



Newsletter 21/3

Summer 2021

President's Report

Hello all

Well, I am thrilled to bits at how much enthusiasm there is out there for visiting gardens again. It might seem meteorologically to have been a strange spring/summer with 50 shades of green being the predominant theme, but we are all craving a bit of colour at the moment and many of our gardeners are providing just that. We have proved that we can open gardens and visit gardens safely and enjoyably so I hope that the season will continue in the same vein and on into the autumn.

Thank you all for your help, I am sure that this year we will be able to offer some new hues and to pave the way to bring back a bit of zing into the lives of the children that we support.

Best wishes,



***Karen Roper
President***

Maximise your membership!

One of the many things I enjoy about being part of the Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts team has been the opportunity to go out and about visiting new gardens and meeting new gardeners.

As you will no doubt realise, we have gardens in many different places throughout France which for me and some coordinators, often means we travel some distance to visit a potential new garden.

But, for me this has been a great opportunity, as it has meant I have a reason to visit other parts of the country that I otherwise would have had no reason to visit. This allows me to enjoy the many changes of scenery on route. This set me thinking about people who buy our annual membership card and how you too might get even more enjoyment out of being part of our association.

This year with the continued uncertainty in the Spring about the health situation, we saw several of our garden openers choosing not to hold a conventional Open Day but choosing to open by appointment, whilst we all waited to see how things would develop. Others told me they would commit to two definite days throughout the opening season, and another indicated that whenever they were at home, they would welcome people to come and visit. What could be more welcoming than that?

These garden openers and others like them, are featured on the Frequent Openers section of the website. Don't forget to check the calendar regularly as new people add their opening dates throughout the year. If you wish to visit a Frequent Opener Garden, but don't have an annual membership card the garden opener will normally ask for the usual single garden entry charge (5€), or a donation. Please check with them their preferred method before you visit.

If a garden is some distance from you, you could make an appointment as we are now permitted to travel around the country. It is now possible to organise a longer trip to visit someone, which could include an overnight stay in a different region, but that could be more fun!

Often, when we are travelling through another part of France perhaps because we are going on holiday, I look to see if we have any of our gardens nearby that we could potentially visit. This is a great opportunity for me to meet the people I often only speak to by telephone or email and a wonderful way for me to see their many different styles of garden.

As things become even safer and everyone feels happier mixing again, maybe you could organise a weekend away with fellow gardeners or garden openers, to enable you to meet like-minded people who have chosen to help us in our great Association? I am sure every garden opener would be delighted to meet you, and you never know what treasures you may unfold!!!

Happy hunting!



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

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

Labours of love!!



***This garden is
opening for the
first time in
2021***

Vieux Moulin is in a small hamlet called La Portaudrie which is in the commune of Villemain on the southernmost tip of Deux-Sèvres bordering the Charente and Charente Maritime.



We purchased Vieux Moulin in November of 2011 and moved in (to tents in the garden) in 2012. Vieux Moulin was love at first sight, it's a medieval watermill which still has its workings in situ but not much else. It came with a hectare of land which was maize stubble. We wanted the land as we always intended to create public gardens, not botanical, but something different.

I trained with the RHS at the National Botanic Garden of Wales. I noticed that a lot of visitors were families treating granny or aunty to a special day, while granny etc... enjoyed the visit and everyone else was mostly bored. This got me thinking, I wanted to create a garden which was fun for all, not just gardeners.

Both Mel and I enjoy being outside, share a love of gardening and wildlife and are both very creative. We accepted the challenge to restore our derelict building and transform the hectare of maize stubble into our dream. We love a challenge and as this was all going to be DIY just the two of us then this was a big step.

The first garden we built was the Potager, Mel had always wanted to build a drystone wall (now he won't stop) so as this was close to the building I designed a walled potager based on a 14thC design consisting of four beds with a central feature so very formal looking. There are vegetables and salads, flowers, fruit and herbs. Beyond this we planted the beginnings of an orchard then moved on to clearing what was the leat, this has become a bosquet with a woodland path where the water once ran, this is bordered by formally clipped hedges.



Next came the Cottagers Garden, there was already a lovely tree which seemed the ideal place to start giving us somewhere to relax and take a break from rebuilding the roof on the mill. As the house has never had electricity or sanitation our next step was to install a fosse septique, to do this we had to remove 50cm of topsoil from behind the building to get down to road level, what do you do with all that topsoil? You build a hill!



We had a *trachycarpus fortunei* which had no home and we found some yucca whilst searching for stone to build walls, so the idea hit us - the Jungle Garden was born. We chose the spot in front of our newly formed hill and the first paths and plants went in in 2015. Work on the Jungle Garden then went on hold until 2017. When we restarted in this area, we built a wildlife pond.

Then we had the crazy idea of building a cave! This took two years of digging by hand and building (the local builders supply thought we were building a house). Now there are 100 meters of paths meandering down into the center of the Jungle where the pond lies behind which is an island bed and a clearing with stone seats, a firepit, a stone clad spa and the entrance to the cave.



Steps lead to the top of the cave where you can view the jungle from above. From here you can continue down into our mediterranean

garden, or you can continue through the cave and step up into the Mediterranean Garden the choice is yours. On the back of the hill we are in the process of building a Stumpery. Leaving the Mediterranean Garden you enter, via double doors, a Moroccan Courtyard Garden, the central pond is built but the surrounding walls are not there yet as that is my fathers project but due to covid19 he hasn't managed to get here.



Our project last year was the woodland. When we bought the property, we left this part of the land to nature as we knew that in 7-8 years, land would return to woodland. We then spent 3 months on our hands and knees with a saw and secateurs removing all the bramble and wild clematis, which we didn't want, enabling us to see the trees, paths were then cut and rooms created.

The woodland is still young but already has a wonderful atmosphere, lots of wildlife and fairies!

We have created an avenue of native hedgerows giving a vista of 170m from where the drive will enter to the far end of the garden, part of this area will be a Parterre with three fountains the work on this has already started, beyond the Parterre is a boules court shaded by 6 albizia trees underplanted with lavender. The gardens are still evolving with more areas planned, we will reinstate the mill pond and open a new driveway, we have plans for a Wine Garden, a Japanese Garden and a huge koi pond with a water feature made out of musical instruments. Will there be anymore ? Well, if we can think it, we CAN make it.

You can keep updated by following Vieux Moulin Gardens on FaceBook

Margaret and Mel Heath, Deux Sèvres

https://www.opengardens.eu/garden-detail/?gard_random=gB312VUD8lCdYt2&lang=en-GB

This garden will be opening 24th and 25th July. More details can be found on the Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts website www.opengardens.eu

The Plessis Garden, Pornic



This garden is opening for the first time in 2021.

I live in the Breton seaside resort and port of Pornic, on the Jade coast. Pornic has its owcastle. My house was built in 1995, on land bordered by a line of beautiful oak trees.

Originally the land was planted with corn or grass for cattle.

The character of the garden was influenced by the underlying earth it of clay and limestone on one side and bluish clay on the other.

During my career as a schoolteacher, I developed a project one year, with my students, based on the Middle Ages, and as part of that we set up a small garden. During the project my research and



artistic and historical reading motivated me to consider what I wanted to do in my own garden.

In 1997/1998 the structure of the garden was established. In the 2000s, wooden features and terraces were added.

In 2011, we organised, with an independent bookstore, a "reading aperitif" event on the theme of the garden. It was a very beautiful evening, which again determined the future direction of my garden. I wanted this living space to demonstrate something tangible!



As I was always passionate about the Middle Ages, it was, therefore, natural that the different parts of the garden found their names reflecting the Middle Ages, particularly the monastic and royal gardens. A dozen spaces were created illustrating centuries of history in themes ranging from "love for gardens" to "a garden of love".

And this is how for ten years my garden has been open to the public, by appointment. I also take part, every three years, in the "Welcome to my natural garden" programme. I also work for the Pornic Tourist Office for whom we organise four visits per year.



And now, I'm signed up for the adventure with "Open Garden/Jardins Ouverts"!



The garden is cultivated with respect for nature, without chemicals, with homemade compost, leaf and hay mulch and green manure.

Brigitte Bachelier, Loire-Atlantique

https://www.opengardens.eu/garden-detail/gard_random=05ZKzsr7Fgdozs5&lang=en-GB

This garden will be opening 7th and 8th August. More details can be found on the Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts website www.opengardens.eu

Planting design - Designing a mixed border for seasonal interest

A great garden comes with a good practical layout and well thought out planting schemes. For many of us (including myself!) gardens 'evolve' over time as we find gaps to fill, extend planting areas to create space for more plants - often when we have bought them on impulse! This can lead to some great unplanned planting combinations, but very often you

can end up with a border that lacks continuity or structure and balance. Whether you are starting from scratch or want to enhance existing borders It is a good idea to take photos through the year and plan what you need to enhance existing borders.

Try to do some research and create a planting plan before you start a new border or give an existing border a 'make over' this will help you to create a successful and pleasing planting scheme. For this it is important to understand your plants. It is very easy to buy an innocent looking plant in a small pot that ends up being way too vigorous for the space you have, so make sure you are aware of the eventual height and spread of a plant, whether it is evergreen or deciduous, what are its main decorative qualities - foliage, flowers, fruits, coloured stems etc, when is the main season of interest, its habit (for example; 'fastigate' (tall and narrow), or low and spreading, arching, climbing, trailing etc, is it an annual or perennial, herbaceous or woody, and most importantly, is it hardy enough to tolerate the cold winters outdoors in the ground.

To create a mixed border full of interest it is important to know all these factors to plan a combination of interest and decorative features throughout the seasons. A 'mixed border' consists of a mixture of shrubs, herbaceous perennials, bulbs, maybe trees and grasses and is the best way to get all year-round interest in a small to medium size garden.

To begin with you need to choose the plants that give you structure throughout the year - these will be the framework for interplanting with plants that give decorative features over the seasons. For this we are really looking at foliage, so a selection of evergreen and deciduous shrubs chosen for contrasting colours and textures should make up around 30-40% of your border, their height and spread proportional to the space that you have available. You can include some trees for height and shade too. Ornamental grasses are also great for their long season of colour and texture. Don't forget to include some plants for winter interest too.

Next you need to select some plants that will give you shorter bursts of ever-changing seasonal interest. This is where plants with mainly flowering interest take front stage. Some of your chosen shrubs will add to this but the main stars will be herbaceous perennials and sub shrubs. Herbaceous perennials tend to flower for maybe 4-6 weeks each year before going to seed, so you need to choose some that will flower in spring, some for early and mid-summer, followed by late summer and autumn flowering perennials and spread them throughout the border.

Complimentary colour combinations and a mix of heights and habits will also increase the aesthetics. Some herbaceous perennials will naturally flower two or even three times over the long growing season here in France and this can be encouraged by deadheading and cutting back faded flower stems immediately after flowering. These seasonal interest plants should also take up 30-40% of your border design.

The remaining 20 -30% should be made up of what I call the 'fireworks' these are plants that give a short but spectacular display. Again, some of your deciduous shrubs and trees already chosen for form and structure can add to this with maybe blossom, fruits or autumn colour. Bulbs are also a great choice for this and can add 'pop up' colour right from the early snowdrops in January through to the summer flowering Gladioli and Crocosmia and Dahlias.

Caroline Wright, Le Jardin Créatif, Haute Vienne

<https://lejardincreatif.net/>

***Stop Press !!!!!
A date for your Diary -***

24th July

Afternoon Tea at Chateau de Montmagner



Saturday 24 July

By kind permission of
THE CHATEAU DE MONTMAGNER
Montmagner, 87160, Arnac la Poste



In the courtyard or in the tea rooms if wet

From 5 €

Reservation Essential
Book your teatime slot

Please contact
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