



Newsletter 23/1 Winter 2022/3

President's Report

Dear All,

Here we are in 2023 and a new gardening year for everyone to get excited about. February and March are the months in which we set out new plans for the garden and marvel at how things are bouncing back already from the winter. A time for pruning to keep plants in shape and promote fresh growth and for planting seeds in anticipation of new displays and abundant harvests.

As President of Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts, this is my last newsletter intro. I have enormously enjoyed the time I have spent working with the committee and our gardeners and am grateful to them for their passion, dedication, and enthusiasm. Although I am moving on to other activities I shall continue as much as possible to support the Association. I am very proud to have been a part of it, its values and its ethos remain very close to my heart. The teamwork particularly has been a real pleasure.

I hope that this year will prove to be as successful as last year was and perhaps even more so. We have started well with our first gardens of 2023; a wonderful collection of brave little snowdrops being rewarded with some glorious sunshine and many appreciative visitors. I am sure there will be many more treats in store throughout the year. Keep an eye on the website to see which gardens will be open and if you would like to get more involved, please don't hesitate to make contact through the site or at any of our gardens that you visit.



***Karen Roper
President***

Greetings from the new Interim President!

It is with much regret that we recently received resignations, from their offices and conseil memberships of Open Gardens/Jardin Ouverts, of our President Karen Roper, Tim Roper our Webmaster and Jess Roper who helped us with media matters. They have over the last few years done much to support the work of the association in the spirit of its founder, Mick Moat. For this we thank them wholeheartedly and we

wish them well as they seek to make the most of their lives after Open Gardens!

I am the new Interim President and my immediate objective, and that of the conseil, is to maintain the core services that our association offers, particularly providing support and encouragement to garden openers and their area coordinators, maintaining and raising our public profile and thereby continuing to raise funds to donate to French associations caring for children and young people with life-affecting illnesses or conditions.

It will come as no surprise that we are looking for new members of the conseil, including French and English speakers, to share the work of moving the association forward through 2023 and into the years beyond. If you could help us in this or any other way or know someone who might be able to do so, please contact the association's secretary Ronnie Ogier at secretary@opengardens.eu. The contact details of other members of the Open Gardens team are on our website www.opengardens.eu. Your support would be much appreciated, and I look forward to meeting some of you at garden visits and other events.



Richard Ogier
Interim President

Engaging with young people.

One of the things our coordinators say to me is that if we wish the association to further develop in the future, we need to encourage more young people to become involved in what we do. I have been thinking about ways in which we might be able to do this.



One which I have used is to welcome a group of students from our local Agricultural College in Ahun. These are 15- to 18-year-olds who come with their English teacher. She asks them to listen, look and communicate with me in English, whilst she assesses their capabilities in speaking English. These students may go on to work in either agriculture or horticulture. It is an opportunity for me to discuss the method I use which is No Dig and to discuss why I think it is better for the health of the soil. Their college kindly donates to our association our standard €5 entry fee per person and their comments make me look at the garden with fresh eyes.

On my Open Days, I actively encourage young families to visit who are trying to be more self-sufficient. They can see a vegetable garden with fruit trees; and learn about how having a polytunnel allows one to continue to grow food out of season.

Another garden opener also had teenagers from a private agricultural college visit her garden. They are training to be landscapers, plant nursery people or small tool repairers. They showed interest in the use of the plants and the fact that they were labelled, which will help them with their studies. She has also been able to welcome her local Ukrainian community, with women and children visiting several times for Easter Egg hunts, picnics, etc. These families are living in flats or houses with no outside space, so they appreciate the opportunity to be

able to enjoy a garden.

Other ways we could encourage connection is to invite school children to join us in the act of gardening. Maybe you have a small area you could allocate entirely for their use? When you have an Open Day, you could use our posters to actively encourage young people to visit. Perhaps you could provide a specific child related activity such as a nature or treasure hunt?

One of our Partner Gardens has a game where children look for symbols around her garden, such as a wooden owl in a tree, and mark these on a sheet. Great fun! Another garden opener produces a board game about magical plants and herbs in his garden for parents to purchase for their children at the end of the visit. I loved it so much I bought one myself! If you know any local teenagers, maybe you could ask them if they would help you by sitting at the garden gate and taking entrance money or maybe they could act as a waiter or waitress for your refreshments!

Sometimes the younger generation are more computer literate than we are, and you could ask them to help you use social media to advertise your openings or contact a radio station or newspaper on your behalf? Maybe their design or practical skills could be put to good use making plant signs for you?

Do you know a teenager who enjoys photography? Maybe they could take pictures of your garden for you to use on your garden page? How about encouraging a budding cake maker to make a cake for your refreshment stand?

Do let me know what ideas you have that I can share, as the more young people are encourage to visit our gardens and learn about the children and teenagers we help with our donations, the more willing they might be to help us in the future.



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

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

Our Garden - Wilderness to Oasis



In 1994 we bought the house and the adjoining land. Everything is in a village of 7 houses surrounded by meadows and orchards! The house, dilapidated, had not been inhabited for 40 years, the last tenants were sheep. Only major asset the roofs were restored. The land, of 9600m², slightly hilly, is an old orchard of apple

trees and cider pear trees in the shape of a trapezoid. The state of the garden was not encouraging broken trees, brambles, nettles and other undesirables littered the ground. But, for someone who wished to create a garden it was a blank canvas

Without having studied horticulture and with no special landscape knowledge some plans were drawn up to place the paths, the location of the vegetable

garden - it was a primary purpose - , the orchard and some flowering strips. In the first year, a small part of the land (about 200m²) was worked and planted



with hundreds of cuttings gleaned from friends and family.

My passion for trees brought an opportunity to create structure to the nascent garden. The discovery of a forest nurseryman allowed us to establish two small



coppices with young plants and an alley of liquidambars and create a hedgerow to protect from the prevailing winds -the west at that time. We planted 1 m shoots of cherry trees, American oaks, laburnum, cotoneaster and holly. They were never staked, and we staggered the pruning of the trees. Today they are around 15 to 20m high.

Over a period of ten years, we extended the plantating of stem trees and shrubs in islands or isolated for the most prestigious. A nurseryman I found on Minitel provided us with most of these plants. During a visit to a market an exhibitor of plants attracted our attention - it is what we call a nurseryman collector - seeing our interest, he suggested that we went to visit the nursery the next morning. We returned the car overflowing with exceptional plants: conifers, trees, shrubs and even a plum tree. These discrete or imposing plants added to the setting of the garden.

With the intention of shaping a specific space for roses at the beginning of July we went to a rose nurseryman with roses growing in an open field to choose the varieties we liked.

Some earthworks had to be carried out to flatten the land, create the alleys and at the same time we dug a pond fed by a spring that flowed nearby on the ground, gutter water was also captured, the overflow drains back into the stream below. The watering of the garden is provided from the water of this pond.



In the heart of the field, one, then two, then three perennial beds were created in different shapes. These were filled with perennials, roses and bulbs flowering at different the seasons.

It went without saying, a chicken coop was created; a few chickens, chicks raised to adult size and then geese and ducks.

We had an opportunity to acquire an empty hive; This is the beginning of a spiral towards a new passion that despite the disappointments (varroa mite, Asian hornet) continues with six to eight hives.

The garden is naturally worked, at our own pace, and I'd add that the work is a pleasure work to do which brings satisfaction and well-being, it encourages the need for activity for any individual.

Opening to the public was not our goal but after a few successful years (120 visitors and more sometimes) the preparation is no longer a concern for us as we are committed to keeping everything clean and in order.

In 2019 the opening was scheduled

on the first Sunday of June; the Friday before I mowed the lawns, Saturday was reserved for placing tables and chairs: for the entrance and on the lawn to serve drinks to visitors who wish to do so, but you also must think about solving all the little details that are lacking...



That year we had not anticipated the storm MIGUEL! Overnight from Friday to Saturday the violent gusts tore leaves and branches from the trees and plants, in the early morning it was disappointing to see! Goodbye small details you I had to mow the ground again.

Sunday arrives, the first visitors walk through the garden, the questions are diverse: "how was this garden at the beginning?" "Do you maintain this garden alone? and many other questions about trees, plants.



It is a very convivial, warm and pleasant moment. We open our garden on the same day as that of our neighbours they are neighbouring but different gardens. We are satisfied and happy to contribute to the Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts Association.

Michel and Simone Paumard, Mayenne

https://www.opengardens.eu/garden-detail/?gard_random=oWs4343RbvJ7Hfr&lang=en-GB

This garden is opening on Sunay 28th May 2023 between 10.00 and 18.00. Please cjeck the website page for further details

19th century Château Garden

Located on the top of a wooded hill, near the village of La Rochebeaucourt-et-Argentine in the Périgord Vert, Lasteyrie's seven hectare parkland dates back to the 19th century. We visited the property for the first time in 2014, and despite the fact it was on a dull winters day, we were immediately taken with the park.



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*.

Wisterias and roses are climbing its walls and in the summer, a *Campsis grandiflora*, adorns the terrace with its large, orange, trumpet-shaped flowers.

The grounds provide many areas to explore. The landscaping was mainly designed by a previous owner in the mid 90s and has been enhanced ever since.

The French style garden's most striking features are the topiaries - box hedge shrubs clipped into ornamental shapes. This art requires a lot of maintenance and care. They need meticulous pruning twice a year to keep them in shape and from early spring to the autumn, we check the

leaves regularly to spot the first signs of box caterpillars and treat immediately. If left unattended, the effect will be devastating.



Along with more trees, native and exotic, the garden displays roses and seasonal flowerbeds. Apple trees, kiwis and a very old quince tree can be seen in the orchard near the original green house and the vegetable garden growing in the remains of the old walled beds.



The Japanese garden, has a more modern look and contains beautiful specimens of Japanese maple trees. It was created by a keen bonsai collector to display her art. The bonsaïs are no longer there, but it is now home to an amazing Edgeworthia chrysantha paperbush-the bark is used to make the Japanese mitsumara paper- which flowers in February as well as various

succulent plants and euphorbias. It is still a place of serenity in which to relax.

Since we've moved in, eight years ago, we have worked to keep the park and the various areas healthy and we are still in awe of the beauty of the grounds. We have lost trees and plants along the way, to weather conditions or diseases, and it is always upsetting to have to chop the older ones. But we have replaced them and planted new ones. We've tried new species, some, like an holm oak and a cherry tree, with great success, some not quite so successfully.

However, our proud and joy, and our very own addition to the garden, is the formal pond. It came to life rather unexpectedly, as we decided one day to clear

an area full of brambles, revealing a concrete basin and a stone waterfall, hidden under the overgrown bushes. We immediately saw the opportunity and started to work on the project.



It is now populated with comet and shubunkin goldfish swimming around the amazing assortment of hardy water lilies and the sacred lotus Nelumbo nucifera. All the aquatic plants have come from Latour-Marliac, the oldest nursery of this kind in the world, which inspired the famous French painter Claude Monet.

We have ten varieties, carefully chosen for their

colour, such as Almost Black and Siam Purple or their rarity, such as Ziyu. This is another inspiring place where time slows down and pleasure steps in.



With more than 95 species of trees and plants-we are still identifying and counting them- work never ends in such a property and it will keep us busy for years to come. Future projects include, behind the chateau, a sloping field below the pyramid topiaries which would make a perfect terraced garden and off the Japanese garden, the bamboo grove, waiting to become the next wandering spot.

Nigel and Fabienne Slater, Dordogne

<https://www.opengardens.eu/garden-detail/?>

Please check the website to see the opening dataes for this garden

And finally!!!

If you have enjoyed reading this Newsletter, our latest news and the two gardens featured in this issue, you may wish to find out more about our Association and the work we do to support disabled and seriously ill children here in France.

There are several ways in which you can help or become more involved:

- Have you opened your garden for us in the past and would you consider opening for us again?
- Are you a regular opener for us and if so, will you open again and talk to your coordinator about a date in 2023?
- Become a member of the Association. Annual membership costs 15€ per person and your donation goes to help us make donations to the charities we support at the end of the year. If you would like to renew your membership, or join for the first time, you will get free entrance, using your membership card, to every garden opening for Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts during 2023. You may purchase membership from any member of the Conseil, at the first garden you visit during the year or on our website www.opengardens.eu
- You can visit any of our gardens as they open during the year, and many are willing to accept a visitor by appointment or in response to a phone call. Look on our website www.opengardens.eu under Find a Garden.
- Perhaps you could support a garden opening near you by baking a cake, donating plants or cuttings for sale, or offering help at an opening.
- Or perhaps you may feel willing and able to join the Conseil.

Any of these ways will make a valuable contribution to our fundraising for children and young people in France with disabilities or life-changing illnesses. If you would like to know more please email me at secretary@.opengardens.eu

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