home having finished several weeks before. The Coronilla shrubs added a lovely buttery yellow to gardens and road sides. We saw many large examples of salvias in full flower, a show stopper for me being the deep red *S. gesnerifolia* at Val Rahmeh. **Pic Rosa 'La Follette'**

One of the good aspects of the whole trip was the flexibility allowed for travel, accommodation and transport to and from the gardens. We had all made our own arrangements to get to the starting point of Menton, near the Italian border. The visits had then been organised in different areas that gradually worked back towards the west. This worked well for those able to take up the kind offer of accommodation with fellow MGS members. We moved through the week and were never far from friendly faces and good local knowledge, a powerful combination when in strange territory ! Good directions to the gardens were distributed and convoys arranged for shorter trips. Everyone had their own cars and shared as needed, the good sense and patience of those leading the way meant that no one got lost – as far as I know ! Staying with MGS hosts also presented the chance to see yet more gardens along the way and to discuss them with their owners. Hotel accommodation was easily available in a choice of price ranges – another bonus of travel out of high season. We were even allowed the luxury of a 'day off' mid week, so we took the chance to visit another 'holy grail', Bulb'Argence near Arles. This was a real treat as Law de Jager was available to take (and talk) us round his nursery. For me it was a first good look at the white form of *Scilla peruviana* which could be a good plant for some of our shady areas. The climbing tropealums were in full flower and we saw many bulbs in all their spring finery. The order form for autumn deliveries was being filled in as we left the car park !

So, we had the right time of year, excellent company and good gardens to view and, oh yes, what was the other thing ? Plant buying opportunities !!

Coming from the horticulturally deprived Algarve it was very soon apparent that here, right under our noses, was an amazing selection of places to buy plants. I am not used to this and it may just have gone slightly to my head! But, the thought of flying back from Barcelona to Seville on the way home did rather limit the shopping. An unscheduled but very welcome visit to a local large garden centre soon had us scurrying around looking for the smallest possible 'suitcase friendly' versions of all the lovely salvias we had seen in flower. A particular find for me was a dwarf white water lily, it is looking good in our tank on the terrace already.

The dates chosen for the tour were not only spot on for the gardens visited but also managed to cleverly include the best regional plant fair of the year on the final Saturday. I would be lying if I did not admit right now that this was a major factor in taking part in the tour ! I had attended Courson and other plant fairs in France and knew what splendid opportunities they could present for seeing lots of specialist growers – all in one place and at one time. I prepared my list of longed for plants and hoped for the best. The plant fair was held at Serignan du Comtat near Orange and was well worth adding to the trip. Orange provides many low price hotels at this time of year. There were sixty exhibitors and the whole village seemed to be taken over with the two day event. I managed to get my caper plant, Capparis spinosa, Fremontodendron, Clematis campaniflora and several euphorbias as well as some lovely blue and yellow dwarf iris. By the way, the airline flying us back home had a delightfully relaxed attitude to 'hand baggage' – fortunately!



Our journey home also gave the chance for a visit to Olivier Filippi's nursery (pic left in his garden). Olivier has sent us plants and his catalogue is consulted on a daily basis so this was too good a chance to miss. The demonstration garden and nursery were looking very good and we thoroughly enjoyed wandering around for the whole morning. It was so interesting to see his approach put into practice and the way the plants thrived under the thick gravel mulch. A wonderful lesson in appropriate planting for our extreme climate. We continued on our journey home via another welcoming MGS member and had a happy time looking round their garden, surrounded by pine woodland and bird song.

Opening the shutter and seeing a nesting hoopoe sitting on an adjacent down pipe was rather wonderful. It was good to get home and start potting up all the newly acquired plants, our first walk round the garden for ten days was very special. We discovered new wild orchids and small narcissus waiting for us. The chance to travel with fellow gardeners is an opportunity to compare notes, discuss plants and growing conditions but, above all else, an opportunity to see your own garden from a new perspective. Thanks are due to all our welcoming and hospitable fellow gardeners but most of all, congratulations to the hard working organisers for a job well done. Perhaps next time we will drive to this lovely part of France, and bring a bigger car !

Rosie Peddle - April 2008

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Members of the MGS are part of a large international group of amateur and professional gardeners, horticulturists, botanists, and others who appreciate the unique climate called 'mediterranean'. Annual subscriptions are payable in January. New members joining during the year will receive all four issues of the journal published in the year of joining. To join the MGS, fill out an application and send it along with your membership fee (€35) to **The Secretary, The Mediterranean Garden Society, P.O. Box 14, Peania GR-190 02, Greece**. New members will be automatically added to the membership list with this Branch. Further information about the MGS can be found on the main web site www.mediterraneangardensociety.org. There is a membership page and application form available on the website, if you would prefer to receive these in the post please let Rosie Peddle know and confirm your address or fax number.

Regional Contacts:

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