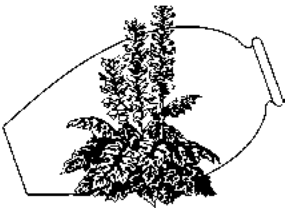
THE Mediterranean Garden

No. 4 Spring 1996

Lotusland

THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN



THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN

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mediterranean climate regions of the world

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The Mediterranean Garden Society is a non-profit-making association which acts as a forum for everyone who has a special interest in the plants and gardens of the region.

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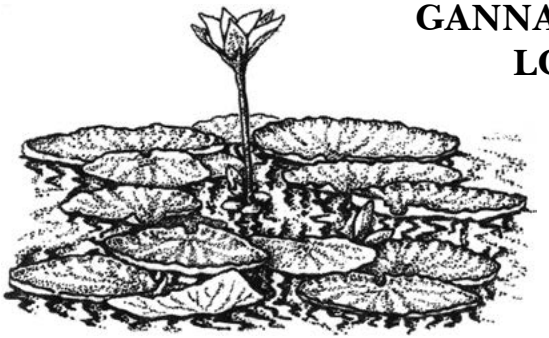


GANNA WALSKA'S LOTUSLAND

Martin Wood

In the spring of 1940, the opera soprano and socialite Madame Ganna Walska decided, prudently as it turned out, not to summer at her French home in the Île de France. Instead, she spent the season in California, in a country she had hardly visited. This change of plan may have been due to the influence of Theos Barnard, also known as the 'White Lama', her then husband, who persuaded her to buy Cuesta Linda, a 38-acre estate in Monticeto, just outside Santa Barbara.

The name Ganna Walska was actually a 'nom de plume', no doubt adopted for the stage. Her real name was Anna Puecz and she was Polish, born in Warsaw in 1883 to a middle class family, although her origins are a little shrouded in mystery. In later years it was the income from the International Harvester shares she received in her divorce settlement from her fourth husband that provided much of the money to run the garden at Lotusland, although Madame financed some of the developments in the garden by selling pieces of her jewellery, of which she had an extensive collection.

Ganna Walska was singularly fortunate for the land on which Cuesta Linda was built had once formed a major portion of a nursery owned by Kinton Stevens. Stevens, who died in 1896 aged just 47, was the foremost nurseryman of his day in California and his first list, published in 1893, could not be surpassed more than fifty years later. It contained all the palms then in cultivation, and even today there are said to be 52 species grown on the estate; there were six species of banana and he could supply four species of pineapple. Kinton Stevens is also credited with being the first man in California to grow

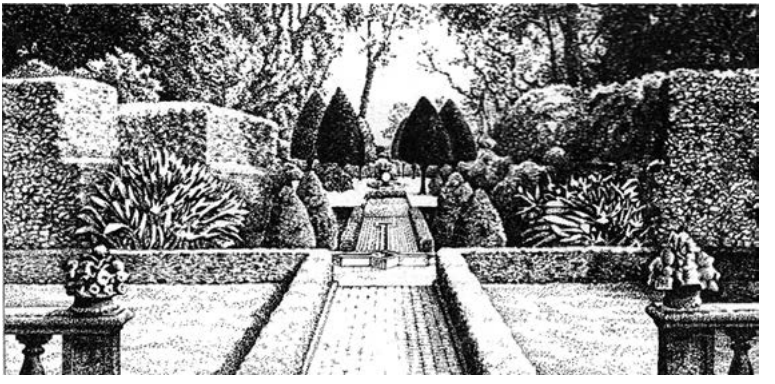
the sacred pink lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*), an event now credited in the estate's name, and he also introduced the candlenut tree (*Aleurites moluccanus*) from Hawaii where he enjoyed good relations with Queen Liliuokalani, the last sovereign of Hawaii.

Having decided to develop the gardens, and lacking detailed knowledge herself, Ganna Walska brought in a consultant landscape architect, Ralph Stevens who, being Kinton Stevens' son, had grown up on the estate. Stevens was a truly remarkable man and Victoria Padilla in her book *Southern Californian Gardens* paid him the compliment of saying that 'no landscape architect used cacti and succulents with more dramatic effect than he', which is undoubtedly true. Perhaps one of the finest examples of this style of planting is the drive at Lotusland, although from the road it seems fairly unremarkable. Pink-washed walls provide an effective backdrop to a bold planting of the blue *Agave franzosinii* [now *A. beauleriana*], the wrought iron gates allowing glimpses of the bold masses of *Sedum pachyphyllum* and tree aloes (*Aloe bainesii*). The drive twists past a very large Japanese garden and through some dense shade from tall kentia palms (*Howea forsteriana*) and king palms (*Archontophoenix cunninghamiana*), set in a sea of ivy and periwinkle, eventually emerging into bright light and another world. On the left hand side the planting is mainly euphorbias, including *Euphorbia milii*, known as the crown of thorns, all of which seem almost unremarkable. But to the right the planting is all cactuses. I must admit that to me cactuses, on the suburban window sill in England, seem rather inanimate things, rather pointless in fact, but here one can see their charms and beauty in another light.

Forests of old man's cactus (*Cephalocereus senilis*) stand tall and proud above masses of golden ball cactus (*Notocactus leninghausii*) which in turn lead on to vaster swathes of golden barrel cactus (*Echinocactus grusonii*), which look like huge well-armed pin cushions. Smaller-growing cactus were not neglected and groups of *Mammmillaria compressa* and bishop's cap cactus (*Astrophytum myriostigma*) are used as foils to lumps of amethyst crystal, set into the red and black lava gravel used throughout as a ground covering. A long drift of snowball cactus (*Espostoa lanata*) runs to an old coast live oak tree (*Quercus agrifolia*), which casts its gentle shade over the guest cottage

and attendant bromeliad garden. Huge plants of *Neobuxbaumia polylopha*, used again to flank the front door like Italian cypress, and a monstrous form of *Cereus peruvianus* [now *C. repandus*], which looks quite grotesque, are used as background material and show up well against the pink wash of the cottage walls. However, the plantings seem to reach a climax as the house comes into view. A truly enormous weeping form of *Euphorbia ingens* towers above the house, leaving an impression that even Hitchcock would have been proud to create. The euphorbia's thick branches, which shoot up into the sky with more grace than one would imagine, fall to earth, curling onto the forecourt like lengths of very thick rope. Little can dispel the impression that the euphorbia is about to eat the house, a task in which it would no doubt be aided and abetted by a large planting of dragon trees (*Dracaena draco*) backing the forecourt. Although often used as a specimen tree, it has rarely been planted in the distinctive masses used here.

Perhaps therein lies the secret of Lotusland. Nothing is used sparingly, but in bold masses and large groups, avoiding any feeling of spottiness, which would have been entirely inappropriate on so vast a canvas, although this is a lesson which many gardeners who work on a much smaller scale would be well advised to heed. There is also another lesson which can be well learned at Lotusland, which seems almost contradictory: that of simplicity. The drive works on the principle of surprise



The Moorish Garden

(perhaps surprise at the bizarre) but after walking through the house out on to the terrace, a broad sweeping lawn gives an essential sense of repose and dignity, providing a fine setting to a group of Canary Island date palms, beyond a glorious Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*), which once grew in one of Stevens' greenhouses. Needless to say, when a choice had to be made between greenhouse and cypress, the cypress won.

The cypress actually lies on the edge, but is part of, the old formal gardens created by the Gavits with the help of Peter Riedel, a Dutch-born Santa Barbara nurseryman and latterly landscape architect. These gardens were in the Moorish tradition typical of the era, and consist of three main vistas laid out parallel to one another. The first, and shortest, is the pebble garden with its two pavements of black and cream pebbles, an entirely Mediterranean effect. Hedges of eugenia (*Syzygium paniculatum*) define the vista, which terminates in a small pool with a statue of Neptune. From the drawing room terrace a second far grander vista opens. This time the hedges are much taller and *Pittosporum undulatum* is used, enclosing lawned beds edged by African box (*Myrsine africana*), leading the eye on to an astrological clock, its face formed from succulents and the hours depicted by the signs of the zodiac cast in bronze. A collection of topiary animals, some cut from juniper, others made from ivy, surround the clock and a few very large pittosporums, planted in wooden tubs and clipped as cones, stand guard and complete the scene. Before reaching the clock one passes a central star-shaped pool, itself encircled by strelitzias, which acts as a fulcrum. A path leads down to the Neptune pool in the pebble garden, but also continues up into the old rose garden (soon to be restored) shaded by a cistus pergola and eventually becoming the cistus garden, partly underplanted by kaffir lilies (*Clivia miniata*). A third path crosses the pergola into the olive grove, providing a background to the astrological clock, a vista terminated by a Moorish tiled wall.

Passing from the astrological clock, with its topiary bears, on to the lawn, the narrowing lawn is terminated by a theatre of terraced grass steps. A hedge of Monterey cypress forms the stage backcloth and a collection of stone grotesques in 18th-century dress, which came from France and are said to be

characters drawn from Voltaire, forms a rather odd audience. Looking towards the house the fine Monterey cypress, with the house behind, is framed against the Santa Ynez mountains in the distance, a truly beautiful prospect. Beyond the theatre a group of the aptly named elephant foot (*Beaucarnea recurvata*) fringes the lawn and a mass of gently curving beds disappear into the distance beneath the shade of some old oaks. These beds form one of the bromeliad gardens and again the trick of planting in vast quantities works to perfection. The red centres of *Neoregelia princeps* appear to be emphasised by their use in large numbers and the grey, silver, white foliage of *Aechmea fasciata*, the old silver vase or urn plant, seem all the richer for such treatment. As elsewhere in the garden, the oak trees are made to play an integral part in the composition, not merely by their presence, but also by the great wads of Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) which hang decoratively, just like sticks of grey candyfloss, from their branches. On the edge of the garden another oak has many baskets of *Sedum morganianum* suspended from its spreading branches, each with a cover to deflect the water which turns them into odd-looking lampshades.

The bromeliad garden gives way to the blue garden. From the cottage lawn a broad swathe of *Agave franzosinii* [now *A. beauleriana*] leads the eye to the entrance, marked by two stone globes on pedestals. A few old Chilean wine palms (*Jubaea chilensis*) give shade far above the head but their massive trunks provide obstacles for viewing the whole garden at a turn. Some Mexican blue fan palms (*Brahea glauca*) [now *B. armata*] and a familiar blue atlas cedar, fringing the drive, provide most of the height and the body to the planting. The garden is simplicity itself for it is in fact formed from a carpet of *Festuca ovina* var. *glauca* [now *F. arvernensis*] and *Dudleya brittonii*, which seems to bring the colour of the agaves rolling through like a river in an uneven carpet of colour and texture. The sand paths which meander through the garden, leading on to the cycad garden, are edged with what appear at first sight to be huge uncut emeralds but which is, alas, merely the slack from a Coca-Cola bottle factory!

Leaving the cool charms of the blue garden, the path leads on through the succulent garden, the beds full of echeverias

Encephalartos longifolius

set in volcanic rock, to the cycad garden, among the last areas of the garden to be developed and probably one of Ganna Walska's finest achievements. Madame did not begin the project until the late 1960s, when she was already quite elderly, and as Ralph Stevens had died in 1958 she engaged Charles Glass to help her. Money seems to have been no object and the whole garden is said to have cost something in the order of $2 million, financed through the sale of the remains of Madame's jewellery collection, including two tiaras. The garden took seven years to develop but was well worth the effort. Created on falling ground, using a small pool and waterfall at the lowest level as a focal point, the cycads are planted on the crests of small hills which enables both the beauty of their natural form and their highly sculptural qualities to be seen to perfection. Surveying the scene from the little pool, surrounded by a group of *Encephalartos longifolius*, a clump of papyrus giving a light effect and the rocks softened by masses of asparagus fern, the whole garden seems to be populated by hundreds (there are said to be five hundred specimens) of enormous green shuttlecocks. This is, however, no mere mass planting but a carefully assembled botanical collection, which is among the finest in the world. The cycads are carefully divided up by geography with Australians in one bed, Asians in another; in the African bed are to be

found no less than three examples of the rarest of all cycads, *Encephalartos woodii*, one of the treasures of the estate.

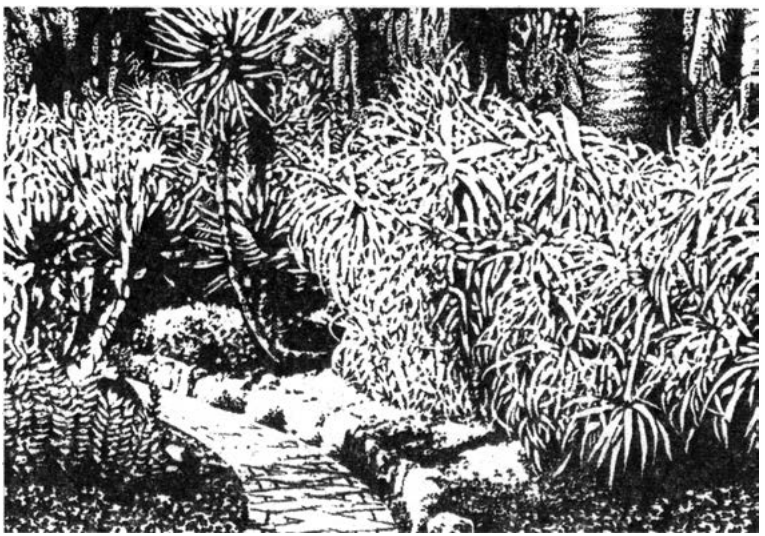
Crossing the drive from the cycad garden, the visitor passes beneath a torii gate into the Japanese garden that (this being California) is on a monumental scale which would seem to have little to do with any sort of garden found in Japan. The lake, complete with a small island, covers perhaps more than half an acre but as you walk round the lake towards the shrine with its two stone lanterns, passing a fine *Catalpa bignonioides* and groups of camellia and azalea, the whole garden seems to take on a repose and dignity of its own. One can well imagine why this was Madame Walska's favourite part of the whole estate. Near the shrine is a large bed planted with nothing but *Agave victoriae-reginae,* considered by many to be the finest of all the agaves, and again it is shown to perfection by a groundcover of volcanic rock. Behind the shrine the path snakes through a jungle of palms such as the European fan palm (*Chamaerops humilis*) and spiny fibre palm (*Trithrinax acanthocoma*) creating a sense, quite deliberately, of discovery.

By now most visitors – and, one hopes, readers of this article – will think there are no more surprises in this garden, but you would be wrong. Of all the gardens created at Lotusland the aloe garden must be the most bizarre and surreal. The word surreal is perhaps apt, for it is surely equal to anything created by Salvador Dali, indeed by comparison lobster telephones seem pretty tame stuff. Again, the use of hundreds of one type of plant in bold masses, such as the tall tree aloe *Aloe bainesii* or the clump-forming *Aloe cameronii* and *Aloe barbadensis* [now considered a synonym of *A. vera*], largely creates the effect. The paths are all terracotta tile, or stepping stones of terracotta, and the beds are all covered with red tufa and black volcanic rock, contrasting with the large kidney-shaped shallow pool painted an almost ghostly blue that forms the centrepiece of the garden. It is surrounded by hundreds of abalone shells, obtained from the fishermen of Santa Barbara, and some giant clam shells, mounted on columns of coral, to form perverse fountains – although perhaps 'sinister' would be a better description than 'perverse'.

It comes as something of a relief to leave this strange and bizarre world and find the relative tranquillity of the

lotus garden, devoted to what is surely the most beautiful of all aquatic plants. The garden was formed from the old swimming pool instead of which, since it was some distance from the house, Madame had a new pool constructed in a more convenient position and of better proportions. The old one was three quarters filled in and used to grow the sacred pink lotus of the Nile (*Nelumbo nucifera*), the leaves towering above the water providing a perfect foil for the exquisitely formed pink flowers. Two further shallow pools were excavated on either side of the lotus pool, so that the whole resembles a butterfly, and these are used to grow colonies of the giant Amazonian water lily (*Victoria amazonica*) with some more familiar water lilies for company. A clump of papyrus (*Cyperus papyrus*) stands out well against the pink washed walls of the pool house, adding a lighter touch to the exotic picture, while the whole network of pools is given an enormous flowery necklace of agapanthus.

One may sit and contemplate this majestic scene from one of the two Moorish tile benches looking across to the old pool house, after which contemplation the old water staircase leads the visitor back to the forecourt. Madame was a keen swimmer



The path to the Aloe Garden, with a group of *Aloe ferox*

even into old age, so a new pool was created much nearer the house, approached through a fern garden. Swimming pools are always something of a problem in garden design but here the pool seems almost like an oasis, surrounded by the rich tropical vegetation of the fern garden. Some huge coast live oaks (*Quercus agrifolia*) provide much needed shade and are also used to provide a home to colonies of staghorn ferns and bromeliads planted in gigantic baskets suspended from the trees by chains. At their feet masses of ladder ferns (*Nephrolepis cordifolia*) and clumps of a type of parlour palm (*Chamaedorea costaricana*) pierce a thick carpet of *Soleirolia soleirolii*, better known as 'mind your own business'.

I am sure the people of Santa Barbara will long remember Ganna Walska, not just for her legendary garden, or her fabled jewels, nor even as a grand and sometimes cantankerous dame, but for her munificence. When she died in 1984, aged 100, the garden had already been handed over to a foundation, generously endowed to ensure its maintenance and preservation. After some initial local opposition and reluctance the estate is now open to the general public (see below), so the ideas used to such stunning effect may be seen by as wide an audience as possible. There is, indeed, much to see and even more to learn. Perhaps Ganna Walska could have wished for no finer memorial.

Note: The estate has a permit allowing 9000 visitors per year and is open *strictly by appointment*. Half of these places are allocated to members of the foundation, the rest for the public. The garden is open from mid February to mid November, Wednesday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. Reservations can be made through the Reservation Office (tel. (805) 969-9990), which is open 9 a.m. to noon Monday to Friday. An admission fee of $10 is charged.

A GARDEN IN AGRILI

Irmtraud Gotsis

My 'voyage of exploration' into Greece and her nature began fifteen years ago. My husband was homesick, and thus we came to Greece and settled in Messinia, near the small port of Agrili, where we built a house about two kilometres from the sea. The awe-inspiring beauty of Greece has been much written of, and it is no exaggeration to say that for all of us it was love at first sight. Indeed, through the passing seasons I have never ceased to be moved by the ever-changing moods of nature: hot, still summer mornings with the endless rasping of the cicadas, azure spring skies in which buzzards circle on their heavy wings, autumn thunderstorms rolling over the sea bringing torrential rain, breathtaking sunsets over the sea, the Milky Way spanning the summer sky in all its splendour while nightingales sing.

When we began to make our garden, though, we were faced with certain problems. In the heat of midsummer the upper layer of soil turned to a powdery sand, blown everywhere by the wind, while when the first rains of autumn came the baked surface of the ground was unable to absorb the sudden heavy flooding and rapidly changed to sticky mud. In spring aphids were everywhere; the orgies of whitefly led to heated discussions as to whether or not we should use pesticides. And, like many gardeners in the Mediterranean region, we discovered that local nurseries did not stock a wide enough variety of species to cover our needs. Before we gave up in despair, however, we were lucky enough to be visited by garden-loving friends from Vienna, who gave us some good advice.

Their first piece of advice was to improve the soil by mowing the luxuriant growth of weeds, then leaving them in place as a mulch. In this way the surface of the soil would be protected from the vagaries of the weather and the mulch itself would act as a fertiliser and would stimulate the micro-organisms in the soil. For, of course, it is the micro-organisms in humus which decompose dead organic material and provide the main source of nitrogen in the soil and which make inorganic minerals available for uptake by plants. With the help of the

humid air of Messinia, our watering and mowing soon began to bring about visible success: the upper layer of the red clay soil changed to black humus and before long we were celebrating the appearance of our first earthworm.

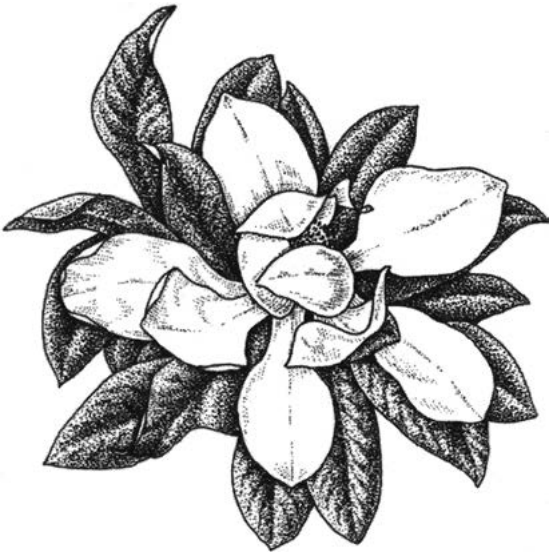
The second piece of advice that our friends gave us was to do without pesticides on principle, in order to foster the equilibrium between pests and their natural enemies. This is the subject of much heated debate, about which I then knew practically nothing. One key phrase emerged, however, which is worth repeating over and over again: healthy plants in healthy soil. I decided to overlook the aphids and not to worry too much about the whitefly. And in the course of time they have ceased to be much of a problem, though it is true that some of their kind still nibble at aromatic leaves or at my 'Gloria Dei' roses. Leaf wilt of the roses has also decreased. However, we have learned to forgo the pleasures of grapes and the big yellow peaches. Overall, the small plant community in our garden has prospered without the use of pesticides and with only the minimum of inorganic fertilisers.

The third piece of advice concerned the lack of suitable plants in local nurseries. Our friends suggested that, making use of the favourable climate of Messinia, it should be possible to raise a variety of plants, either from seed or from cuttings, without too much expense. I was lucky enough to be able to receive seed from the Belvedere Garden in Vienna, to which in return I gave seed of *Nerium oleander*. Friends travelling abroad or living in other continents also helped to supply us with seeds, and later we discovered the large seed merchants of Australia, South Africa, England and Germany. At the beginning my attempts at raising plants from seed were like a game of roulette and my dreams of a paradise with great cascades of flowers often seemed fated to remain unrealised. Nevertheless, over the course of the years many of these dreams became reality. Among the plants thus raised or otherwise acquired that now grace the garden, I note the following:

– *Strelitzia reginae*, the Bird of Paradise. Sheltered by a south-facing wall against the cold winds, it flowers until spring.
– *Acacia dealbata*, the florist's mimosa. It carries its racemes of flowers like small green pellets throughout the year, which in

the warm January sun open into racemes of shining yellow flowers.

- *Bauhinia variegata* opens its orchid-like flowers as early as March, their fragile rosy beauty shining against the light.
- *Solandra guttata*, the Cup of Gold, forms its flower buds in December on the strong, liana-like branches. In early spring the sun opens their cups of flowers.
- *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* also starts to flower in spring, with its large red flowers standing out among the deep green of the foliage.
- *Jacaranda mimosifolia*, a much admired tree from the tropics, produces its long panicles of blue bell-shaped flowers in June.
- At about the same time the heads of *Eucalyptus ficifolia* [now *Corymbia ficifolia*] start to unfold, their long, shining, bright red stamens protruding.
- Miracles of flowers appear with the bottlebrush stamens of *Callistemon*, *Calothamnus*, *Melaleuca* and *Grevillea*.
- *Bougainvillea* hybrids flower almost throughout the year. There is a fascinating new form, with both white and purple flowers on the same branch, double-flowered plants producing great balls of flowers.
- *Nerium oleander* has been known in the Mediterranean for 2000 years. It is pollinated by long-tongued night-flying moths, and growing oleanders from seed enables one to make infinite experiments in order to achieve new forms and colours.
- The light blue flower heads of *Agapanthus* sway in the breeze on one-metre-high stalks, while at the same time the heavily fragrant white petals striped with dark red of *Crinum* × *amabile* complete the beauty of the garden.
- *Magnolia grandiflora* presents us with large white chalice-shaped flowers.
- *Erythrina crista-galli* gives dark to light red peaked flowers on its long branches.
- *Thunbergia grandiflora* is a vigorous climber with panicles of pale mauve flowers on its hanging garlands.
- *Hibiscus moscheutos* 'Southern Belle' has white, pink or dark red flowers the size of a saucer.



Magnolia grandiflora

– Late in summer the flower spikes of *Hedychium gardnerianum* open, golden yellow, heavily fragrant, and with long red stamens.

For all these plants, the *sine qua non* is of course water. We drilled and found water at a depth of 40m, from where it is brought to the surface by an electric pump. Watering has always been hard work, and many are the hours that I have spent going round the garden with the hose. Recently, however, we have installed an automatic drip irrigation system. And our early reservations have turned to pure enthusiasm.

We got a scare in the winter of 1991-1992, when in the early morning hours the temperature dropped to -7°C. There were inevitably some losses: *Cassia didymobotrya* [now *Senna didymobotrya*], *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* hybrids, *Solandra guttata*, some guavas and *Passiflora edulis*, for example. Thus we erected a plastic-covered greenhouse in which to protect some of our spare plants in large pots during the winter months. However, our garden has transformed itself into a small forest, its own microclimate largely protecting it from the vagaries of the weather. And luckily we have never had such low temperatures again.

The garden, once established, also became home to some of the birds and beasts of the Greek countryside. Blackbirds, thrushes, finches and starlings are frequently to be seen. Small owls sit close together on the chimney. High up in the Norfolk pine the magpies nest, hoopoes observe us from a safe height, and through the dewy morning grass stalk wagtails. Occasionally an especially deep bird call is heard, and then the golden oriole may be seen on the branches of the *Grevillea*. Swallows, our summer visitors, take great pleasure skimming the surface of our small swimming pool. The Greek frog, the large common brown toad and the small grass-green tree frog live in our garden. Emerald green lizards bask on warm rocks in the sun, and occasionally we encounter a snake. It is more pleasant, though, to observe the tortoises wandering around, or to see a hedgehog mother with her children. The insect life in the garden is also rich. Spiders abound, in many colours and every size, their webs glistening in the morning dew. Bees hum everywhere, hornets sometimes scare us, the large locust gives us some idea of just how terrible a vast swarm of them would be – though the flowering *Buddleja* is a source of pleasure when it attracts masses of large butterflies.

Plant life and animal life together: there are countless small happenings to be observed in the small world of our garden. And the joy that our little oasis gives us is like a gift from the great beauty of Greek nature.

CLIMBING COUSINS

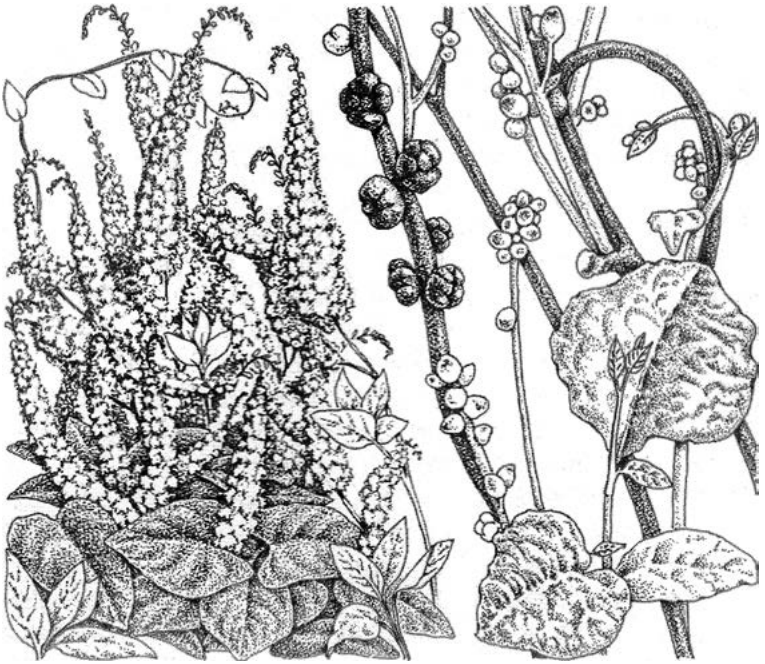
Tom Wellsted

There are few plants of the basella family in general cultivation and indeed the family does not seem to be a large one. The ulluco, *Ullucus tuberosus*, is a food plant in the Andes but two other family members provide interesting plants for the gardener.

Perhaps the best known of these is the Madeira vine, a popular name which tends to conjure up rather Dionysiac visions though the plant is a native of tropical South America. Another popular name for it is Mignonette vine, and this gives some hint of its scent. Its current botanical name of *Anredera cordifolia* is specifically descriptive of its heart-shaped leaves, yet even so the plant may be better known as *Boussingaultia baselloides*. Whichever name you use, this plant is a fast-growing, twining climber which sends its clammy, spiralling shoots up in summer from a tuber. These shoots branch and spread rapidly, maybe to 6m, and so it may quickly cover trellis work, an arch or, as I use it, a large section of hedge (laurustinus, *Viburnum tinus*). The rich green leaves, lighter than those of the hedge, appear in early summer or sometimes earlier, and soon hide whatever the plant is clambering on. Then, perhaps in late October or in November, this dense leaf canopy is itself smothered by the panicles of flower.

I simply cannot understand the descriptions of the inflorescences as given in the few books I have which mention this plant. So far as I am concerned, the full inflorescence is some feet long (try that in metric), maybe one, two or nearly three; it is branched and the branches may be branched too. Short spikes, say 8cm long more or less, spring from the lowest bracts, and proceeding to the tip the bracts get smaller, but the spikes or racemes get longer until the ultimate panicle of perhaps 20-25cm. The whole inflorescence seems alive and writhing when in full flower and covered with myriads of fragrant cream-coloured stars. The individual flowers may be small, but they certainly make up for it in their mass and pervasive scent. For a while at least, but then (at least in recent years) disaster seems

to strike. Wet and cold combined are not to the plant's liking. It can take a little of each separately, but either in excess or too much of both turn the leaves to soft seaweed and the flowers to rust. And in full flower the plant is a mess.



Anredera cordifolia *Basella alba*

Fortunately the tubers seem to put up with anything. Floods, droughts and bitter cold, as in the early 80s, are shrugged off. I have been told that the tubers grow to massive sizes but no one has been able to tell me how big, 30-40 cm or more? Small tubers are produced along the stems and easily detach, readily root and thus soon provide new plants. Planted horizontally and only a third to half buried, the tubers soon heave themselves underground.

Basella alba is a climbing cousin with a number of popular names which suggest its provenance and use. Malabar, Indian

or Ceylon spinach are all current for this species and the genus may be known as Malabar nightshade. I grow the red form, once known as *B. rubra* but now unfortunately suffering under the botanical jargon of *B. alba* 'Rubra'. Seed sold for spinach leaf production I have seen listed as 'Redstem' but my reason for including it as a decorative plant, apart from its merits as such, is that a few years ago I was astounded to find it on sale at a plant and flower stall in Aix-en-Provence at the enormous cost, for three sprouted vegetable seeds in a pot, of some 150F. It is true that the sprouts were about 30 cm tall and all three carried the curious buds which gave rise to the name under which it was being sold, in English, of 'Rosebud'.

An herbaceous plant, it is usually grown as an annual and, as I have never managed to overwinter it, it does seem in a hurry to fulfil an annual cycle – which is very fortunate, for it is decorative at all times. The young shoots start rose-coloured, later deepening. The leaf petioles colour similarly and also grip tightly, but the plant is nowhere nearly as rampant as the Madeira vine. Unfortunately it is a simply delicious salad vegetable: young shoots a foot or more long, and leaves too, have a wonderful earthy, somewhat beetrooty taste. The heart-shaped leaves are beetrooty in colour, too, so that despite cropping it remains very decorative. The flowers are curious as they never seem to open but remain as 'rosebuds' in effect, at least in the 'Rubra' form. Then they turn, very quickly, to black – pitch black – and strikingly glossy seed capsules. A lovely plant. The flower/seed spikes remind me of studded dog collars, 10-15 cm long. The uncropped plant is reputed to make perhaps 10m. Some sight that must be.

Sadly, I do not know of any European source of seed for the red form, but Suffolk Herbs, Kelvdon, Essex list the white *B. alba*. The red form is available in the U.S.A. from Park Seeds, Greenwood, South Carolina. This firm is apparently not export-minded and a United States address is needed. As vegetable seed the plant is not expensive.

ACACIA STENOPHYLLA

Hugo Latymer

There are two views on sunlight in the Mediterranean. One is that exposure to it confers both health and beauty – which is why, of course, so many people come here for their holidays. The other is that it is a lethal light. The sanest view perhaps is that a reasonable amount is acceptable, that light shade is a happy compromise. But when one looks for trees giving light shade for a garden, one finds a restricted list from which to choose. *Parkinsonia aculeata*, the tamarisks, olives are some of the few.

Light-foliaged evergreen trees that provide interest but little substance in winter, so that the most is made of sparse, winter-season sunlight, are even harder to find. Most of the best for the climate give heavy shade – the bay and most conifers, for instance. So you must excuse me for adding an excellent and distinctive evergreen small tree to a palette which is, on the whole, already of a generous size in the Mediterranean.

This tree is *Acacia stenophylla* Cunn. ex Benth, more charmingly known in Australia as the "Dalby Myall" or "Eumong" and in California as the Shoestring Acacia. It is a fast-growing, easily cultivated small tree of up to 10m in height, less in spread, with leaves that are long (to 40cm) and narrow (less than a centimetre), whence the tree's Californian name. Creamy-white balls of flowers open successively among the buds during the early winter for several months. These are followed by interesting long pods, constricted between the rather large seeds. The general effect is sparse, light and delicate, and though not spectacular in any way the tree is always charming. It is a good patio tree for it is clean and tidy. Try it for shadows on a white wall.

I will do my best to send half a dozen seeds to anyone who wants them, germination not guaranteed, though the usual trick of pouring boiling water on the seeds and leaving them to cool should encourage this. Write to: Hugo Latymer, Calle Rafael Blanes, 63, Arta, Mallorca, Spain.

ACCLIMATISATION PROBLEMS: TEMPERATURE FLUCTUATIONS

Piero Caneti

It is said that England and Ireland have a good climate but bad weather; this is true if one considers that along the coasts the minimum winter temperature is similar to that of Sicily. However, because of their latitude and abundant rainfall, evenly distributed throughout the year, sunny periods are scarce. In the Mediterranean Basin, on the other hand, we can say the contrary – the weather is good, but the climate less so.

I am not referring to the more favoured areas, where the temperature rarely goes down to zero or below, but to the coastal areas which are less protected by mountains from the north and east and where for three seasons – nine months a year – there is always a possible risk of weather disturbances. Plants from other countries with a climate similar to the so-called mediterranean climate adapt easily and are able to cope with hot and dry summers, mild autumns lasting until December, winters which are harsh only for 8 or 10 days in January and February and springs which sometimes arrive early.

In the last few years, though, we have had to take into account exceptional weather patterns which seem to call in question this accepted climatic pattern. Often weather disturbances coming from the east, which can be deadly because of the atmospheric phenomena that they create, are stronger than those coming in from the Atlantic. These weather clashes in the upper atmosphere often have effects on the development of plants, not only exotic plants but also indigenous ones. We have only to remember the famous frost of 1985 which caused visible damage to the branches of *Myrtus communis* in the macchie of the hillsides of Tuscany.

Abrupt temperature fluctuations, especially when unexpected and when they follow a period of mild climate, can have very serious consequences and may even cause the death of plants. For this reason it is always wise to plant tender species, in other words those which cannot withstand temperatures below -5°C, in the spring. However, even when this rule is strictly followed

Euryops Virgineus Drawing by Piero Caneti

one can never be sure of avoiding unpleasant surprises; *Euryops virgineus*, for example, being a native to the Cape of South Africa between Bredasdorp and Port Elizabeth, should acclimatise very well in all coastal areas of the Mediterranean Basin and in fact has proved to be able to withstand the harshest of winters even with occasional snowfall. It looks most impressive when flourishing under a white blanket. What it cannot withstand, however, even when fully grown, are late frosts. At the end of March last year in my garden I registered only one night of -3°C. Another frost of -2.5°C occurred on the 1st of April, and again on the 15th of April the temperature fell to -1°C and there was a light dusting of snow during the night. Well, these completely

exceptional conditions were enough to kill my four-year-old specimen of *Euryops virgineus*, 1.20m in height and width, which had been flowering from the middle of October until the end of May since it was very young. These 'exceptional' conditions are becoming increasingly unexceptional.

Another plant which suffered from an extremely cold spring was *Ipheion uniflorum*. The bulbs did not die, but the leaves that once formed a pleasant evergreen carpet disappeared, though luckily they reappeared the following September after the rains.

The reaction of *Colquhounia coccinea* was different, though as we shall see it confirms what we have said so far. It was planted with bare roots in November 1994 and its two stems, then 80cm in height, were cut off 30cm from the ground just above an outward-facing node. These nodes grew visibly throughout December and then came to a stop during the two winter months of January and February in which there were 18 frosty nights, only one of which went to below -4°C. Yet, already by the end of March, despite extremely cold weather, I noticed two well-developed and healthy little leaves. The plant grew rapidly to a height of 1.5m during the good season, but after producing a few flowers at the beginning of November it was struck by the usual temperature fluctuations – once again 'exceptional' - with -3°C during the night. This damaged the orange corolla, browned the leaves and dried their margins.

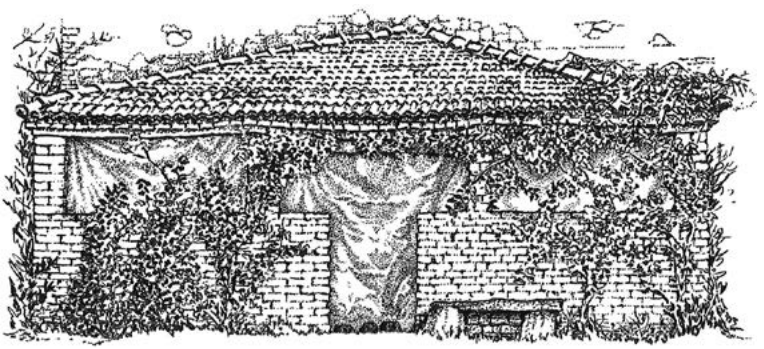
Though the moment of least resistance of a plant can be either spring or autumn, corresponding to the end or the beginning of its flowering season, late frosts are always poorly tolerated. The observation of these phenomena could prove of use to us in order to achieve a 'well tempered' garden.

COPING WITH THE CLIMATE IN TUSCANY

Judith MacDonald

As an Australian from the temperate southern State of Victoria, relocated in central Tuscany midway between Arezzo and Siena, I have found that I can grow far fewer of the frost-tender plants typically associated with a mediterranean climate than I could in north-eastern and central Victoria.

Dealing with droughts, enduring long, hot, dry summers, lacking water: all these remain constants, but I had never imagined the length, the cold and the harshness of the winters here. Earlier brief summer sojourns had not given any hint of the polar conditions that winter brings to this region. I had, of course, noticed that lemon trees were cultivated in magnificent and enormous terracotta pots but had naively assumed this to be purely for ornamental effect.



The *porcillaio* in winter

In Australia I had never had need of a greenhouse for the overwintering of delicate plants, and have no recollection of considering the microclimates offered by sunny walls. I was quite content with the range of plants available which did not require this attention. However, in this zone a greenhouse (*sic*) of some type is obligatory if one wants to carry over from one year to the next plants traditionally associated with a

Mediterranean garden. I make do with the sealed-in old pigsty (*porcillaio*) attached to the western side of the house. It's far from ideal and not 'warm' enough to maintain bougainvillea and datura [now *Brugmansia*] successfully. But it now houses all the succulents, pelargoniums, *Plumbago auriculata*, my one solitary citrus, agapanthus, *Argyranthemum frutescens*, perforce being grown in terracotta pots. Tender salvias have been potted up from the garden to help them survive the winter. There are cuttings of more pelargoniums, *Helichrysum petiolare*, bidens (known here as yellow verbena) and *Argyranthemum frutescens* to renew stocks and to cover any losses.

In Victoria, pelargoniums weathered out winter after winter, getting knottier and knottier. There was a lemon tree to be found in almost every suburban *back* garden (note the positioning), being mandatory along with a fig tree beside farmhouses. Agapanthus grew into luxuriant clumps and was the mainstay of many low-maintenance holiday home gardens. I used *Argyranthemum frutescens* to create immediate bulk and colour when establishing new gardens – their woodiness increasing annually until they had to be relegated to the compost heap. I loved the wild, tumbling hedges of the pale blue *Plumbago auriculata* which had been planted in the older gardens.

I arrived in Tuscany just after the 'historic' frost of 1985. The classic landscape had been ravaged: olive trees had either been cut to the ground or killed outright. Only those in well-protected positions maintained the beautiful traditional goblet form. Oleander, bay, myrtle, mimosa (as it is known here, though as an Australian I much prefer to use only its botanical name, *Acacia dealbata*) suffered similar fates. Temperatures fell to -15°C or more.

Since then winters have been variable and it is difficult to discern any pattern. One can expect at least one snowfall a year which usually disappears within a few days. Frosts can be hard and regular. Some winters the ground may be frozen for a few weeks, even as early as November. I can well do without this, but the local belief is that we need an extended period of freezing temperatures to sterilise and purify the ground annually. I remember a year when there was a series of spectacular hoar frosts which I had previously only read about. Winters are

generally dry but so far this winter it has been wet. Fog and damp are constants. The last two winters have been relatively mild.

This winter has brought a sharp, heavy frost of -5°C in early November, occasional light frosts and an extraordinary heavy snowfall (for the area) in mid-December. The weight of the snow caused extensive physical damage to olives, holm oaks, deciduous oaks, umbrella pines and cypresses. Many of the *Cupressus sempervirens* have lost their beautiful compact columnar forms and are now flayed apart and missing boughs.

Our house, stark and isolated, is situated unprotected on a hilltop among rolling hills of cultivated fields and woodland. The microclimate is relatively harsh for the zone and it has been a devil's job to get any trees or protective cover growing. The soil is heavy clay (and alkaline) and I have limited watering possibilities over summer. Winter brings the icy *tramontana* whipping down from the north, battering the garden and clothing it regularly with frost. In summer strong hot winds punish the already stressed plant cover.

Even within a range of 10 kilometres one can find more benign microclimates. A village garden benefits from the warmth and insulation provided by the mass of walls and paving. Other farmhouses and attached gardens more sensibly located, tucked snugly into the sides of south-facing hills, have more ideal growing conditions. I have a neighbour whose garden has not yet been touched by frost; her *Helichrysum petiolare* still has its end-of-summer form, whereas mine was burnt back to the base in the first week of November. New gardeners to the area may be surprised to discover that some frost-tender plants which are able to be grown in the moderate and urban English climates or in Florence may not survive in a country garden in this area of Tuscany.

One early error I made creating this new garden was not concentrating energy and water supply into developing windbreaks and getting trees established. Another was to plant too many perennials, aromatics and roses. I love to have scent and colour, a wilderness of flowers planted for a continuous display for as long as possible. This was a planting style I brought with me, suited to a more gentle Victoria winter; it

lacked balance here and my garden looked too 'sparse' and low over winter. Lavenders, santolinas, salvias, cistuses and rosemary are not at their best on an exposed hilltop through the cold of winter. I felt that the introduction of more evergreens with a stronger presence over winter was needed to improve the form and structure of the garden.

I shall conclude with some comments on a few plants which I believe are useful in improving the look of a winter garden here. Nothing exotic – my personal experience has led me to retreat into using those plants proven to work in this landscape. Time to experiment later when the microclimate has improved (if this is possible). Humble and common some of these plants may be, but their role and place in a garden should not be undervalued.

Viburnum tinus

Hedging, shrubs and trees

1. Box (*Buxus microphylla*)
It is slow to get started, one needs to be patient, but once established needs little water and tolerates long dry summers. Used as low hedging or to enclose garden beds it can give much needed form to a winter garden. Very much part of the Italian garden tradition and can equally fit in informal gardens. Spheres or other topiary forms planted in terracotta pots brighten up terraces emptied of their summer adornment.

2. Common myrtle (*Myrtus communis*)
This deserves to be more widely planted. A medium to large shrub with dense dark green foliage, small white flowers in spring followed by bluish black berries. It provides a beautiful solid presence in a winter garden. I find it best clipped into tight spherical forms and it can also be used for hedging. In central Tuscany it needs a sheltered site. The foliage is highly aromatic. Known since classical times, with many associations with old myths, it is an essential component in a romantic garden. Dwarf and variegated forms are available.

3. Bay (*Laurus nobilis*)
Kept trimmed as a dense medium to large shrub, bay can look good all through the year (barring a drastic winter). Another aromatic with links back to ancient times in the Mediterranean, it should be an essential component in the garden. Bay is also good for hedging and is more fitting to the landscape than the more commonly used (in my district) laurel, *Prunus laurocerasus*. I don't recommend its use in exposed northern sites.

4. Viburnum (*Viburnum tinus*)
This humble viburnum has always been widely used as hedging in Tuscany. Evergreen, with slightly fragrant sprays of white flowers appearing through winter, it provides some colour and charm when little else is inspired to flower. Extremely tough, it is reliable and tolerates the summers, in need of water only in the year of establishment. Inclined to sucker and self-sow, but not a nuisance. Needs clipping after flowering.

5. Tree germander (*Teucrium fruticans*)
This was much favoured by the Italian landscape designer Pietro Porcinai who used it to create 'en masse' sweeping effects as well as for hedging. This is one grey-leafed shrub which holds up well in winter. I love it for its ability to continue producing the small pale lilac flowers over this period (cultivars have deeper blue flowers). Growth can be open and untidy but it responds to heavy pruning, and can even be cut back to ground level. Reliable, tough and thriving without water. I find it indispensable.

Eriobotrya japonica

6. *Ceanothus thyrsiflorus* var. *repens*
In a period when other evergreen shrubs can be looking a little jaded, this ceanothus maintains its rich, glossy, dark green foliage. It can produce its powdery pale blue flowers early if planted in a protected position. Quickly established, it provides wide-spreading excellent medium groundcover.

7. Persimmon (*Diospyros kaki*)
Single specimens or lines of this tree create absolutely stunning effects in a winter garden – the large balls of orange fruit hang resplendent on the otherwise stark but well-formed tree. Persimmons can also be grown in very large terracotta pots for a rather extravagant statement. I'm not at all keen on eating the fruit – I grow them purely for the ornamental effect. The flowers are apparently toxic to bees. As frosts can damage early spring growth it requires shelter in colder zones. When buying new trees check on fertilisation needs – male and female plants are needed to ensure fruit production.

8. Loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*)
One of my favourite trees. The small white flowers have a pervasive and divine scent in late autumn. Unlikely to form fruits in Tuscany, as flowering and the period of fruit maturation coincide with heavy frosts. It is an evergreen with handsome, broad, dark green heavily veined leaves. In colder areas it benefits from a sunny south-facing position, or being close to the house. Needs some watering to get going but then is drought-resistant.

Flowers in the winter garden

1. Winter Jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*)
In local gardens it is a low deciduous shrub and it has been quite extensively planted which testifies to its toughness and suitability for the zone. With small bright yellow flowers evenly distributed over the slight arching stems it looks fabulous cascading over stone walls. I have even seen a specimen sprouting out of a crack quite high up on a house wall (stone). In this area it flowers through December and January.

2. Candytuft (*Iberis semperflorens*)
The white flowers brighten up entrances from Christmas throughout January and on. Another old rustic much loved and used by the locals. It is usually grown in pots. This is the earlier flowering form and is slightly larger and woodier in growth than the early spring-flowering *Iberis sempervirens*. Both species require little water or attention over summer and are easily propagated by cuttings (it also self-sows).

3. Pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis*)
This can flower through winter in mild and sheltered positions. It is to be found in village gardens and around older more traditional farmhouses. I love the deep rich orange shades which many baulk at. It seems that many of these old garden standards are considered 'common' and are overlooked in the quest to acquire the new and unusual. A good self-sower best left to its own devices. The pungency and colour suit a Mediterranean garden.

4. Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum*)
Another old garden plant often neglected in a garden striving to be fashionable. Although it is usually considered to be an annual, it can be a short-lived perennial in this climate. It has naturalised in old village walls and around all farmhouses, wedged into impossible cracks and crevices. This is the habit which needs to be encouraged. Once established it can flower over mild winters. The brash purples and carmine colours are more resistant to rust.

5. Algerian iris (*Iris unguicularis*)
This is an evergreen, rhizomatous winter-flowering iris which forms thick mounds of thin strap-like foliage. Around 30cm in height. It is happy growing tucked in against walls and in stony ground, tolerating the heat and the dry. There is a continuous show of pale lilac flowers over winter. But beware, slugs and snails enjoy the buds.

Iris unguicularis

6. Hellebores
Helleborus foetidus
This occurs spontaneously in the surrounding woods. A very stately foliage plant at any time of the year, enhanced by the pale green flowers appearing in late winter. Needs semi-shade but tolerates dry conditions.

H. lividus subsp. *corsicus*
Another elegant clump-forming hellebore, looking especially grand in winter when many other perennials have been reduced

to ground level and are looking miserable. Evergreen with reddish-tinged toothed leaves, it provides a bold ornamental effect throughout the year. There are large clusters of pale green flowers in late winter. Best in semi-shade.

Helleborus foetidus

WHERE WATER IS LACKING

Heidi Gildemeister

Our Mediterranean environment is characterised by its mild winters which bring rain and an abundance of flowers. Spring is exuberant, but when it comes to an end a long, hot, dry summer starts. Water reservoirs become empty, springs dry up and the water truck is usually needed elsewhere while water prices soar. Many plants survive these months of hardship by becoming dormant until the first autumn rains reawaken them into a jubilant symphony of shiny foliage and cheerful bloom.

Over the years, I have discovered ways in which to help our gardens survive these trying summers. I shall share a few of them with you. Mostly they are related to the idea of 'how to save water'.

Mediterranean plants have invented a wide range of survival strategies to overcome periods of stress. Many plants have developed ways of reducing transpiration of precious water through their leaf pores. Let us look at these leaves. They may be tough and leathery like those of olive and laurel, or they may be protected by a waxy coating. Grey leaves reflect the sun's intense rays. A range of Mediterranean natives grow in a cushion shape in order to preserve a cool centre within them. Those with long roots may search for moisture far below the surface of the soil. If we choose plants with one or more of these survival strategies, we are on our way to saving water – a lot of it. Many of them are listed in my book.

However, we can go a step further on the path to water saving by grouping the plants in our garden according to their water needs. Exotics such as *Hydrangea* and *Canna* depend on ample supplies and are best located near the house. Other plants make do with weekly watering and can be assembled further away (many *Hebe*, certain roses). And then there is the large group of those Mediterranean natives which manage quite well on their own (broom, carob, coronilla, laurel, oleander or thyme, underplanted with all those bulbs which require summer baking in a hot, dry soil to mature well). We thus ensure that our precious liquid is used according to each plant's needs.

A lawn requires lots of labour and much water. If both are at our disposal, it can be most attractive. But if our empty cistern and the price of water rob us of our sleep, a patio or courtyard, so characteristic of Mediterranean regions, may be a suitable alternative. Both replace a lawn effectively, allowing us to enjoy the outdoors with its cool shade and colourful blooms. Paving can be most attractive and its design deserves careful attention. Pots with flowers such as *Clivia* and *Agapanthus*, scented climbers, a tree in bloom to shade our gatherings, if well-chosen, can make do with little water.

We can also replace a lawn with wide expanses of lavender and rosemary, with caper and gazania or well-chosen succulents. We plant closely and mulch generously to conserve precious soil humidity. A few flowering acacias, Judas or almond trees will cast light shade and give wind protection. In denser shade, periwinkle (*Vinca difformis*) will cover any expanse with its lustrous foliage and palest blue flowers. I brought one plant to my garden where today it covers all those places where nothing else came to my mind. It never requires my attention and is happy with very little water.

Let me tell you, though, which step I consider to be the most important one: getting to know one's garden intimately. In August, for example, we could make a list of those plants which tolerate drought 'with a smile' such as lavender, lentisk, the strawberry tree, pine or the Mediterranean fan palm. Months later we could brave a violent rainstorm to explore where the water carries our precious topsoil and where most damage occurs. Our intention is to let the rain infiltrate the soil, so that it remains as an important reservoir in the subsoil for times of need – a wise step for a waterwise gardener.

Heidi Gildemeister's book *Mediterranean Gardening, A Waterwise Approach* (Editorial Moll 1995, ISBN 84-273-0749-7) was reviewed in *The Mediterranean Garden* No.2. Readers who have difficulty obtaining copies locally might like to know that it can be ordered from RHS Enterprises, Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB (tel. (0483) 211320, fax (0483) 211003). French and Spanish editions should be appearing shortly, with German and Italian editions to follow a little later.

A NEW PEST OF CITRUS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA, THE CITRUS LEAF MINER

Richard Dight

For those of us who enjoy growing oranges and lemons, the appearance of a new pest of citrus trees is causing problems. The Citrus Leaf Miner (*Phyllocnistis citrella* Stnt.) arrived in Malaga Province, Spain in the autumn of 1993, probably from North Africa, and by the end of 1994 had spread throughout the Iberian peninsula. It has since then appeared in Israel, Crete and on the Greek mainland. As well as spreading round the Mediterranean it has also appeared in Florida. It affects all species of citrus and other members of the Rutaceae.

The Citrus Leaf Miner originated in Asia, being fairly common on citrus in China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia and northern Australia. In its native habitat it is often present but not in epidemic quantities as it seems to be kept in check by natural predators.

Obvious symptoms of attack are that new leaves become curled and twisted. Closer inspection reveals that the leaves contain serpentine galleries marked by a black line. In the early stages the leaves have a silvery appearance due to cavities under the leaf surface. In severe infestations the young stems may also be attacked. In my garden almost every new leaf was affected in 1994; these eventually curl up and may die and drop off or have more than 50% damaged tissue.

The adult moth is tiny, silvery-white and 3-4mm long with a wing span of no more than 8mm. The female moth lays one egg on each young, small, tender leaf; after hatching the larva eats its way into the leaf, burrowing under the epidermis and leaving a tell-tale black line of faecal pellets. The mature larvae are about 3.5mm long and pupate on the edge of the leaf which curls up. Egg to adult may take 21 days depending on the temperature; there may be five or more generations in a year.

Control of this pest raises problems because of its rapid reproductive cycle. Chemical control requires an insecticide

with some systemic activity, as the larvae are inside the leaves, while frequent spraying would be needed for reasonable control because of their rapid rate of reproduction.

There are some indigenous parasitic wasp species (Chalcids) that feed on leaf miner larvae and they give hope for biological control. These include *Pnigalio mediterraneus*, probably common over the whole Mediterranean area, as well as *Sympiesis* spp. and *Cirrospilus* spp. which occur in Spain. Parasitic wasp numbers build up during the year and they are most abundant in summer and autumn. These species may not yet be very good at parasitising Citrus Leaf Miner larvae as they are not part of their normal diet.

Trials have shown the effectiveness of various insecticides against the Leaf Miner and the following table lists five that have been approved for use on citrus against Leaf Miner in Andalucia. Some of these chemicals may not be available in small quantities or approved for use on citrus in all Mediterranean countries. The label recommendations should be followed before use.

Chemical	*Name*	*Manufacturer*
Abamectina	Vertimec	Merck Sharpe and Dohme
Diflubenzuron	Dimilin	ICI
Flufenoxuron	Cascade	Cyanamide
Hexaflumuron	Consult	Dow Elanco
Lufenuron	Match	Ciba-Geigy

With all the above in mind, my strategy for combating the leaf miner is as follows:

1. February: apply fertiliser and water if necessary, to encourage as much new leaf growth as possible.

2. February to March: spray new growth with Vertimec every three weeks until new leaves are mature.

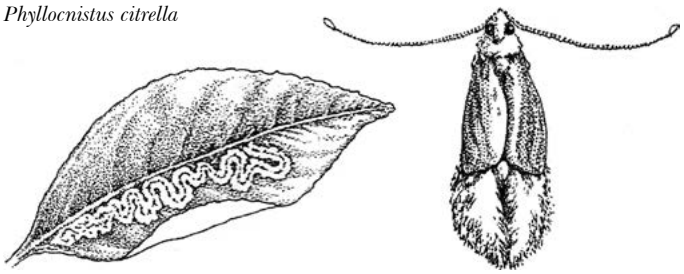
3. In summer: do not apply any manure or fertiliser and not too much irrigation, so as to minimise new leaf formation.

4. During the summer and autumn do not apply insecticide, thus enabling *Pnigalio mediterraneus* to parasitise larvae on any new growth.

The system seemed to work well on mature trees in 1995 which gave my best crops ever, even though there was a lot of leaf damage by the end of the growing season.

Young two-year-old trees suffered badly; the local recommendation for young or newly grafted trees is to keep spraying new leaves as they appear during the season.

Phyllocnistus citrella



Affected leaf *Adult moth × 10*

We are grateful to Mr. S. Sinanos of Agrevo (Hoechst/Schering) SA for directing us to a Greek Ministry of Agriculture report on which these drawings are based. Agrevo is marketing Hostathion (triazophos) in Greece for the treatment of citrus leaf miner. We would be interested to hear of products available in other countries.

MEDITERRANEAN BED AND BREAKFAST FOR GARDEN LOVERS

Edna Price

A Bed and Breakfast for Garden Lovers scheme exists in the UK, which publishes a directory (actually a leaflet) of accommodation where there is 'a love of gardens and gardening'.* I cannot help thinking that something similar covering the Mediterranean would be ideal: here's the gist of my thoughts:

1. Everyone interested to get in touch with the organiser. I'm willing to take this on unless someone else comes forward.

2. The following to be provided:
   a. Photo or drawing of house and garden (drawings are easier to reproduce).
   b. Description, prices, etc.
   c. Details of any guides listing the house – guarantee of standard?
   d. List of gardens to visit within, say, 50 km.
   e. Flora and fauna of particular interest.
   f. Any other attractions in the area.

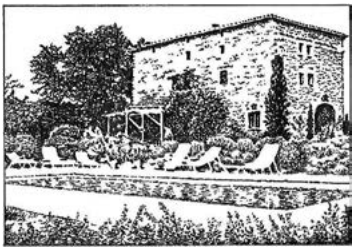
3. Obviously some financial contribution to cover production, promotion and distribution costs would have to be made – I've no idea how much. The UK B & B for Garden Lovers leaflet came to me free but I sent an International Reply Paid Coupon and an s.a.e.

4. Promotion and Distribution – a blurb and our leaflet could be sent to relevant periodicals in all countries with MGS members. A copy of our leaflet could be inserted with the MGS journal.

* Available from Mrs. S. Colquhoun, Handywater Farm, Sibford Gower, Banbury, Oxon. OX15 5AE (s.a.e. appreciated).

5. Language – English to start off and perhaps others later?

Sample entry



Edna and Ted Price
Mas de la Fauguière
St. Nazaire des Gardies
30610 Sauve
France

Tel: 33.66.77.38.67
Fax: 33.66.77.11.64

Old 'magnanerie' (silkworm nursery) surrounded by vineyards and garrigue on the edge of the Cévennes. Nearly two acres of young gardens and orchard with more than 100 old scented roses, a particular passion. Swimming pool in grounds, tennis and riding nearby.
1 double, 1 twin, each with bathroom – 400FF incl. breakfast for two sharing. No dogs (we have two ourselves), no smoking.

Guides – Gîtes de France, Chambre d'Hôtes et Gîtes Prestige, Guide des Maisons d'Hôtes de Charme en France.
Gardens to visit – Bambouserie de Prafrance (Anduze, 10km), Jardins des Plantes, Montpellier (oldest in France, 45km), Jardins de la Fontaine, Nîmes (15 hectares, 1740).
Flora and Fauna – Camargue (50km), Cévennes National Park.
Other attractions – Roman towns (Nîmes and Arles) and monuments (Pont du Gard), medieval hill villages, Huguenot strongholds, grottoes…

Obviously there's a lot of hard slog ahead if it looks feasible but I think the benefits to owners and guests would be worth it.

A MEDITERRANEAN LANGUAGE?

Derek Toms

Diana Farr Louis writes (Letters, *The Mediterranean Garden* No. 3) that 'although an enthusiastic gardener' she is 'uneducated in botanical language', and wonders if it be too much to ask the journal 'to translate the Latin names into more familiar names as well'.

Common names, of course, do occur throughout *The Mediterranean Garden*, which is not an academic journal. Contributors, like the rest of us, tend to slip into the vernacular when well-known plants are concerned. It seems a little unnatural always to refer to *Cercis siliquastrum* when everybody knows it's a Judas Tree. But a lot of Latin names also pepper the pages, and Diana Farr Louis's complaint should be taken seriously, for it is one which is voiced by a great many gardeners.

The use of common names, however, is not always the easy option it appears to be. *Arum maculatum*, for example, is known by a multitude of colloquial titles throughout Britain, often regional in their distribution (and sometimes rather vulgar!). Thus, if common names were used, two gardeners from different ends of the country might not realise they were talking about the same plant. Conversely, the same name (Mother of Thousands, for instance, in English, or 'Fouli' in Greek) can be applied to two or more unrelated species. So if you ask for a plant using the common name, you might not end up with the one you wanted.

If a term is familiar, it is because the plant it refers to is familiar. But if you have come to Mediterranean gardening from a temperate climate, you will have had to leave a lot of old familiar favourites behind since they just do not thrive here. Many of the plants which are discussed in this journal (because they are likely to tolerate our local conditions) are decidedly unfamiliar – certainly as far as I'm concerned. Never having lived in Australia, it really doesn't help me to be told that *Acacia cardiophylla* is an alias for the Wyalong Wattle. Though I suppose it's nice to know in case I'm ever visiting a garden where the proud owner confronts me with 'Whaddya think of my Wyalong

Wattle, eh?'. At least I shall know which direction to look. But for somebody who has difficulty in remembering the names of people I'm likely to meet in the street, the prospect of having to learn more than one name for every new plant I hear about is daunting.

Some common names just seem to confuse the issue. Why is *Achimenes* called the Hot Water Plant, since it neither produces hot water nor grows in it? Wouldn't it make life simpler if we were content to call it plain *Achimenes*?

The task of translating Latin names into common names in a journal like *The Mediterranean Garden* could be quite an undertaking. After all, its readers speak several different mother tongues, and perhaps not everyone is especially interested in the common English name. Printing entries like '*Pistacia lentiscus* (mastic tree, lentisk, lentisco, skinos, skinari, trislja, etc.)' would add more to the size and cost of the journal than to its readability. Not to mention the expense of acquiring sufficient reference books to do the job properly. Would it be too much to ask readers to keep a book handy and look up the common name themselves? After all, if you can't find it in the RHS Dictionary, it's a pretty safe bet that the editor doesn't know it either.

Fortunately the problem is not as great as some people imagine. For a start, the great majority of plants, from *Abutilon* to *Zinnia*, are generally known by their Latin names, so the problem doesn't arise at all. It is also a popular misconception that you need to be educated in 'botanical language'. All you need to do is to learn the names – which are not really any more difficult to memorise than any other names. And if you're not sure about the pronunciation, don't be put off – gardeners have been mispronouncing Latin for years, but we still manage to understand one another.

Once you get into it, you may well find that Latin names are a lot more fun than you expected. Did you know, for example, that *Alyssum* means 'without madness' – as it was once thought to cure insanity? Neither did I, until I read the Chilterns Seed Catalogue*, which is a mine of fascinating information with

* Catalogue available online from chilternseeds.co.uk.

which to impress your fellow gardeners. Most Latin names tend to roll off the tongue in a rather satisfying manner (those that don't you can think of as a challenge). *Santolina chaemaecyparissus*: now there's a name to conjure with! (the 'ch' is pronounced as 'k', so I'm informed). Whereas nobody is likely to stand in front of the bathroom mirror practising 'Lavender Cotton'.

But the great benefit of knowing Latin names is that, when you don't find the plant you're looking for in your local garden shop (where they probably can't reliably identify their plants in *any* language), you can always send off for seeds or browse through plant catalogues from elsewhere. If you know the Latin name, this is fairly straightforward – but tracking down plants with a common name can be considerably more difficult. This applies equally well, of course, to looking plants up in books.

Having said all this, we should also stress that it would be a great tragedy if common names dropped out of use altogether. They are part of country plant lore – that body of traditional knowledge which has been built up over the centuries by ordinary people living in close contact with nature. This is particularly crucial in the Mediterranean, where in recent years so many young people have migrated to the cities and turned their backs on the accumulated wisdom of their forebears. In many areas the colloquial names for plants are now remembered only by a dwindling number of ageing villagers. Happily, some researchers are trying to record these common names before they are lost for ever. Let's hope that future editions of *The Mediterranean Garden* will be able to publish their findings.

THE GARDEN IN SPRING

Jenny Bussey

POT PLANTS

As the spring starts, it is a good time to repot plants that flowered in the winter. Use fresh, free-draining compost and pots only a little bigger than the previous ones. Remove dead flowers and leaves and, if the roots are very matted, these may be cut back a little too. After repotting, put in a shady place and do not overwater. Once new growth is obvious, move to a lighter position and increase watering. Start to feed with a high potash liquid fertiliser once a week when flowers begin to develop.

There is a whole range of bulbous plants that do well in pots and flower from April onwards. *Lilium regale* is particularly beautiful and sweet-scented, and there are also many modern hybrid lilies to choose from. Plant three or five in a large pot in a rich compost and water regularly, increasing the amount as growth starts and adding liquid fertiliser when the flowers form. Hippeastrums, however, are best planted in individual pots, again with a nutritive soil mix.

Lots of ordinary garden plants do very well in pots on a patio or balcony. The many varieties of pelargonium, or geraniums as we like to call them, nearly all have a long flowering period if kept watered and fed regularly. If you are bothered by the Geranium Bronze Butterfly's caterpillars, dead-head your plants regularly, and cut any damaged stems back to clean 'wood', disposing of the bits in a sealed bag.

Many annuals make a cheerful show in pots and the trick is to combine flower and leaf colours and shapes to advantage. It is best to keep to a few varieties and mass them in groups, which avoids the bitty look you can get with too many different plants together. Annuals can be sown directly in your prepared pots in March – you may need to give them some protection from sun, wind and rain when they germinate. Do not overfeed or you will get leaves at the expense of flowers. Once in bloom, dead-head regularly to keep them producing more buds – if they set seed, they will die down. Plants such as petunias, *Begonia semperflorens* [now *B. cucullata*], pansies and lobelias that get straggly with age

can be cut back quite hard and will give another good flush of flowers later.

Patio and miniature roses are also a delight grown in containers. When sold in pots they can be transplanted at any time so long as care is taken with watering until they are well established. They will need regular feeding, using a high-potash liquid fertiliser to encourage repeat flowering. A mulch of some sort helps to keep plant roots cool and I find small and medium riverbed pebbles look attractive and stop mud splashing when you water. There are many other shrubby plants and even small trees that will adapt to life in a pot as long as you make sure the pot is the right size – big enough for the plants to develop well, but not so big that the soil gets too wet or too dry and the roots suffer.

THE FLOWER GARDEN

If you planted spring-flowering bulbs last autumn, you will be enjoying their blooms in these early months of the year. As the flowers fade, dead-head them and feed the bulbs with good general flower fertiliser to build them up for next year. Do not remove the leaves until they die down naturally, then cut them off at ground level. If your bulbs are planted deeply, they will not need to be dug up, especially those well adapted to the Mediterranean climate. However, one can sometimes lose bulbs to mice, rabbits and other pests. Most of the South African bulbs that do so well – freesias, ixias, sparaxis, etc. – will self-seed if you do not dead-head them, thus increasing their flower-power by leaps and bounds from year to year. These all need to be dry in the summer months, so do not have them where your irrigation system is in use.

All the daisy-flowered plants perform well in our climate. Again, many of them originated in South Africa. They are all easily propagated, either by seeds or by cuttings which, as the soil warms up in the spring, will often root where you want them to grow. Trimming the plants over when flowering slackens off will often provoke a repeat flowering later in the year. Generally, they are not fussy about soil and most will survive with little more than rainfall once established. They may not look good in the heat of summer, but will bounce back

again in September when it rains. Among the annual daisies, sunflowers add height and interest to your garden – they now come in several colours, often with branching stems, and can be sown *in situ* in April.

As shrubs, trees and climbers come into flower in spring, we can enjoy their colour and scent. Remember that as soon as flowering has finished you should prune and feed them to encourage the new growth which will bear next year's display. Roses also need regular attention. Apart from cutting back the flowered shoots by a third to a half, give them a granular slow-release high-potash fertiliser every two to three months to keep them growing strongly.

Unfortunately, the warmer weather also wakes up the pest population. If you do nothing, predators will often reduce these populations to acceptable proportions in a very short time. If you spray too assiduously you deplete the 'good guys', either directly with the pesticide or by starving them of their normal food, and you are left having to spray for the rest of the summer. Fungal diseases, though, are another matter and it is worth being on the lookout for the first signs of mildew or rust. If you use a copper sulphate spray (Bordeaux mixture) at this early stage, it is often enough to stop problems for most of the summer. However, some roses seem to be particularly prone to black spot, say, and may need regular treatment.

If you have not already organised your watering system, get it done soon while the weather is not too hot. Check that any tubing installed last year is still working properly and replace outlets or split tubing as necessary.

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

How much you plant in the way of vegetables depends on how much water you have available, and how much time you want to spend. Generally I am over-ambitious at this time of year and find that a lot I sow or plant now does not reach the table.

Sowings of root crops and salads germinate well in spring – providing ants do not carry off your seeds. To prevent this I either dip the seeds in something smelly like paraffin before sowing or, very successful with carrots, I pre-germinate them indoors and fluid sow them just when they show roots.

Seedlings of onions, lettuce, cabbage, tomatoes, aubergines, courgettes etc. are often available in local markets in March and April. These plants need wider spacing than in Northern Europe and, of course, more generous watering and feeding. Prepare your beds well, adding well-rotted organic matter to increase water retention, and organise your method of watering before you plant (troughs, flat beds with a ridge round them for flooding, or drip or 'oozy' tubing). Overhead spraying of vegetables is not only wasteful, but you will probably have all sorts of problems with fungal diseases too.

THE FRUIT GARDEN

Many of us 'inherit' Mediterranean fruit trees, such as citrus, olives, carobs, almonds and vines, when we come to live here. The last four all originated somewhere around the Mediterranean, but citrus were brought from China and really prefer a climate with a high summer rainfall. This is why they require summer irrigation, which would be the death of the other plants mentioned.

Spring is the time to prune citrus trees, after the cold and wet weather is over. Cut right out all damaged, dead or crossing branches, and those vigorous shoots that head straight up in the middle of the tree – they are taking the goodness that should be directed into the fruiting branches. Mature oranges, lemons and grapefruit trees may not need pruning every year, but mandarins tend to get very bushy and need thinning out each spring to allow sun and air to enter the centre of the tree. This helps flowering and the setting and ripening of fruit, and prevents pests and diseases from building up. Oranges fruit on two to three-year old wood, the others on wood produced the previous year, so the idea is to encourage young growth for fruit in the future.

Citrus trees in many areas are now seriously affected by the leaf miner, *Phyllocnistis citrella*. However, in the Valencia region there is evidence that the larvae are being parasitised by *Cirrospilus pictus*, *C. vittatus* and *Pnigalio mediterraneus*, and the advice being given is NOT to spray either young or mature trees at present. Let us hope that these predators give adequate control of this damaging pest.

SUNDRIES

Les Journées de Courson

The Journées de Courson, the foremost French flower show, will be held at Courson (about 35km south of Paris) from 17-19 May 1996. On Friday 17 May during the morning entrance is restricted to gardening professionals, while on Friday afternoon from 2.30 p.m. as well as on Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 May (10.0 a.m. to 7.0 p.m.) the show is open to the public. Admission: 60 FF. For more information, telephone (0331) 6458 9012.

Vivaio Corazza

One of our members, Gianluca Corazza, has established a nursery specialising in plants for enthusiasts. He has young trees, shrubs, succulents, aquatics, bulbs, etc., with the emphasis on plants which are suitable for our climate. The catalogue is free and bilingual (Italian and English) and those interested should write to: Vivaio Corazza, C.P. 103, 55045 Pietrasanta (LU), Italy.

Wild Flowers in the South of France

Tom Wellsted notes that a *Catalogue des Plantes Vasculaires des Bouches-du-Rhône* is available from the Natural History Museum of Marseille; also that the Natural History Museum of Avignon organises an annual exhibition of living wild plants in May, with over 1000 species from the Vaucluse.

Members in the south-west of France may be interested in the activities of La Salicaire (*Association Botanique de la Vallée de la Garonne*). In addition to publishing a quarterly review, the association organises plant study and garden trips in the region, as well as conferences, workshops and a plant fair in May. For full details, contact: Colette Soubrier, La Présidente, La Salicaire, BP 14bis, 82210 St. Nicolas de la Grave, France.

BOOKS

Le Jardinier de Provence et des régions méditerranéennes, by Arnaud Maurières and Jean-Marie Rey, photographs by Eric Ossart. Published by Editions Edisud, La Calade, RN7, 13090 Aix-en-Provence.

Gardeners in southern France and similar regions will welcome this book by experts well known in this country. Plantsman Jean-Marie Rey runs the largest private nursery in France, at Lalonde near Hyères. He has contributed nearly forty pages of plant lists of well-adapted varieties conveniently organised by use ('shade trees', 'groundcover', etc.) Besides indicating size, climate zone, soil type and flowering season, he has added a particularly helpful column of special remarks. Arnaud Maurières, as garden designer, wrote the bulk of the text which has a far wider scope than do most practical gardening books, since he begins with general considerations on landscape, climate and site. Four garden plans help determine style: a 'colonial' garden (for plant collectors in sub-tropical climates); a suburban lot, a town courtyard and a terraced hillside. There are suggestions of gardens worth visiting from botanical collections to contemporary designs, as well as addresses of nurseries, plant fairs, and other sources region by region. A selection of 'fiche techniques' tackles specific problems such as the pruning of olive trees, or getting agapanthus to flower. These pages are illustrated with drawings, whereas the rest of the book has lush colour photos by Eric Ossart, who is both photographer and garden designer in his own right.

This book does not pretend to completeness and the beginner gardener will be left with many questions. For example, the pruning of fruit trees, all varieties, is covered in a few short paragraphs. But it is the only practical book now available specifically adapted to the wide variety of local conditions. And the only one in French – though organised in such a way as to permit easy consultation even for those whose French is not perfect. There would still be room for an even 'earthier', hands-on gardening book about the how, what, when, why and where of gardening in Provence.

This volume provides, however, an invaluable tool for a whole class of desperate people: gardeners transplanted from other climates who are learning rude lessons about the Mediterranean world. It will save them from many disappointments as they make plans and experiment in their new circumstances. And, finally, it is a great pleasure to read intelligent reflections which link the culture of plants to culture as a general human experience, the way we live in and perceive the Mediterranean world.

Arnaud Maurières recently founded the innovative École Méditerranéenne des Jardins et du Paysage in Grasse, on the French Riviera, which trains serious gardeners and horticulturalists and helps in the renovation of historical properties; it also offers short sessions and workshops in English. Proceeds from the sale of the book help support the school, certainly a worthwhile cause.

Louisa Jones

LETTERS

Derek Toms has asked me for my view on exotic, drought-tolerant plants with regard to a Mediterranean plant register (see 'A Mediterranean Plant Finder', Heidi Gildemeister, *The Mediterranean Garden* No.1).

To the Mediterranean gardener, exotics could either be all those plants which are native to regions beyond the Mediterranean Basin or, on the other hand, all those which do not come from a mediterranean-type climate. Sometimes people simply consider those plants as exotics which (regardless of their native lands) require a lot of water and care, or those which may be too delicate to be planted in the open.

Now that we can more or less agree on what 'exotic' means, and coming back to the question, I assume that the plant register is meant to give guidance to Mediterranean gardeners on a suitable choice of plants.

Generally speaking, I would say 'what suits the garden suits today's gardener'. But to be more specific, I feel that it is a question of priorities – what are our needs, and what are the garden's needs? Do we require a quick cover to protect bare ground, do we need plants which tolerate shade or shallow soil and are easily cared for, do we look for drought-tolerant vegetation, do we want to have flowers at a certain time of the year or do we need plants easily propagated to save on expense? I could go on enumerating these limiting conditions.

In my own garden I had to give priority to groundcover in various layers, since upon my first arrival I found much bare soil. After a few years lush vegetation would prevent the soil from drying out and from erosion, and would combat weeds, in line with today's restricted availability of labour. Beauty and harmonious landscaping were also foremost in my mind. Thus, alongside all the mediterranean-climate natives I include every exotic which serves these purposes, is drought-tolerant, tells me by its vigorous growth that it likes the conditions I can offer it, fits discreetly into the surrounding countryside and, of course, is not weedy or, worse, invasive.

However, I have an area in our garden where exotics are not admitted. Here we have carefully restored old terraces, tended

their centuries-old olive trees, lentisk bushes and such rare endemics as *Rhamnus ludovici-salvatoris* and *Cneorum tricoccon* which grow beneath them. Here we plant only natives from the Mediterranean Basin such as *Arbutus*, *Cistus*, *Coronilla*, *Cyclamen*, *Helleborus*, *Paeonia cambessedesii*, *Phlomis* and *Viburnum tinus*, or the climbing *Clematis cirrhosa*, *C. flammula* and *Lonicera etrusca*, all of which suit the mood of the 'natural landscape'.

Heidi Gildemeister,
Balearic Islands

In his article 'Kankerbos' (*The Mediterranean Garden* No. 3), Tom Wellsted speaks of the difficulty of finding *Sutherlandia frutescens*. It may be useful to your readers to know that this plant is included in the fine catalogue of Dino Pelizzaro, 290 Chemin de Leouse, 06220 Vallauris, France (tel. 93641848).

Piero Caneti,
Velletri, Italy

In *The Mediterranean Garden* No. 3 Marjorie Holmes refers to *Rosa bracteata* as being hard to come by and the editors ask whether anyone knows of a supplier. *Rosa bracteata* is supplied by the David Austin rose nurseries, and is listed in their most recent (1995) catalogue – which anyone who is interested in roses should try and get hold of, as it holds out so many possibilities. The plants arrive in perfect condition, with great promptness and no fuss. I believe there is a minimum charge for EC customers, although the difficulty is not that one spends too little, but that one is almost certain to spend too much. The address is: David Austin Roses Ltd., Bowling Green Lane, Albrighton, Wolverhampton WV7 3HB, U.K.

Liadain Sherrard,
Euboea, Greece

I believe that *Rosa bracteata* is still available from specialist rose growers, for example La Roseraie de Berty, 07110 Largentière, France. However, for the majority of members of the MGS

a much better supplier would be David Austin Roses (tel. 01902375027, fax 01902372142). Their current catalogue, valid until the end of April 1996, lists this rose at £7.95. They are experts at sending roses to all parts of the world, though they will only do this to a minimum order of £25.00. Some countries, even within the European Union, may require phyto-sanitary certificates and I am told that Greece is particularly difficult in this regard.

J.M.Singleton,
Salernes, France

Among the 'Roses That Do Well' on the Costa Blanca is *Rosa banksiae* f. *lutea*. Planted from containers, it flowers from the first year. By the second year it has spread over three metres. Mature plants cover an area of many square metres and flower profusely. In the colder inland valleys it may lose its leaves in cold weather but seems resistant to a few degrees of frost.

Roses appear to like the clay soils of this area, though they dry out to concrete in the summer.

Climbing roses are particularly valuable, rapidly covering large areas of wall or terraces. Amongst the hybrids, 'Kordes Perfecta' is robust with wonderfully large flowers, cream-edged carmine, beautiful from the bud stage till fully blown. The foliage is glossy and it seems resistant to fungal disease. An older 'good doer' hybrid is 'Mme. Butterfly': a well-formed delicate pink with a lovely scent. Its one failing is that pollen beetles can disfigure the flowers. Partially repeat flowering in the autumn, it has reached the top of a 3.5m wall in four years. So far it has been unaffected by the common fungal diseases of this area.

Hybrid bush roses which have been a great success, from one to two metres high, are 'Summer Holiday', a vibrant colour, 'Michelle Meilland', delicate pink but scentless though an excellent cut flower, and 'Barbara' which seems robust enough to be a large shrub rose. All these are repeat flowering from the end of April to December. Fungal diseases have not been a problem, as they are with some other varieties.

As for *Narcissus*, it is not surprising that certain *Narcissus* grow, flower and increase with ease in this part of Spain, considering

the origin of some of the species which have been used to create modern hybrids. Having said this, it must be recognised that many of the large flowered varieties bred for Northern Europe don't survive the first year. They don't like the summer heat.

Of those that do well here, among the first to flower during February and March are the *N. cyclamineus* hybrids such as 'February Gold' and 'Charity May'. Their exquisite forms, with reflexed petals, are a pleasure in the early spring. Planted in 1985, these varieties have flowered every year with a minimum of attention. A high potash feed before and after flowering is all they need for yearly success. Disease has been absent.

Among the newer Jonquilla Narcissus 'Susy' is an excellent yellow with an orange-red cup, strongly growing and sweetly scented. Another dwarf gem is 'Lemon Glow', with a sweet and unusual scent, which has two to five pendant flowers of lemon-yellow delicately poised at the top of 20cm stems.

These are only a few examples which I have found to be excellent garden plants among the dwarf hybrids. For success plant by the middle of October – the earlier the better. Initially these bulbs are expensive, but they have proved to be a good investment. Apart from being good garden plants, they are excellent cut flowers for smaller arrangements.

J.M.Calderwood,
Lliber, Alicante, Spain

Hugo Latymer is too pessimistic about the prospects for 'Plant Finders' in France and Italy. I understand that there is already one in France, called *Où trouver vos plantes*, published by the Société Nationale d'Horticulture de France. In March of this year the first edition of *Il cercapiante* is due to be published by Mondadori in Italy. Whether they give much space to Mediterranean plants is another matter.

I might add to Marjorie Holmes's list of 'Roses That Do Well' – which seems to fit Central Italy as well as Corfu – 'Clair Matin', 'Lady Hillingdon', and any of the English roses (the ones developed by David Austin). On where to find *Rosa bracteata*: in Central Italy it should be easy. Fratelli Margheriti (Loc. Monte S. Paolo 50, Chiusi (Siena) fax +39 578 21411) list it in their

current catalogue and do mail orders. I've found mislabelling a problem, but the *R. bracteata* I bought there some years ago was indeed what it should be. Also Rose & Rose Emporium, Contrade Fossalto 9, 0515 Fabro (Terni), near Orvieto, lists *R. bracteata* in an old catalogue I have and they do mail order as well. They have a very extensive collection of roses, especially old-fashioned and botanical. If you're in the Volterra area, the nursery of Venzano, Mazzolla, 56048 Volterra, tel. +39 588 39095, also lists *R. bracteata*. I don't think they do mail order, but the nursery is well worth a visit, as it has a very interesting collection, with an emphasis on aromatics and Mediterranean perennials, and the owners are very helpful and knowledgeable. They are also native English-speakers; I'm pretty sure, if you don't speak Italian, that English also wouldn't be a problem at Rose & Rose Emporium and – at least for written communication – with Margheriti.

Diana Farr Louis's problem with wormy olives: it sounds like olive fly (*Dacus oleae*). If you can get, perhaps by mail order, an appropriate sticky trap, hang it in the middle of your grove, and when you trap about 10 of the adult flies a week it's time to take action. Otherwise, the thing to do is to start checking the olives, probably in August, to see whether you find little triangular scars which are the mark of the female fly having laid an egg in the olive. When about 5% of a sample of the olives is so marked, it is time to spray with dimethoate-38 (Roger L 40), 10 grams to 10 litres of water. (A few varieties of olive don't tolerate this pesticide.) A second treatment may be necessary before harvest, if you're in an area of heavy infestation. It's a bigger problem for table olives than oil olives, and in coastal areas and the south. (I should add that spraying recommendations are book-learning on my part, as it isn't necessary for the oil olives I raise in the Tuscan hills.)

Finally, the ongoing Mediterranean compost debate: there's no problem in my experience, provided you have sufficient space and sloth. You'll need an area of at least two metres by three metres. Divide this in two, and in one half start throwing household waste, chicken feathers, wool, grass clippings, weeds – anything, provided it isn't too woody. Don't bother with accelerators, turning the heap, etc., and don't expect quick action. If it hasn't rained in months you might throw a bucket

of water on it, but that's all. When the pile has gotten just too monstrous, start throwing the top layers on to the other half of your space. You will be pleasantly surprised to find that at the bottom of the old pile there is quite a supply of good compost, with manure worms and all. If you've dismantled the old pile in summertime (which you should aim for), transfer some of the manure-worm-rich bits to the new pile to give it a good start, and cover the already composted stuff with clear polythene – the kind you use to protect plants in winter. If it seems dryish, first throw a bucket or two of water on it. The hot Mediterranean sun will sterilise everything under the plastic, killing even the toughest weed seeds and all the fungus and bug eggs. No problem, this way, with remembering not to put couch grass on the compost heap. I keep the plastic on for a month, a rather arbitrary period, and I've had no trouble from weeds, insects, diseases, etc. from compost treated this way.

Ruth McVey,
Montisi, Italy

In answer to Diana Farr Louis's plea for help (Letters, *The Mediterranean Garden* No. 3), those who read Greek might like to know of a useful book, *Contemporary Practical Olive Cultivation* (Σύγχρονη Πρακτική Ελαιοκομία) by Kyriakos Sakantanis, Spyros Spyrou Agricultural Publications, Athens, 4th edition, 1982. This book is (or was until recently) available from the bookshop of The Agricultural Bank of Greece, Academias Street, Athens.

Caroline Harbouri,
Kifissia, Greece

In *The Mediterranean Garden* No.3. the article by Megan Toms goes into the uses of *Salvia officinalis*. One use for sage which may not be well known is a formula with lactic acid as a lotion for stings and bites. This was available here commercially under the name 'Pluriderm' until the firm was taken over by an American concern and the cream ditched. Yet the astonishing thing is that everyone we knew who used the cream found it worked.

As for 'Roses That Do Well' – oh, how I wish they'd grow here!

I don't know that I entirely agree with Louis Marcelin-Rice's verdict of 'unmitigated success' for the *rond-points*. As I live just south of Aix-en-Provence, I think I suffer from them. Many in this particular area were promoted by the former mayor of Aix and became part of his re-election campaign – so much so that his most brilliant piece of electoral paperwork was a beautifully produced colour brochure picturing them. He lost.

Both Jenny Bussey in 'The Garden in Winter' and your correspondent A. Martorell of London mention compost: here you cannot make it unless you are prepared to foot the water bill. To illustrate my point from another angle: Mr. Julian Makowski kindly sent me cuttings of his tree dahlia, and I grew one here in the garden in 1988. The plant made 6m in its first year and flowered profusely, supported by the nearest thing to an oil rig that I've ever constructed and by bountiful supplies of water. I calculated at the time that to achieve this the water cost me the equivalent of *£80* for this plant alone.

Tom Wellsted,
Malouesse, France

In *The Mediterranean Garden* No. 2 Tom Wellsted mentioned *Flowers of the French Riviera*, published by Longmans in 1914. Curiously enough, a few months ago a friend drew my attention to this book which he had found in the French Public Library in Grasse. I felt sure no one ever read this most interesting and informative book, but representations to the library were answered with a resounding 'No'.

However, to my joy I have just received a copy through the good offices of Mary Bland, a specialist in new and second-hand horticultural books. After long and diligent searches she has supplied me with several out-of-print books and I do recommend her to any members who are looking for similar works. Her address is: Mary Bland, Bookseller, Augop, Evenjobb, Nr. Presteigne, Powys, Wales, UK.

Joanna Millar
Tourettes-sur-Loup, France

In *The Mediterranean Garden* No. 3 Grace Kiernan writes of the Hanbury Gardens that 'sadly the magic has been lost'. What I believe is that if you come to the Hanbury Gardens looking only for what is not there any more, you easily miss all that is there *now*. Of course, during the past years of hard work we have had to renounce the magic and poetry of uncared for bushes, trees, paths and borders, but there are many ingredients in poetry, and I guess that confusion is not the most important one. We have recovered many of the other ingredients of the poetry of the Hanbury Gardens: sights, paths, new and old collections, borders. Would Mrs. Kiernan prefer the whole area covered by weeds and thorns? Would she find a complete mess more poetic? And what about the aromatic garden? When I first entered it, eight years ago, it was a chaos of weeds and dead bushes; only a few species had survived thirst and lack of care, hidden in a sea of grass. Now it has recovered, with collections of *Pelargonium*, *Jasminum*, *Thymus* and many other Labiatae. Even blind people can appreciate it because of its fragrance: is there no poetry at all in that, nothing magic? Have you ever walked through the Gardens in the fall twilight, the dark blue of the sea being your only shadow? It is absolutely magical, I've always found it magical. So the magic of the Hanbury Gardens is still there in many other shapes, but it seems Mrs. Kiernan missed them all. The poetry remains, but it takes other forms more elegant than the poetry of messy flowerbeds. And wasn't it because of the weeds and neglect that we were criticised so much a few years ago?

Mrs. Kiernan mentions the inspiration and love that Thomas [Hanbury] and after him Dorothy poured into this magnificent garden. We have faced the dilemma, as we tried to bring the Gardens back to their former magnificence, of whether to restore them as Thomas shaped them or to follow Lady Dorothy's style. Their ideas are not at all the same. We are trying to restore the Gardens as Thomas wanted them, following his advice with as much love and inspiration as we can, from little details to the general architecture of the Gardens. Of course everything changes; we couldn't make a copy of the Gardens as they were a hundred years ago, even if we wanted to. But we try to follow the original architecture of the Gardens and

sometimes even can claim to improve it. I'm more than sure that Thomas would recognise his Gardens and probably even smile after what he had to see in the past (and I'm not referring only to the Italian management of the Gardens). I must confess that Thomas and I are good friends; he doesn't care that I'm not the best of gardeners, he knows very well that I can improve my gardening style as much as my English.

As for a nursery: Italian law does not allow the University to sell plants and seeds. We have two old greenhouses, one of which is now working with the *Salvia* collection and the North American Medicinal Plants collection (a new project – yes, sometimes we have some ideas). We receive and cultivate seed from all over the world. Next May we shall be visited by Mr. Mike Honour, ex-superintendent of propagation in the Wisley Gardens, and with his help shall start propagating all the old and rare plants we have. How could we do this without a nursery? However, even if we cannot sell plants we can give them. You just need to subscribe to the *Amici dei Giardini Botanici Hanbury* and we will consider any request for cuttings, plants and possibly even seeds and pollens. I hope people will stop taking cuttings without permission (we don't appreciate it so much).

To sum up: if Mrs. Kiernan meant that *the English do it better* (i.e. gardening), we can agree that the English gardening tradition is probably the best in the world, and we always try to cooperate and ask for advice. But it was to the Italian government that Lady Dorothy sold the Gardens, and it is up to the University of Genoa, entrusted with keeping it, to honour such a precious heritage. We may need advice, but we also need respect – and feel that we deserve it because of our hard work, dedication and sincere love for the place.

Sergio Orrao,
Gardener,
Hanbury Botanic Gardens

THE CONTRIBUTORS

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HUGO LATYMER established the nursery Vivero Hortus on Mallorca in 1967. He is the author of *The Mediterranean Gardener* (1990).

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EDNA PRICE, a former librarian, is a lover of gardens and old stone houses who now lives in the South of France.

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TOM WELLSTED has been involved with garden publishing for many years, as a journal contributor, book editor and author (his books include *Vegetable and Herb Growing* (1977) and *Patio & Window Box Gardening* (1986). He now lives and gardens in Provence.

MARTIN WOOD is a garden consultant based in Yorkshire and London.

We should like to apologise to Hugo Latymer for misnaming his book in our last issue: its correct title is, of course, *The Mediterranean Gardener*.