



Newsletter 22/4 Autumn 2022

President's Report

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After an extreme summer our gardeners have had a range of different problems to deal with, but they are a tenacious group, and we are absolutely delighted that between them they have raised 20 000 € for us to make donations to our chosen Charites. We will soon be able to let you know in more detail which Charities will be beneficiaries of your kind contributions.

But "Giving is not just about making a donation it's about making a difference", (Kathy Calvin)

You may already know that visiting any of our gardens is not just about the plants and the plantsmanship but also about spending time in the company of like-minded people and exchanging ideas. This is why our garden openers usually do 2 things which make a visit so much more of a worthwhile experience for the host and for the visitors.

To begin with the guided tours offered by most of our openers enable everyone to understand the history of the garden, discussing the ups and downs of every gardener's journey and the gems of wisdom shared during these visits are invaluable. Then later, as you enjoy some of the refreshments provided in pleasant surroundings you can chat some more.

You may reflect on what a privilege it is to be welcomed into someone's private garden, appreciate the work that has gone into it and then go home knowing that together your contributions of time, effort and money, have made a difference, to both the people you have engaged with, and the children and youngsters who will be helped by the proceeds.

Thank you to all our gardeners, sponsors, helpers and visitors for making it all possible.



***Karen Roper
President***

Charitable Donations 2022

Thanks to the generosity of our garden openers, visitors and all other supporters we have been able to make donations totaling €20 000 this year. Our first donation is a one-off donation to support Ukrainian refugee children in the area near the home of one of our loyal and long serving conseil members, Laurent Willig, who died earlier this year. This was a cause for which Laurent felt passionately and the donation is largely from the contributions made at his funeral.

Donations 2022

Ukrainian Refugee Children in France €1 000
À Chacun son Everest €3 500
Quelque Chose en Plus €3 500
Le Rire Médecin €2 500
Réseau Bulle €2 500
Sourire à la Vie €2 500
À Bras Ouverts €2 500
Actions Autisme Asperger €2 000



AFTER THE DISEASE ... BACK TO LIFE!

The Association supports children with cancer or leukemia, and women in remission from breast cancer, to help them face the delicate phase of post-cancer so that they can regain confidence, joy of life and new life.

An association founded in Vaucresson:

- an Institution for Children and Adolescents with multiple disabilities accommodating 15 young people with polyhandicap aged from 5 to 20 years;
- a Medical Reception Centre welcoming 32 adults with multiple disabilities and autisme



Le Rire Médecin dreams of a world where, whatever his condition and the severity of his illness, each child in hospital will always find at his side allies who will restore in him the care free life of his age, listen to him, understand him, make him laugh and accompany him to help him get through the hospitalization and find in himself the resources to overcome the disease.

Network of mutual aid and solidarity for families and people affected by autism
An association that advocates the kindness to all people, directly concerned, whatever their autism and associated disability. They believe in promoting each person in their individual and collective skills, and in learning from each other. They believe that to live together or live it, "Autism" is another way of perceiving the world.

It is an association that fights for a constructive, co-intelligence and partnership to providing solutions.



Sourire à la vie works alongside children with cancer by offering a complete sports programme,



educational and creative games, and gives respite times to allow parents to breathe.

The programme starts as close as possible to the diagnosis of the child in the hospital room and continues throughout the child's journey by promoting their development and allowing them to stay active.

Organises weekends and holiday breaks bringing together young people and people with disabilities and their chaperones, in houses in the countryside.

It's a time when the activities proposed by A Bras Ouverts encourage respect, simplicity, a sense of festival, friendship, joy and meeting with others.

A BRAS OUVERTS



It is an association of families that acts to:

- Support the schooling of people with Asperger's and High-Level Autistics in ordinary classes, with the support of an Individual School Life Assistant (AVSI)
- Their successful integration into social and professional life;
- Their accompaniment towards autonomy.

A challenging summer!

Well, what a season this has turned out to be! Having dealt with re-opening after Covid last year, our garden openers this year had extreme weather conditions to cope with - high summer temperatures which most areas experienced were coupled with high winds, flooding and hailstones for others. Undaunted as ever, people pulled out all the stops to continue to help us regardless. You will read how one couple's prefecture cancelled all outside cultural activities until after 7 p.m. due to the heatwave. They decided to not cancel their event but opened into the evening instead.

One morning not long before our open day, I went into the garden to discover a huge branch of an oak tree was straddling a fence. This needed lifting by a tractor and cutting into logs. Two rose arches in our vegetable garden were bent double and an hour before opening, I lifted the lid of a storage box to discover a wasp nest and two wasps promptly flew out and stung me. Others had polytunnels blown away and greenhouses broken by hailstones. Obviously, the heatwaves and torrential rain affected visitor numbers, as people found it just too hot or too wet to be out visiting gardens.

So what does this mean for our openers? Well, I think it may be that in the future we will all need to think carefully about both the time of year we choose to open and our opening times. Although we do open our garden in June as we open with two neighbours, late February/early March can look very pretty with all the hellebores, primulas and spring bulbs. Likewise, during the second week of September we have lots of dahlias, asters, hylotehiums, rudbeckias and pyracanthas that look very effective as the autumn starts to set in. Sometimes the harsh mid-day summer sun does not show our garden at its best, but either early morning or by 6 p.m the garden looks much better. Others may find this too and decide to split their opening hours.

As we continue to try to make the name of Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts more widely known throughout France we ask for your help

too. If you are a visitor to our gardens and you do not wish to open yourself, you may think our association is something people in your commune may be interested to learn about. Your mayor or local garden group may never have heard of us. If you would like us to send you some trifold publicity leaflets, please do contact me at gardendevlopment@opengardens.eu. The more we all tell people about Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts the better.

Not only do we need new people to open on our behalf but as always, we need new coordinators to help encourage and support garden openers in their area. Please get in touch with me as above for more information.

After this autumn you may hear about us attending different plant fairs, as we try to launch ourselves into new areas. It would be extremely helpful to us as an association to have more articles written about us in the French press; or maybe be talked about on radio or television.

Our garden openers do their very best to help us by advertising their openings locally, but we really do need the wider public to know more about us and the charitable work we do.

If you think you could offer your experience in this area on a voluntary basis please contact Karen Roper direct at president@opengardens.eu.

Until next time.



***Sue Lambert.
Garden Development
Manager***

***email:
gardendevlopment@opengardens.eu.***

Coles on Tour!

My husband and I joined Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts in 2014 and enthusiastically opened for a long weekend that June. Several more regular openings met with varying success in the following years. We concentrated on spring and early summer opening, but we began to feel that our real interest was being overlooked.

For years we have collected rare snowdrops, we have visited the UK for snowdrop galas, a frenzied gathering of Galanthophiles (Snowdrop Lovers) seeking to increase their collections, and we had also sought out fellow galanthophiles here in France. We found a dearth of galanthophiles here as galanthomania hadn't yet gripped French gardeners or indeed other nationalities gardening in France.

We had been thinking about how to diversify our fundraising for Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts when we hit on the idea of 'Introducing Galanthus', a talk about snowdrops in our home followed by a tour of our snowdrop collection. Reassuringly, people wanted to know how to purchase rare snowdrops for themselves.

Introducing Galanthus was an encouraging success with the feedback being very positive. The following year 'Snowdrops and Soup' continued the success from the previous year. A full house of visitors, both French and English, enjoyed the experience of viewing snowdrops on a gloriously dreadful day. Five Euros admission was a bargain and Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts also profited from the healthy sale of drops and other plants.

Then the dreaded COVID struck. Not wanting to be beaten we planned garden visits by appointment. Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts organized the advertising and we communicated with visitors via email and telephone. It was a blustery, rain lashing down type of day. The phone started to ring early as our bookings thought we would cancel because of the weather. Oh, so tempting but how could we? All was ready and the flowers were out. Potential galanthophiles turned up for their allotted time slots to be guided around our garden intent on viewing the rare snowdrops on show. It was hard work but every prebooked slot turned up including several visitors traveling more than two hours. Three soaked coats later the event was declared a success.

As visiting gardeners genuinely seemed interested it was felt that a wider audience may be waiting to hear our presentation. We contacted Sue Lambert from Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts to say that we were willing to travel within France to 'present snowdrops to garden groups in February. Enthused by this proposal she contacted various people and we soon had two booking confirmed as well as potential ones for the future.

The winter of 2021/22 saw us off to a garden group south of Limoges with three trays of snowdrops to sell and a bucketload of anxiety. Knowing and loving your chosen subject does not exclude one from having stage fright. The sale of snowdrops was so good that we had to raid our garden to replenish our stock ready for our next presentation in the Dordogne.

The trip to the Dordogne was equally successful despite some technical problems with the presentation being outside on such a beautiful, sunny day. The projected presentation wasn't visible to the audience so with no prompts Sheila adlibbed prompted by Ian. Following the presentation, people moved towards the snowdrops on offer and made the most of this unique opportunity. One lovely lady on her third return to the sales table commented 'life is too short to be mean'.

The welcomes were very warm, well there's not much about in February to be honest so the interest was high, potential friends and contacts were made. We like to visit different regions in France so the whole experience was a 'win/win' one.

We are now being affectionately called 'Coles on Tour' by the conseil of Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts. There are six or seven trays of our best snowdrop doers ready to sell with 100% to go to charity. These bulbs are rare in France but there is always more than one bulb per pot. We believe that we offer true bargains when you consider the price of Snowdrops in the U.K.

So as autumn approaches and many gardens are slowing down we are ramping up and looking forward to presenting snowdrops to a wider audience. By the end of October our first bulbs of snowdrops will be up. They are always reliable, as bulbs usually are. February is peak season and that's when we'll be going on tour. Bookings are already in and we look forward to touring, seeing new regions of France, meeting new people and sharing our love of the little white gems that give so much joy.

Retentive 'nerds', yes, but happy people.

Sheila and Ian Cole, Arnac-la-Poste, 86170

Coping with the canicule !
Open Garden, Chez Sarrazin, 19th June 2022

After opening our gardens very successfully for two half-days last year, this year David and I decided to do one full day instead, this time on Sunday 19th June. For weeks in advance, we worked on the borders and pots despite the increasing heat and stocked the freezers with home-made cake. Volunteers were roped in, and finally towards the end of the previous week we were pretty sure we had done all we could, and we were all prepared for a 10am start on Sunday.

However, On the morning of Friday 17th we received an anxious phone-call from Jean-Yves of the local press, asking us whether we were aware of the official ban on daytime outdoor gatherings that weekend because of the canicule. Predicted temperatures of over 40 degrees over three consecutive days had prompted this move by the Prefecture. This came as a complete shock to us, especially as Jean-Yves then asked us if we were prepared to change our opening time to 19.30h until dusk. The decision needed to be immediate as he was about to go to press with opening times.

I promptly agreed, somewhat against the advice of my husband and visiting friend who thought no one would want to come in the evening, or equally importantly to eat the cakes I had made, and then we got down to letting everyone know, via the DVN, the website of Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts, and by email to friends, acquaintances and known gardening groups.

By the Sunday morning the temperature had already dropped somewhat, and thunderstorms now threatened the evening. David put up marquees and parasols in the courtyard, and prepared tables and chairs, still convinced it was all in vain, and with one eye on the gathering clouds. He put out signs along the local roads, umbrella under his arm, raked gravel, and generally did all the right things just to keep me happy. An atmosphere of dogged determination in the face of imminent disaster prevailed.



Friends and such helpers as could manage the new times dropped in, and together we frosted cakes and set up the potting shed as a temporary kitchen for refreshments. Then, with the hot-water urn bubbling away, and a regiment of tea & coffee cups laid ready we waited anxiously.

Just before 6pm the first French couple called for directions from Angoulême which was encouraging, and shortly afterwards a few people drifted in through the gates. Then suddenly the trickle turned to a torrent, extra kettles were required, and we almost ran out of cake.



The evening light was magical, the temperature perfect, and when a rogue shower fell people simply laughed and put up their umbrellas, or moved under a parasol. By 9pm just over 70 people had come to see the garden, and everyone seemed to enjoy it.



All agreed that the garden visit was a very different thing in the evening, with the lower light really highlighting the borders, especially the tropical border with its bananiers, dahlias and large cannas. The gentler temperature also proved a bonus, and people were much more inclined to linger and chat over their tea and cake.

In addition, many people who had been out during the day were able to come to us in the evening, and wind down gently with a soft drink and light refreshments. Our last visitors left at about 22.30h, by which time it was almost dark, and all agreed it had been a great success. We had made over €500 for good causes and had a great evening.

We very much enjoyed our somewhat changed agenda and would absolutely recommend the possibility of an evening opening during the hottest summer months.

Sarah and David Asplin, Brossac, 16480

Thank you to David and Sarah for accepting the 'challenge of the cannicule'! Your determination to help us support our charities is inspiring!! *Ronnie Ogier, Editor*

Letter from La Redonne Autumn 2022

The heatwave continued through August until it exploded in an all-out storm at the end of the month, and we had 3 inches of rain, thunder and lightning one night.

The tomatoes have done really well, and we've given up making them into sauces, soups and ratatouille and have started drying them instead. It's been so hot that the onions put out to dry in the greenhouse cooked. Such a shame because we had a good crop. The other veg was ok but not amazing. The figs have cropped really well however and as we couldn't keep up, we have rows of pots of fig jam and fig chutney in the cellar.

We are now under strict orders from the local government not to use water for anything other than health, drinking and hygiene so we are saving the water from showers and washing up to flush the loos and water the pots outside. It really makes you appreciate having the well. Despite the more frequent showers the river is still dry, the heron making the most of it as the poor fish are stranded in the few remaining pools. The beavers are undaunted on the little river which always has water somehow, and are busy chopping down trees and bushes for the winter.

With autumn in sight, it's not only cooler, positively chilly at night, and the hillsides are turning golden, russet and yellow. But with the little rain we've had the garden the wildflowers have sprung back and are having a last blooming. The roses, dahlias and veronica are really good, along with the grasses, heleniums and echinaceas. We're also lucky to have drifts of pale blue wild asters growing happily by themselves, and for the first time, our olive trees have got fruit. Pinot and I counted over 600 (it's a lot for us!).

I ordered tulip and narcissi bulbs from Holland, so we have 6000 bulbs to plant - knees are not looking forward to it. However, life goes on and so does bulb planting and putting the garden to bed for the winter. The greenhouse is coming back into its own with lots of lovely crisp lettuces, small dark red tomatoes and little beans arriving on the tower of runner beans and forest of French beans in there. The pumpkin which seeded itself on the compost heap is busy producing pumpkins of varying sizes. The days are drawing in with glorious sunsets, misty mornings and a distinct chill in the air first thing in the morning.

The harsh summer has produced a bumper crop of mushrooms in the forests so we're about to head off with our baskets once the mist has cleared.

Jane and Gary Quarmby, La Redonne, Dauphin, 04300

Jane and Gary were 'first-time openers' this year, based in Alpes-Haute-de-Provence, they are our first garden in that département, and the furthest south east of all our openers.

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