



Newsletter 21/2

Spring 2021

President's Report

Dear All,

A topsy survey year already with both the weather and the virus but the gardens are looking beautiful again despite everything.

Our revised website is up and running and we have a new means of finding a garden to visit. Some of our gardens open on a daily basis to the public and offer free entrance to those with an Open Gardens membership card. Other gardeners prefer to open by appointment rather than have a set open day, and some do both.

We now have a "Frequent Openers" button which directs you to these gardens listed by region. Please take a look, I hope you will find this useful.

The latest directives may limit us to 10km travel and a maximum of 6 people together in an outdoor group, but this still means that with the correct measures in place we can enjoy the pleasures of the gardens nearby.

We all need beautiful spaces to visit to keep our spirits up so if you know of a garden near you that might be encouraged to welcome visitors, let us know and we will explain how they can help not only their local garden lovers but also the children we support through our fundraising who are having a particularly tough time of it at the moment.

Take care, one and all.



***Karen Roper
President***

Variety is the Spice of Life.

One of the fun things about visiting one of our Open Gardens is that you are unlikely to see the same sort of garden twice. In my area alone we have a garden on the edge of a rock face, a village garden built level with the top of a garage, a no-dig garden, a permaculture garden, a garden with a collection of rare trees and a maze, a garden built alongside an old mill race, a garden created from their neighbours' cow fields, a bee garden, a garden surrounding a chateau, and the list goes on!

When we start to look further afield, we find gardens inspired by a particular garden designer or method of cultivation, maybe a garden created for a country estate or a garden tucked away behind a town house. You will always be surprised.

In visiting any one of these gardens you will meet passionate gardeners who live and breathe gardening. Because they come from a variety of backgrounds they all bring something different to their garden and have invariably created a garden that suits them and their surroundings. By visiting them on one of their Open Days you will get to meet a wide variety of owners with a story to tell about how and why they created their garden like they did.

So why do we visit gardens? We usually go to be inspired, to relax in pleasant surroundings, perhaps to buy a small plant cutting or a packet of seeds; or maybe to pick up handy hints and tips and sometimes even steal an idea! I have to confess to having visited a very famous French garden where in the vegetable garden they had used snail shells placed on the top of garden canes to protect their gardeners from harm whilst bending, but also because aesthetically it looked charming. Guess who went home and encouraged her husband to eat lots of snails so she could copy the idea! You see, we all do it!

I noticed recently that there are many more younger visitors coming to visit our gardens too. Having recently moved into the area they are often keen to learn about what they can grow, what will survive and what may not. Our garden openers are usually more than keen to share their expertise and give their advice as they were once in their shoes, just starting out.

This year with our Covid 19 Health and Safety Guidelines in place some of our garden openers have chosen to only open by appointment, but what better way to go and meet a wise gardener keen to share their years of experience.

The pictures on our garden pages may show you some of the things you might expect to see in that garden and the descriptions may give you a flavour of the type of garden it is, but I can guarantee that no photo will entirely do its garden justice. So have a look, choose something you feel may appeal and go and be inspired.

I can guarantee you, no two gardens will ever be the same; and by the time you walk away, you might not be either.

Enjoy!



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

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

2020: A Year of Ecologically Intensive Gardening.

The chaotic year 2020 helped increase the floral richness of our garden. In the spring when the garden centres were closed, we were able to create new beds with plants that we had 'harvested' from the garden. The adage of gardeners - "it grows better in a garden when we have sown it" allowed us to plant while remaining faithful to our rules for the design of our flower beds - to preserve the harmony of flower colours, plant hardy perennials and combine grasses from slopes or edges of fields. This is why Echinaceae mixed with Poppies (*Papaver*), Mallow (*Malva sylvestris*) or Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*) are close to the rose bushes. Burdocks (*Arctium lappa*), Dactyls (*Dactylis glomerata*) or Borage (*Borago*) dot the sedums. The *Monardas* are accompanied by the *Angéliqués*

(Angelica), the Consoude (Symphytum) or the White Lamiers (Lamium album).

The plants that my wife had taken great care to grow to sell or give to our absent visitors were all planted.

Our pleasure is to maintain a living garden. We are delighted to be able to observe birds, squirrels, insects, frogs, and other occasional visitors. They accompany us while we are gardening and on our daily strolls. To accommodate these inhabitants, we have installed a series of nesting boxes for Bluetits and significantly increased the nesting boxes for Osmia (Osmia cornuta) - European Orchard bee.



There are now five Osmia nurseries, which together contain two thousand nests. To ensure the sedentary lifestyle of our guests, we practice rational feeding, we maintain watering points, we maintain a plenty of blooms rich in pollen and nectar, and above all we offer them a habitat that promotes reproduction.

During the second confinement in November, our desire to create was still just as strong. New beds appeared. It was thanks to the division of the existing plant strains that we planted a bed with narrow leaved plants in a ribbon. Knifophias, Hemerocallis, Irises, Croscomias, Agapanthus and some Stipas or Mulhenbergias.

The associated wild plants were Asphodels (Asphodelus), Rushes (Juncus), Stinking Irises (Iris foetidissima). With the divisions of the strains of Aster, Echinacea and Sedum Purple Emperor we have bordered our rose garden. The dahlias have not previously featured much in our beds so we have put together a new collection of 57 varieties in pink and orange.



To fully appreciate the scale of our planting - there are 29 large beds and 10 borders in the garden. They represent an estimated surface of 500 m², which gives by calculation, at least 3000 plants. In 2020, this was a 20% increase in the number of beds.

Plant waste produces about two cubic meters of compost per year, this allows us to maintain the soil's humus level and to quickly obtain fertile soil to create a new bed. We continue to cover parts of bare soil with hemp straw (1200 litres per year) to limit evaporation, maintain microbial life in the soil and facilitate weeding.

We know we are privileged people in this world today. Our taste for gardening during this year of social restrictions and movement, has contributed to our physical and mental well-being.



Our garden is also our main source of creative inspiration. My wife does macro photography of insects and flowers her photos are: @biraultmarieodile.

My creativity is expressed in the staging of plants in original settings combining flowers, metals, stones and wood.

The creation of the Great Game of the Garden of Magic Plants was my winter occupation. This fun and informative game will be sold to our future

generous visitors, from the end of May and the end of July 2021, for the benefit of the well-being of young children who are seriously ill or disabled.



Dominique and Odile Birault, Indre-et-Loire

This garden will be opening the last weekend in May and again the last weekend in July. More details can be found on the Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts website www.opengardens.eu

A Letter of Invitation.

My dear garden friends,

It is with modesty that I invite you to my garden for the first time.

It is a simple but pleasant 2000 m2 garden made up of small spaces planned during our travels and our visits to other gardens. As you walk through the garden, you will find the corner with grasses, the rock garden, a zen space, the Alambra garden and other areas of interest

Having a passion and living it is good, but being able to share it is even better, especially since a good cause is added to this adventure.

We have lived in our stone house and its grounds since 1984. Our purchase was guided not only by the character of the house (despite the collapse of part of it), but also by the potential there was outside.

We had only two chestnut trees, a fig tree, but there was also endless brambles and a field of buttercups.



Over the years, we have experimented with plants or shrubs that we have come across, but several times without success. Nature remains master, it is up to us to understand it. My Mum gave me a camellia, I changed it from place to place 3 times until 'she' told me where she was happy.

It takes time to enjoy a garden, and also to learn and know the best place for each tree or shrub. You will certainly agree, patience is a quality of the gardener.

We ended our professional activity five years ago and this has enabled us to refine our wishes for the garden, even if it is not yet completed. This activity does give us a purpose in life

Many of our inspirations come after our trips out when we are able to travel, or exhibitions such as at the Chaumont Estate or the Maulévrier Park.



But I have other plants with memories of other places that I can share with you my cannas from Mirissa, The Twins of Paros, my plant from Trogir,



the generous plant from Moorea, or my pine from Brac These plants give me a strong travel memory, sometimes it's a cutting that I try to bring to life.

This is a challenge. Some will think that it is not good to bring back plants. Personally, I only see the memory of the place or the person and I do not think I have unbalanced nature.

The spaces we have created are round the house and therefore they have different exposures. We can walk around the rockery, in the shade of the chestnut tree, near the pond and my corner with wild grasses. We often take this walk on Sunday morning, it is a pleasure to observe the evolution of our plantings, in addition this is always a place where we feel good



We wait in anticipation of your visit, and we are working to make that moment as pleasant as possible.

Paul and Jacqueline Guerin, Loire-Atlantique

This garden will be opening 22nd and 23rd May. More details can be found on the Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts website www.opengardens.eu

So, what is a Pop-Up Opening?

'Pop-Up' openings were devised by the Conseil for 'last minute' openings. If you felt that your garden was looking really good, you wished to share it with others and help us raise money for our designated charities but had not formally planned an opening on the website, then at short notice – usually a week to ten days – we could help you with the advertising and get the paperwork to you. Firstly, we agreed that Sue Lambert, gardendevlopment@openagardens.eu should be notified, and then Jess Roper, media@.opengardens.eu, with some photos of your garden as it is. Easy!!



In March we thought our garden was looking quite lovely and spring-like. I also realised that when the garden is not full of herbaceous perennials, then the structural features are more apparent and actually come into their own.

We felt that it would be possible for us to do two days of openings, and duly notified Sue Lambert and Jess Roper. But of course, we also had the Covid pandemic and the health and sanitary measures to contend with! However, we still felt it was worth 'having a go', so we set about with last minute preparations and our own advertising through Facebook to our friends.



We advertised timed half hour openings for both days and asked people to book as we were limited to six people for each slot. Richard took over the organisation of the openings, receiving bookings by email and confirming acceptance.

I concentrated on the garden, cakes and ensuring we were in line with all the Covid guidance. We had one 'drop-in' visitor but as the slot was not full we could cope with that.

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The days of our openings were dry, cold and windy, but nevertheless we had visitors in almost every slot, though only the maximum 6 persons in two slots. We decided to give ourselves a lunch break, which given the cold windy weather we were pleased to take.

At the end of the two days, we didn't feel totally exhausted, and we had actually enjoyed meeting people, sharing our ideas and picking up tips from others.

On reflection during the following days, we agreed that it was a good way to open – the advantages were that we knew, in advance, how many people were coming and at what times. This was particularly relevant with regard to baking as I only made sufficient cakes for the two days. It also took some of the tension out of the event as, once again we knew when people would be arriving. We will still open in the more 'traditional' way, but, I think we may also choose to open 'Sur Rendezvous' on other occasions.

Richard and Ronnie Ogier, Haute Vienne

This garden will be opening 22nd and 23rd May. More details can be found on the Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts website www.opengardens.eu

Stop Press !!!!!

A date for your Diary

Afternoon Tea at La Sedelle

We are working closely with our Partner Garden, the Arboretum at La Sedelle to offer Afternoon Teas in the beautifull seting of the Arboretum. The planned date is Soday 22nd June.

More details to follow soon

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