



Newsletter 23/2 Summer 2022/3

President's Report

Dear All,

I hope that you enjoy this latest edition of our Newsletter! The money that Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts donates annually to associations supporting the needs of children and young persons with life-changing illnesses or conditions in France is already growing this year, following the opening of private gardens to visitors in various parts of France. We thank all the garden owners who contribute to this cause, and their helpers. We hope that many readers of this newsletter will have been able to get out and visit at least some of these gardens.

On a more serious note, the conseil of our association has at the moment five vacancies, and we would value the help of new conseil members. Travelling distances are an issue, and I was wondering if some of you might be more willing to put yourselves forward for conseil membership if you could participate in meetings online rather than by being physically present? If you feel that this might be your position, I'd be pleased to hear from you.

As the summer progresses, we are conscious that many gardeners are continuing to experience the effects of climate change, and are having to adapt their gardens accordingly. Yet I have no doubt that we will still be able to visit attractive gardens that are rising to this challenge, and I wish all gardeners well in this regard.



Richard Ogier
Interim President

A busy season!

Mid-summer is always a busy time for Open Garden/Jardins Ouverts and this year has been no exception. Apart from supporting our current garden openers and helping to organise an Afternoon Tea event in partnership with one of our partner gardens L'Arboretum de La Sedelle, this year has seen us attending three plant fairs, Couzeix, L'Arboretum de La Sedelle and Mérinchal. We will be present at St Junien and La Sedelle again in the Autumn. We attend plant fairs to try to attract new garden openers and coordinators, discuss the possibility of people becoming Friends of Open Gardens and to encourage people to sign up for our newsletter. If you think you could spare a few hours to help us

when we attend events such as these, particularly if you are bilingual, do let me know.

People often ask me "What is involved in opening your garden?" Well, if you are proud of what you have achieved, whether your garden is large or small and you think you could share your passion with other like-minded people, then that is a really good start. "Is there a lot of work involved?" Well, yes there is, but the pleasure to be gained from hearing people appreciate your hard work and ideas, will more than make up for it.

Some new openers feel disappointed if they don't have lots of visitors the first time they open, but from small beginnings great things grow. We have found it takes time for neighbours and friends to understand the concept of what we do and despite our best efforts many people still don't realise that the money we raise is given to children's charities here in France. We also know that some people are wary of giving money to charitable causes in case their money does not reach its intended destination. We are not obliged by law to have our accounts audited but the Open Gardens committee has always chosen to do this, so you can rest assured money donated is going to very worthy causes.

I am delighted this year that people have taken note of the last few summers' heatwaves and are adjusting their opening hours accordingly. This has helped considerably, so if you see a garden opening into the evening, do go and support them as they are trying to make your visit more enjoyable.

In the past some people have said to me they just don't understand why we open our gardens and serve refreshments and sell plants. We find this side of an Open Day most convivial as it gives people a chance to sit and chat about what they have seen, allowing them time to exchange ideas; and maybe come away with a plant they saw in your garden that has inspired them. It is also important to remember that a third of the money we raise each year, comes via this part of the day. This year one of our garden openers even had ice creams for sale. What a delightful way to end a lovely visit!

Our sincere thanks to everyone who opens on our behalf.



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

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

Another chapter – The Challenge of Moving Forward



We moved to France in 2005 to our dream home with a plot of land 5700m² that had been almost untouched for years, It was perfect for us both to develop into our little piece of heaven. My husband set about the hard landscaping and developing his potager and I relished the idea of creating various areas of the garden with my favourite plants and being inspired by Beth Chatto and her dry garden.

There was no plan on paper, ideas developed in a fairly random fashion and we made use of the available materials, stone, fallen logs and the existing landscape. A mature area of woodland provided natural seclusion but also wildlife that at times challenged our ideas of a garden. Over the years, having lost many plants to the food bar of Deer, Badgers and Wild Boar we fenced the totalT area. We even installed metal bars at the base to stop Badgers digging under the fence. Fairly drastic measures but we wanted the animals to enjoy the woodland but not our garden,

The end result after 16 years was to be enjoyed and admired by our many visitors , and friends who made our life at Lauzadie a delight. Every day in the garden was a joy, hard work but I loved every minute of it and always looked forward to another day in the fresh air and surrounded by nature. I never thought of a day when it would not be possible .



As we grew older I started to wonder if we could maintain this in the future, it was a decision we had to make. We both spent every day maintaining our labour of love but we both knew the clock was ticking but we really wanted the clock to stop, or at least rewind. I think my dear husband was probably more tuned into reality than I was.

We talked about it mostly to friends who I am sure were facing similar issues but in the end we made a decision to sell in 2020 then I got cold feet. I just could not see it through. But we never really put this decision to bed.

It reared its head again in 2022 and we did agree to sell in the Summer of 2022. It had been very hot and dry and the garden looked sad. I thought it is really not sustainable in this climate without a significant change of design. Also we both felt it was time to ' go modern ' smaller house, push button, manageable plot. No grass and close to amenities.



So in summary the decision was two fold : a house built in 1814 on three levels and a high maintenance garden was not sustainable in our twilight years and with a changing climate in the SW of France (and world wide) we needed PLAN B.

Finding a buyer was the easy part. We sold in 6 weeks. But where would we go ? I always (and

still do) dream of living by the sea. But we just cannot afford it. We looked at places but you really were talking big money. At the end of the day we love our life in the Lot region so we continued our search within the Lot. My darling husband found us the perfect house within

days of us agreeing our sale of Lauzadie.

We had drawn up a list of criteria to focus our minds. Mainly because we both knew we would be drawn to the old, quirky, stone built, in need of TLC type of houses that are in our DNA. But we needed, modern , easy to manage, no renovation, smaller, close to amenities. Well this house ticks all those boxes and has views to die for.

The process, for me was emotionally challenging. It is fair to say I was very unsettled, stressed and my health was compromised. That is something everyone needs to think carefully about. Because moving house can be very stressful for many people.

I know we made the right decision and we are young enough to cope with the upheaval and the physical and emotional effect a move might have. We have bounced back with vigor and enthusiasm for our next chapter. But, I still see so many people in homes that are inappropriate for them, the gardens are too much work, they still need to chop wood for heating, and they live in an isolated location. It is fine when both are able to help to maintain this lifestyle but so often circumstances change and it is no longer an easy life. It is a case of ' one solution does not fit all ' but I suggest that there is a need to review your personal circumstances and be realistic about what can be done as we get older.

Before we left Pontcirq, our lovely Mayor came to see us to advise us that there are lots schemes available to help residents maintain gardens and homes and this maybe a solution to enable you to stay in your current home. But for us it would still have meant the need to drive to amenities .

What we achieved is a Modern home on one level, we have a supermarket 5 mins walk away, and our GP and major town is only 10 mins by car. The garden is 1500m2 very manageable in a Mediterranean style. We are now working on future proofing the house and garden so that it becomes comfortable and manageable



In my last garden, I created some lovely sitting areas. Our visitors admired these and asked me ' where do you like to sit ' . My answer was ' I never have time to sit' . Our new house has some lovely areas to sit and now I do sit, relax and enjoy the fond memories of Lauzadie and the pleasure it gave me in developing a garden.

I think that those of you who are really passionate gardeners will find this decision harder than most but for the survival of yourself and a garden you must be realistic and smaller, perfectly formed is another option.

Sue and John Sargeant, Lot

Les Jardins du Coq



Les Jardins de Coq are based near Aubeterre in the Charente it is a professional garden which opens to the general public for an entry fee. The owners have very generously agreed to allow Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts members holding a valid 2023/4 membership card free admission on specific days this year. This is a real opportunity to visit a garden of poetic charm created and maintained by two passionate gardeners working with respect for nature and biodiversity. The gardens extend over two hectares, and work has always been in harmony with nature and respecting the environment and biodiversity. Each place evokes personal memories, a message of peace, love and freedom accompanied by the words and thoughts of artists throughout the visit.

Work started in 2010 when the owner, Gerald Chambord, returned to his old family home and sought to breathe new life into a place richly endowed with memories.



Through the gates, the château is approached via a long private driveway bordered by Leyland cypress and across an open parkland that houses a large collection of conifers. Amongst them two magnificent century old Lebanese cedars greet you and are a memorable sight to behold. As you continue to follow the track, more fir trees hide the view until finally the house appears, dominated by a giant *Abies alba*.

This reunification of the family farm gave Gerald the inspiration to start another life more in keeping with his aspirations and his long awaited return to the countryside. There was already a small garden planted with some trees and shrubs at least ten years earlier which Gerald decided to develop as 'green rooms'. Gerald designed the plans and was assisted by Liane in planting the plants and bringing in new ideas. In 2014 the two lakes were merged, and the gardens opened to the public. During all this time, Gerald and Liane did all the work themselves to bring this unusual garden to life, with imagination and feeling. They worked to create an atypical garden based on simple ideas to develop a soothing atmosphere with culture can be found everywhere.



It has been a work of instinct and imagination with the priority of preserving the countryside landscape.

Since 2015, the garden has been extended to the wood of La Paloma and its strange sculptures. Inspired by a beautiful story, this garden keeps the imprint of the three fairies: Marie Jeanne, Olivia and Alméa. Everything here is about love, dreams and



freedom. Today, this is a place of life and sharing, and it continues to renew itself and attract more visitors each year.

The walk around the garden starts with the 'green rooms' and theme rose gardens, it then opens up slowly to the natural garden and lavender field and finishes in the wild area nearby the pond alongside Paloma's wood. There are large areas in harmony with nature where every year artists are invited to exhibit their work. Workshops and courses are organised throughout the season.



The garden continues to grow in tune with the rhythm of nature, when Gerald started work on the garden he imagined a garden retaining the shape of the landscape, created through simple ideas, in a peaceful atmosphere imbued with culture.

Access to the garden and a car park for people with reduced mobility are available, however, the complete garden is only partially accessible to people with reduced mobility as it has several different levels. Ask on arrival for all details about walks. Benches and armchairs are spread all along the walk. The reception, the shop and the tearoom are quite easily accessible on the ground floor. The toilets are in the restricted area of the reception shop and are not equipped to accommodate disabled people.



The tearoom is freely accessible without visiting the gardens in a cozy atmosphere. A large selection of tea, coffee, hot chocolate, syrup and infusion. The artists exhibit their works during the season. The shop offers decorative objects for the garden or the house and products of local artisans (soap, hydrosol, herbal tea, syrup, honey, biscuits ...)

Gerald Chambord, Montignac le Coq 16390 Charente

https://www.opengardens.eu/garden-detail/?gard_random=spfnTUuU6aHWqfT&lang=en-GB

This garden is open to those holding current annual membership cards on 19th July, 16th August and 19 September. Please check the website for further details

From the Open Gardens webmaster.

In my pursuit of keeping the content of our website up to date, I am searching for photos of people visiting Open Gardens' gardens.

I would also like some views and opinions to put on the website from garden openers, people who help at openings/events or from people who visit Open Gardens' gardens. I envisage these would include what it is like to be contributing to the aid of seriously ill children as well as the hands on experience.

All contributions to Ian Cole webmaster@opengardens.eu

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