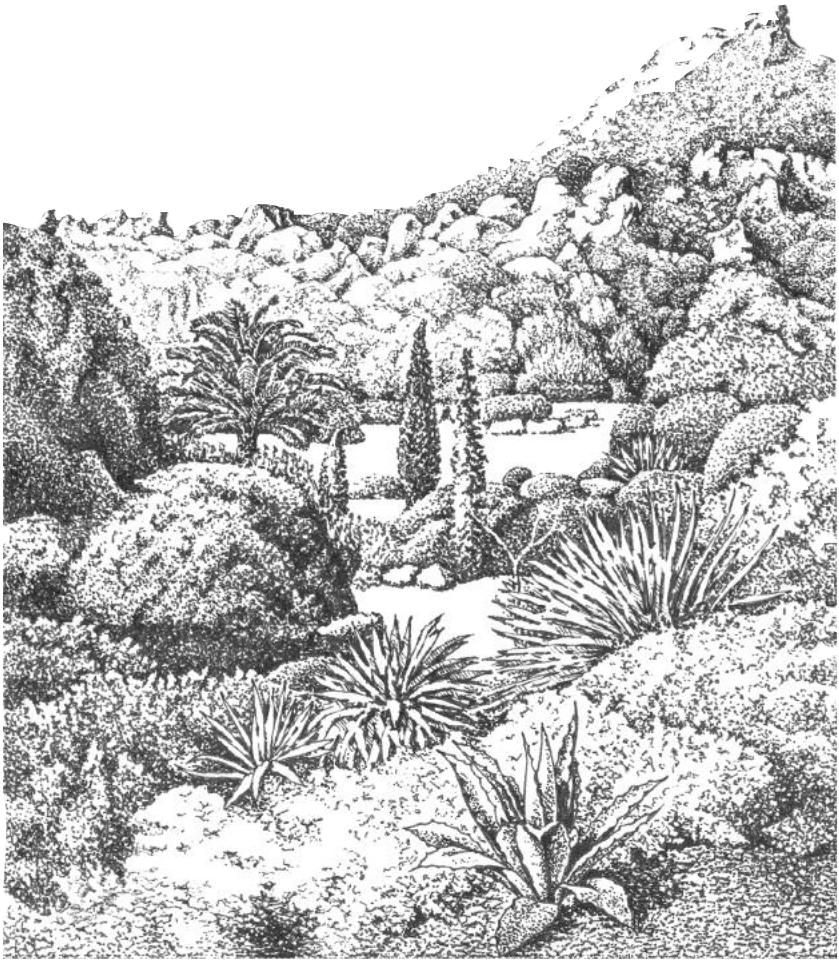
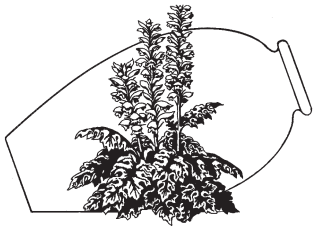
THE

Mediterranean Garden

No. 6 Autumn 1996



THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN



THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN

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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. For details, please contact The Secretary, MGS, PO Box 14, Peania, 19002 Greece.

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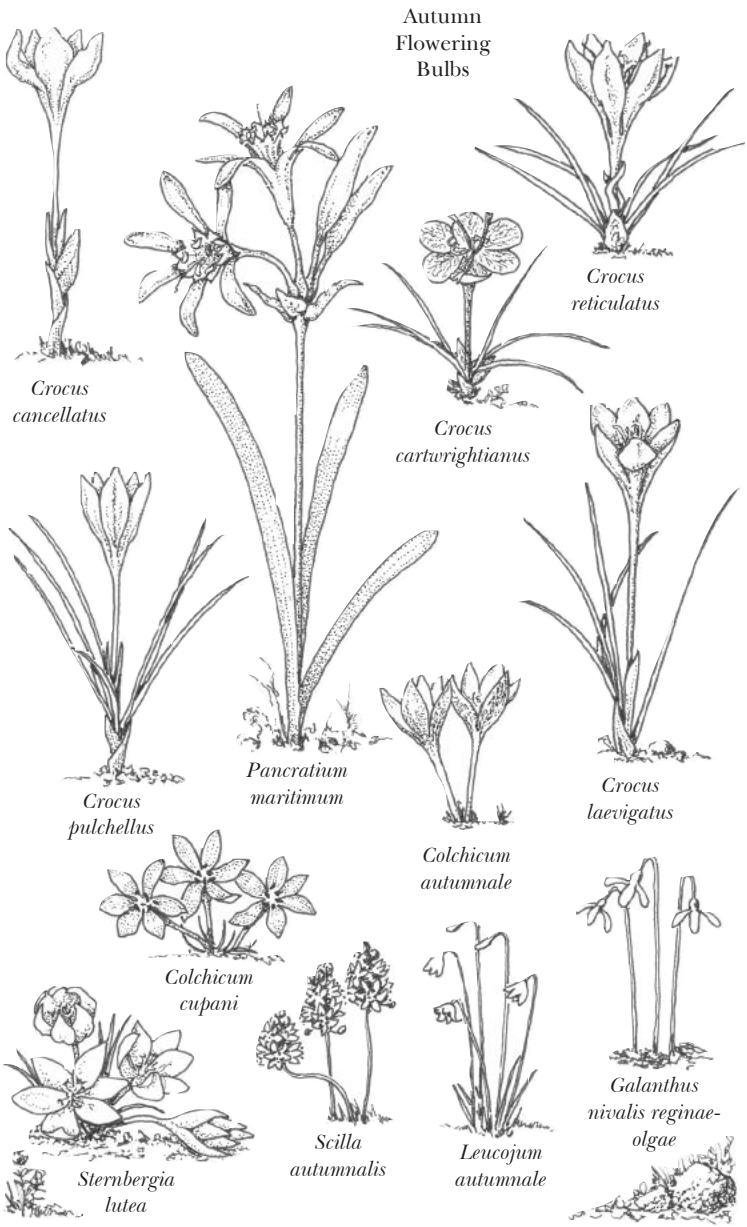
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*M*EDITORIAL

'Should I use chemicals on the garden?' 'Ask a silly question,' we were told when young, 'and you get a silly answer.' It may seem a little harsh to dismiss that particular question as 'silly' – after all, it is a question which we have all asked ourselves at some time or another, and it concerns an issue which we should all take seriously.

Unfortunately there is no one simple answer which will satisfy everybody, everywhere. Let's look at some of the pros and cons. To begin with, we can assume that nobody uses chemicals for the fun of it and all of us, whether or not we are ecologically aware, would happily avoid the trouble and expense of applying chemicals if we could manage without them. But can we? In many cases we can: a mixed community of strongly growing native plants will shrug off most problems without any help from us. Such a garden will not be totally free of pests and diseases – that is a quite unnatural situation – but they will rarely if ever cause significant damage.

This is partly because plants which are native to an environment have evolved their own inbuilt resistance to the pests and diseases they are likely to encounter (otherwise they wouldn't be around today). The animal kingdom also provides us with many allies: lizards and geckos, frogs and toads, wasps and spiders, hedgehogs, birds and bats – even foxes who will make do with beetles if there's nothing better on the menu. In addition to the larger garden friends we can see and count there is a host of microorganisms which attack our enemies. Healthy soil, for example, contains an abundance of these – one good reason for using all that mulch and compost we keep talking about. Some creatures eat pests at one stage in their life cycle and our garden plants at another, making a small charge for their services.

It is important that we learn to distinguish friend from foe, though this is not always as simple as it sounds, especially where the great diversity of insect species is concerned. But it is in our own interest to be selective if we decide that chemical treatment is necessary, otherwise we end up killing off our friends and becoming totally dependent on the spray gun. Our

friends also deserve encouragement: dense foliage makes good nesting sites and rocks shelter cool burrows. A degree of tolerance helps – even if the birds have damaged a few petals, just think how many caterpillars it takes to raise a brood of fledglings.

Some of our problems can be avoided by good management. If we don't give plants free-draining soil when they require it, or if we insist on watering plants which prefer to be summer dormant, we can expect outbreaks of root fungus. It is true that your local garden centre can probably supply a suitable fungicide, but it makes more sense to change your way of gardening.

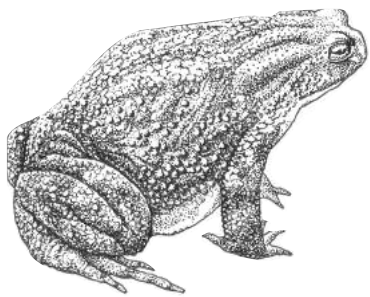
Not all our gardens resemble natural ecosystems with their complexity and inherent checks and balances, however. The site may not be big enough to allow this, or we may wish to enjoy an exotic flora which will not survive unless given support and protection. The vegetable garden is a most unnatural plant community, though a great asset to operations in the kitchen. Many Mediterranean gardens include citrus or olive groves which, like the rows of tomatoes or aubergines, form little monocultures. Where numbers of the same plant are grown together, any pest or disease can spread far more quickly than natural controls can deal with the problem. We are then faced with the choice of either using chemicals or losing the crop.

At least these are the alternatives which confront us today, but this should not deter us from looking for other, chemical-free, solutions. The ultimate aim should be gardens without chemicals – after all, flowering plants have existed since the Palaeozoic era until quite recently without the help of the agrochemical industry, so it cannot be an utterly impractical idea.

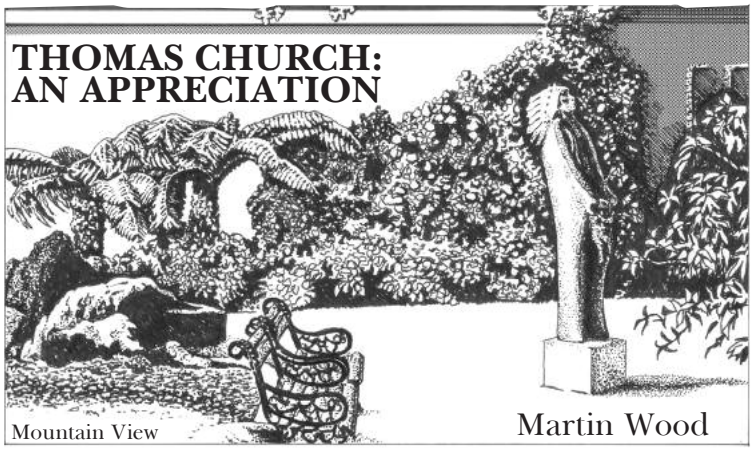
It will not have escaped the notice of readers of this journal that while some articles discuss 'natural' gardens, others are devoted to advice regarding chemical control. This is not, nor should it be allowed to become, a party political argument. Gardens which are highly dependent on chemicals are costly to maintain, vulnerable to new strains of disease or pest, damaging to wildlife and possibly as bad for our health as

cigarette smoking. But a simplistic 'back-to-nature' approach will not always produce the remedies we hope for. We should certainly try to apply organic methods and biological controls wherever possible, but this has to be the result of observation and experience, not wishful thinking. Meanwhile, if we are forced to rely on chemicals, we need to understand why and how these are best applied so that their use is minimal, selective and effective.

The discussions which take place in these pages, looking at the problem from different angles, can provide us with the information we need to make the best decisions; though in the long term it may be that it is not only our gardening methods which have to change, but our attitudes to nature around us.



THOMAS CHURCH: AN APPRECIATION



Mountain View

Martin Wood

One of the many pleasures of visiting San Francisco is staying at The Huntington Hotel on Nob Hill. Being an unusual guest, I always request a room 'overlooking the park' to enjoy the sounds of the cable cars plying back and forth on California Street directly beneath the bedroom windows. Another of the cable car lines (the Powell-Hyde) conveniently terminates near the Ghirardelli chocolate factory (chocolate being one of life's essentials!), passing a rather intriguing house at the foot of Russian Hill. Seemingly set far above and well back from the street, the house was protected from prying eyes by a grey weather-boarded fence, the top covered by green ivy, with a row of pollarded sycamores to restrict the view further. The house looked so unusual and intriguing that I often wondered 'who could live there?'.

Many years ago my curiosity was satisfied when I was fortunate enough to be invited to coffee by the owner, an elderly lady by the name of Betsy Church. I was received with great courtesy and charm, for Mrs. Church belonged to the 'old school', to whom good manners were merely a natural disposition. We sat by an open window overlooking a small formal garden, drinking freshly brewed coffee and eating delicious biscuits baked that very morning by her maid, a jolly lady whose name I unfortunately no longer recall. The house and garden all seemed to be one and so naturally suited to one

another that it was hard to believe they had not been created by the same hand, yet the house predated the garden by more than half a century. This was perhaps the knack Thomas Church had, or 'gift' as he himself described it. As the years have passed, this 'gift' has become influence; influence is indeed a rather hard thing to quantify, yet Church has undoubtedly been copied and imitated by many contemporary landscape designers both in America and here in Europe.

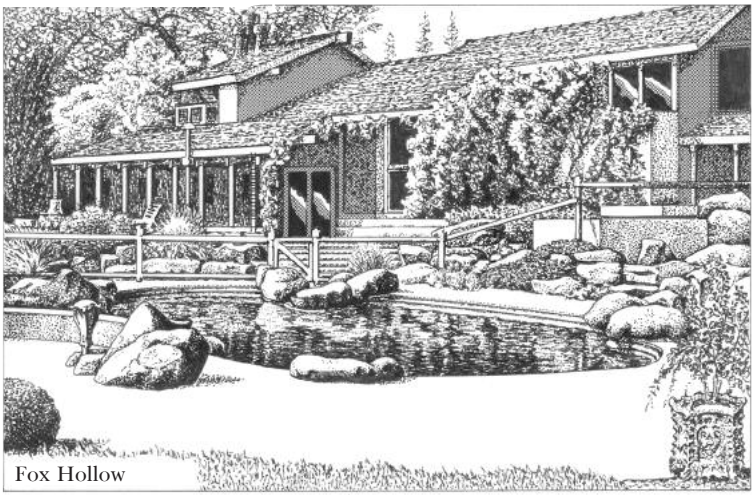
Although his work may exemplify the 'American dream' or California living, Thomas Dolliver Church was actually born in Boston, on the east coast of America, in 1902. He spent much of his childhood in the Ojai Valley, north of Los Angeles in Southern California, but by the time he was 12 his family had moved to Berkeley, near San Francisco. It was here that he made his first garden on a plot of land next to his home, where he terraced the 'sloping site, built steps, seeded a lawn, and planted roses and privet hedges'. In 1918 he enrolled at the University of California; although his family had expected him to take law, a course on the history of garden design in the landscape design department of the College of Agriculture caught his imagination and he graduated in 1922 with a degree in landscape architecture. He continued his studies at Harvard University for a further two years and chose as the subject of his Masters thesis *A Study of Mediterranean Gardens and Their Adaptability to California Conditions* which he submitted in 1927, after having travelled in Italy and Spain for six months.

In 1929 he established a small office at the Pasatiempo Golf Course and Country Club, near Santa Cruz, where he designed a number of patio gardens which were carefully separated from the surrounding countryside by the use of hedges. These patios were not only cleverly created outdoor rooms, but also enjoyed equally clever and carefully manipulated or 'dressed' views into the surrounding landscape. The depression of the early 1930s forced Church to move back to San Francisco where, in 1932, he opened an office in an old spice warehouse which he retained until he retired in 1977. Throughout the 1930s Church was able to keep himself occupied and in 1937 he ventured to Europe

again, ostensibly to study the work of the Finnish architect and designer Alvar Aalto, and of Le Corbusier. Modernism was then in the ascendant in the vocabulary of architecture and design, fuelled by a desire to experiment, and it is perhaps quite natural that Church should have wished to study this newly emerging vocabulary.

Until this second European trip Church had mostly worked in the traditional styles then used in California, loosely based on the Spanish or Moorish tradition and that of the Italian Renaissance. In 1939, at the San Francisco World Fair, Church designed two small exhibition gardens which reveal just how influential Le Corbusier and the modern movement had been. The gardens were characterised by bold, simple, flowing design lines and by the use of new materials, such as corrugated asbestos, thin slices of a redwood tree used as rustic paving, and rectangular sawn redwood blocks used with white brick paving. All this was a brave new world and the philosophy that lay at its heart can best be summed up by Church's idea for a garden. Writing in *California Arts and Architecture* in May 1933, Church pointed out that since the garden is viewed from many different vantage points 'the plan of it cannot be rigid and set with a beginning and an end. The lines of the modern garden must be moving and flowing so that it is pleasing when seen from all directions both inside and out'. In some ways this philosophy would have been entirely familiar to the improvers of the eighteenth century, notably Capability Brown, although such a comparison is even today deeply unfashionable.

The abstract philosophy reached its height in one of Church's most admired gardens, 'El Novillero', which he designed for the Donnell family at Sonoma, California, in 1948 just after the Second World War. Building restrictions meant that a new house could not be constructed, but a swimming pool could (as this was a working ranch and the water could be used for firefighting) and this has become the most famous part of the garden, endlessly photographed and reproduced. The house, situated on top of a grassy knoll, was approached by a mile-long winding drive, leading to a spacious entrance courtyard. On the south side of the house the garden's



Fox Hollow

perimeter was defined by a sweeping hedge of juniper, while to the east a smattering of coast live oaks were retained to provide shelter. The lines of the garden were ingeniously drawn toward the pool garden on the west side, screened from the house by shrubs and more oaks, which make it resemble a tree-crowned hill.

The pool had at its centre a sculpture by Adaline Kent that could be used to sit or recline upon or to swim through. This replaced an earlier idea of using a piece of natural rock excavated from the site, as it was felt that this could be dangerous to swimmers. The sculpture was in fact an integral part of the composition as the shape of the pool employs a cubist trick: its lines simultaneously 'explode' and 'implode', leading the eye to the distant salt marsh valley below and toward the sculpture in the pool centre. Large coast live oaks were retained, or rather were carefully thinned, to decorate the view into the valley, the trees integrated into the design through the decking that continued the lines of the concrete paving.

'El Novillero' is justly regarded as a masterpiece and Church used a number of views of the garden to illustrate his famous book *Gardens are for People*, published in 1955. A full plan of the garden was subsequently published in a new

edition of the book which appeared in 1983 after Church had died, although the project was conceived and the material largely assembled by Church before his death in August 1978. Perhaps it is regrettable that Church did not publish more books, for his only other contribution to the art was *Your Private World*, which appeared in 1969 and has never been reprinted or revised. Church did publish many magazine articles but these are now largely inaccessible, although it may be possible for some enterprising publisher to gather them together and publish them as an anthology.

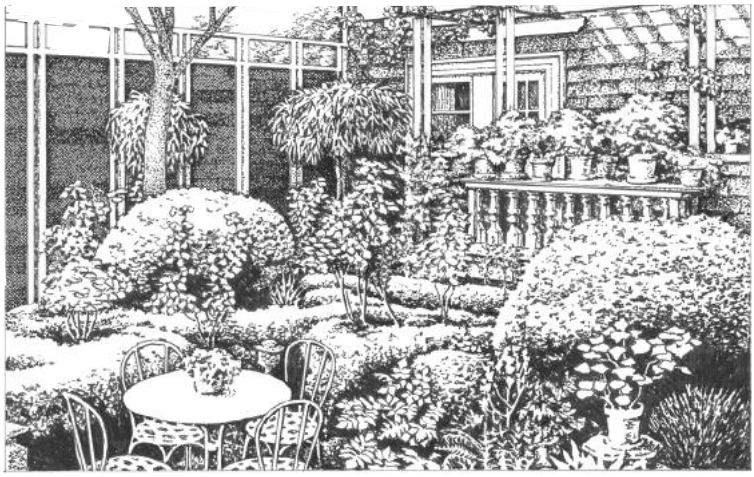
In 1970 Church designed a garden at Fox Hollow near Woodside, south of San Francisco, for the son of a former client. The swimming pool became the centre of the design but was made to look like a natural pond, thus reflecting the sky, by painting its interior black. Several large coast live oaks were incorporated into the design of house and garden, or rather the house was built around the oaks. Another feature was a wonderful view to the south toward a coastal mountain range, part of the reason the owner wanted a natural-looking pond. He also wanted a low-maintenance garden which was achieved by using plants native to the region planted among the 70 tons of sandstone rock used around the pool. Grass is used beyond the pool and extends out just sufficiently to appear to be merging with the surrounding woodland, but in reality merges into the vegetable garden, hidden from view by the contouring. Looking at the whole composition, it is hard to think that this garden is over 25 years old for it looks as fresh and modern as any work I have seen in recent years.

Although many of Church's garden designs were essentially abstract compositions he was not indifferent to a more formal approach and it would be wrong to try and type-cast him. Church looked at a garden as a whole and, as he wrote, 'formal or informal, curved or straight, symmetrical or free, the important thing is that you end up with a functional plan and an artistic composition'. To him a garden should reflect not only the site and the house to which it is related, but also in some small measure the personality of the owners. Of course, an abstract composition is itself likely to contain 'at least one axis and probably has two or three. All compositions, however

free, are built around them'. As Church pointed out, 'the great designers of natural gardens', such as Capability Brown or Humphrey Repton, 'may seem to have thrown away their T squares, but the axis is just as strong as in the mirror pool of the Taj Mahal'.

Church used elements of formal design in a garden at Mountain View, which he made at about the same time as the garden at Fox Hollow, only this time the owner had one condition: he didn't want a lawn mower. This unusual request partly dictated the garden's design; to replace what would normally have been grass Church used low-growing shrubs as a carpet. Many of the characteristic hallmarks of the Church style are evident: well-built wooden decking, good paving, meticulous brickwork and a careful attention to detail. The proportions of the steps and terrace were all so meticulously worked out that they sing as a harmonious whole – as they should in any well-conceived design – and, just as importantly, the garden suits the house of which it is a part. At Fox Hollow the house was very modern, with a deep sweeping roof and architectural chimneys, but here the house is a low-built, flat-roofed bungalow, reminiscent of a style popular in the 1950s. Yet again the appropriateness for the setting is apparent as the house stands in quite heavily wooded ground.

Humphrey Repton, in his book *The Art of Landscape Gardening* published in 1795, remarked that 'the eye, or rather the mind, is never long delighted with that which it surveys without effort, at a single glance, and therefore sees without exciting curiosity or interest'. Perhaps one of the most valuable commodities in any garden's design is 'rhythm and movement', or to put it more romantically, a sense of mystery, making each step a desire (out of curiosity) to discover what lies beyond or within. This dictum may in part explain why Church altered the entrance to his own home as radically as he did in the 1950s. After purchasing the house which was in a sad state of repair in 1933, a formal garden with topiary and box hedging, based on a diamond pattern, was laid out in front of the house. After 20 years many things had outgrown their allotted space and some replanting was required, but as the house was being slightly altered an opportunity for a



Church's south garden

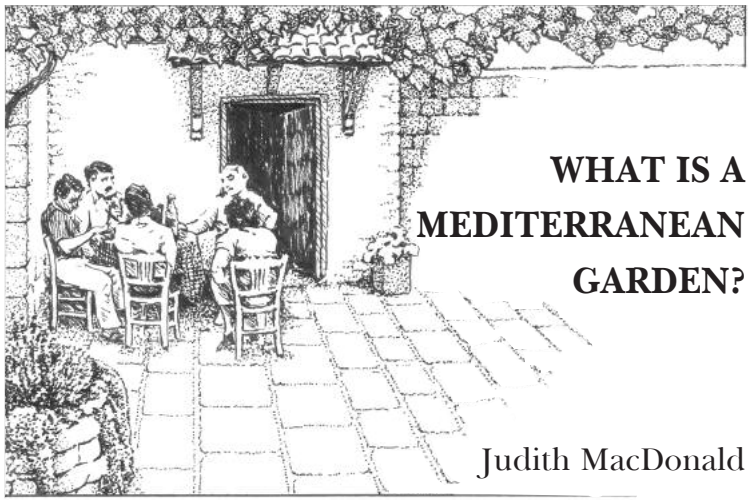
dramatic transformation presented itself. Originally the entrance to the house was by a flight of steps to the first-floor level, on the right side, with the front door in the centre, which meant a sharp left turn at the top of the steps. To give a more graceful entrance, a double flight of steps was constructed based on a staircase at Fontainebleau, leading directly to a landing step outside the door. The proportions and details were so carefully worked out that it is difficult to detect that these very graceful stairs are later work.

The door on to the street in the clapboard fence was retained in its old position, but a soft curved path leads from the right-hand edge more to the centre of the space, linking to four broad steps, leading in their turn to the two sweeping flights of steps. Looking over the garden from the front door, one sees that the garden is formed of a series of mini terraces with the largest being at the bottom of the slope, against the boundary fence. Being the only flat ground, the area became a small sunken garden; because it got little sun it is planted as a green garden with the delicate gothic tracery of the fronds of Australian tree ferns above one's head. Most of the colour in the garden comes from blue agapanthus and a few bright sparks from clivias and vallotas. To add some interest to the

grey painted fence, the ivy was trained up wires to form a diamond pattern with its brown stems, only being allowed to leaf on the top of the fence.

By contrast, the small 'south' garden was the very epitome of the outdoor room and, to bring me full circle back to that now far-off day, it was this small garden that Mrs. Church and I sat admiring from her windows. There was indeed much to admire. In the early 1940s the Churchs were able to acquire 'the adjoining property' which gave them a space some 25 feet square entirely enclosed by buildings; given that it was so boxed in by surrounding buildings, the very strong geometric pattern that Church used for this garden was entirely appropriate. Set in a sea of pea gravel, the centrepiece was a miniature Japanese box parterre for year-round interest, filled with tall roses and a couple of Chinese pottery elephants, just for fun. A flowering cherry tree gave some height and privacy, while the predominantly green planting was used as a backdrop for dozens of pots of bright pink and red pelargoniums and yellow coreopsis.

Though I have not been to San Francisco for many years, the memory of that far-off morning is still fresh and clear. Through the pages of *Gardens are for People* and *Your Private World* shines the essential genius of Tommy Church, reminding one that good design is eternal. Although Church was an American and lived most of his days in California, and although some of his ideas might not travel well, there is much for all students of good design to admire and to learn from the genius that was the 'gift' of Thomas Church.



WHAT IS A MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN?

Judith MacDonald

Recent articles in this journal and in particular the editorial in *The Mediterranean Garden* No. 3 have prompted the question 'What is a Mediterranean garden?', but so far this has led to little debate. I believe that we need to open up the discussion further, to throw some ideas around. We should be looking somewhat further than just what plants work in the climate and discuss the tradition of the garden in the Mediterranean, the relevance of 'the past', the new influences and the changes occurring. My comments are based specifically on the Tuscan situation and in particular the changing nature of the landscape and the gardens in the Valdichiana, the area with which I am most familiar.

One can easily conjure up a generalised picture of a Mediterranean garden 'Tuscan-style', using just a few of the basics and classical characteristics. There would be cypress (*Cupressus sempervivens*), olive, holm oak (*Quercus ilex*), umbrella pine (*Pinus pinea*), bay (*Laurus nobilis*), grape, fig, almond, walnut, *Nerium oleander*, crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*), star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*), rose, lavender, rosemary, sage, santolina, iris, yucca and geraniums and lemons in terracotta pots. Completing the picture there would be terraces, courtyards, stone retaining walls, pergolas, stone

paving, gravel surfaces, more terracotta pots, perhaps a few old oil jars and maybe even a swimming pool. It would be a garden structured for outdoor living.

This general look, however, is flanked on one side by the classical Italian formal style and on the other by what I would loosely describe as 'Tuscan cottage garden' style, and it has drawn influences from both. The formal style is well enough known to be left undescribed here, whereas the latter has been neither much discussed nor documented and is rapidly vanishing, killed off by affluence and new life styles.

Found from city through to country, the 'Tuscan cottage garden' style is characterised by its utilitarian function and its *ad hoc* realisation. Most of what is grown is propagated by the owner or within the local community – seeds are saved, plants and cuttings exchanged and little is purchased. There are grapevines (some of which may be trained to create a shady pergola), olive, fruit and nut trees mingling with flowering shrubs such as lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*), *Philadelphus*, *Hibiscus syriacus* and rose, all in a glorious jumble together with vegetable crops and some flowers. These would be resilient varieties requiring scant attention and minimal water such as perennial asters (*A. novae-angliae* [now *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*], *A. novi-belgii* [now *Symphyotrichum novi-belgii*]), stocks (*Matthiola incana*), snapdragons (*Antirrhinum*), wallflowers (*Cheiranthus*). Geraniums, cactus, carnations and other passed on 'treasures' are traditionally cultivated in discards from the household: chipped enamel pots, cracked earthenware, tin cans. These are to be found grouped around an old well or displayed on a raised plank set adjacent to a house wall. Some elements of the formal Italian style may be incorporated, such as shrubs clipped into tight forms, statuary – be it even a garden gnome – and inlaid pebble paving. These additions can be exuberant and idiosyncratic but invariably 'work'. The gardens have a charm of their own which usually defies mainstream style.

Major considerations for me in developing a garden here are, firstly, the landscape which surrounds the garden and, secondly, the style of the house which the garden is designed to complement. These are particularly pertinent in rural areas where one is literally painting in a detail of the landscape when

planting out a garden or restoring a house. A garden must blend into the encompassing countryside, move into it, not be in conflict or establish boundaries with it.

Italian Renaissance gardens were designed around the features of a landscape – vistas were purposefully framed and allées led out to link villa with woodland and fields. It is still a valid maxim, one that is too often forgotten, and we can interpret it further by introducing more plants from the surrounding natural environment into the manipulated garden environment. Thus not only is the garden structurally connected with the landscape, it is botanically 'fused' as well.

A few examples of plants to use in this region are: *Quercus ilex*, *Juniperus communis*, *Arbutus unedo*, *Genista* spp., *Cistus* spp., *Erica arborea*, *Ruscus aculeatus*, *Helichrysum stoechas*, *Helianthemum nummularium*, *Helleborus foetidus*, *Thymus* spp., *Sedum* spp. Extensive lists and suggestions have already been published in this journal, indicating the wealth of possibilities. Apart from the introduction of native plants, repeating the use of classical Tuscan landscape features like olive, grape-vine, cypress, umbrella pine is fundamental to ensuring that a garden 'fits' a landscape.

I'm not advocating totally indigenous gardens, nor am I in favour of recreating strictly period gardens as too much restraint is imposed and too many creative possibilities closed out. We now have access to an astounding variety of plants. We may continue complaining but we *do* have greater opportunities to use plants from other mediterranean climates as specialist nurseries are becoming established (e.g. 'Venzano', Volterra) and established nurseries are offering a wider and more enlightened selection. Even in this little horticultural backwater of Lucignano *Callistemon citrinus* has become quite commonplace in the last few years. I'm not so sure about the look of it in a terracotta pot but it's a step forward in finding 'new ways'. Cultivars of the New Zealand Tea-tree, *Leptospermum*, can be picked up in the garden section of the local shopping mall complex. Varieties of *Acacia* other than *A. dealbata* can now also be found. Few locals would be aware that these new additions to their garden were Australasian in origin.

There has to be a contemporary statement made in a garden: an imprint of the 'new' as garden style and plant use cannot remain static. After all, those defining symbols of the Tuscan landscape, *Cupressus sempervirens* and *Pinus pinea*, were introduced by the Romans, as were the grape-vine and the olive. Citrus trees were introduced into Italy following the Islamic conquest of Sicily.

In the ten years I have lived in the Valdichiana there have been dramatic changes in the look of the landscape as new housing estates are mushrooming outside the medieval hill villages and industrial estates and supermarket complexes are enveloping agricultural land in the plains. Modern farming practices are remoulding the remaining countryside, *and* people are starting to garden beyond the old functional approach. Whereas a village house may just have had a collection of pots as its garden, these new housing developments have green space to be filled. When I arrived there was not one nursery within a radius of 10 km, now there are five. The classic Tuscan countryside is being re-shaped and new looks are emerging. Is the laurel hedge (*Prunus laurocerasus*), for example, destined to become a new motif of Tuscan style?

Traditionally, the cultivated fields were divided into narrow strips, terraced on hillsides and lined with rows of *Acer campestre*. These trees were pruned annually and used as supports for grape-vines which were then interlaced. Olive trees could be similarly used or there was a mix which might include mulberry (*Morus nigra*) whose leaves were used for silkworm production, willow (*Salix alba*), heavily pruned annually and the young shoots used to tie in the vines or for making baskets, walnut, cherry, apple and pear. The globe artichoke (*Cynara scolymus*) was often underplanted and one could find the odd rose bush used to indicate the vines' susceptibility to disease.

This wonderfully integrated diversity created a relatively rich local eco-system. I mourn the diminishing presence of this distinguishing, truly Arcadian feature of the Valdichiana, but, being highly labour-intensive to maintain, this pattern of land use has become increasingly unviable.

The countryside has been 'smoothed out' – most of the strips and terraces have been bulldozed and old country thoroughfares obliterated. The once intricate, herring-boned patchwork effect has been lost and there are now expansive, rolling fields of wheat, sunflower and maize – treeless! New plantings of olives and grape-vines are done in blocks, the divisions have become fewer and although the patchwork effect remains, the scale has become infinitely grander.

As changing agricultural practices have transformed the landscape, social changes have likewise led to a shift in housing patterns. With the demise, post-war, of the *mezzaoria* (the old semi-feudal share farming system) many of these century-old houses of the share farmers were abandoned as an easier life was sought in urban centres. Initially 'outsiders', both foreigners and Italians, bought up these properties, restoring them into permanent residences or 'country houses' and in the process saving them from falling into irreparable ruin. Agro-tourism is now providing a new impetus for the redevelopment of this housing.

These *case coloniche* (the houses of the share farmers) lay in open countryside and were basically gardenless. Life was harsh, the water supply limited and used primarily for stock and food production. There may have been a few trees, plants had to be functional and any flowers that were grown were those which could be thrown into a corner and look after themselves, e.g. a rose, the Madonna lily (*Lilium candidum*) and iris.

The houses are now being 'reinterpreted' and gardens are being established. All too often they are being enclosed by high wire fences and hedges. Grandiose entrance gates are being constructed and long cypress-lined driveways created (abandoning the original shorter access) – effects which were once confined to the villa (seat of the original landowner). Metres of external lighting seem to be increasingly *de rigeur*, producing Disneyland spectacles in a once barely illuminated night landscape. For me country life means living with the moonlight, perhaps conceding the occasional spotlight for outdoor evening dining to avoid such mishaps as standing barefoot on a hedgehog (true story). I like to call this

reinterpretation the process of 'villafication' (*sic*). Although many of these houses have been restored with great sensitivity and respect for the landscape, the trend seems to be gaining momentum.

In one of those quirky twists of history, the once humble housing of the rural underclass has been converted into new country villas for the privileged. Ironically, the garden of the local villa is all too likely to be found in a deteriorating or much reduced state. Most of the contemporary 'serious' gardening – the forging of a new Tuscan style – is to be found in these recently created gardens of the old *case coloniche*.

More changes – exotic conifers and *Magnolia grandiflora* are being planted extensively in both town and country gardens. The old trickle-down effect has meant that these once motifs of the formal villa garden have been taken up by the people. Varieties of spruce (*Picea*), fir (*Abies*), cedar (*Cedrus*) and the monkey-puzzle tree (*Araucaria*) can be found jammed into town gardens amidst the olives, oleanders and vines with little thought as to their growth potential. This has brought in another dimension to the 'Tuscan cottage garden' style. 'Incorrect' and lacking in aesthetic as it may be, it has become a reality which will endure.

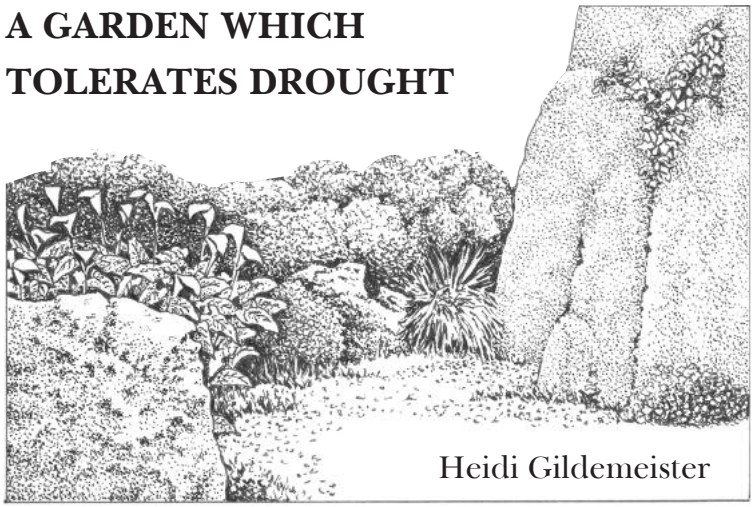
The facility with which one can increasingly defy nature is also leaving its mark – greater ramifications to be seen in the future perhaps. Unlike in some other Mediterranean areas, although the summers are long, hot and dry, there is the potential to tap underground water. With money this resource can be readily utilised and too often, unfortunately, indiscriminately plundered. Bores are sunk (often beyond the legal limit), powerful pumps installed and with automatic irrigation systems thousands of litres daily can be poured on to a Mediterranean garden Tuscan-style. For example, a next-door neighbour, as a final touch in the villafication of the property, has just seeded an English lawn around the newly completed swimming pool – it is early August… Expanses of permanently green lawn have become possible.

The local gardener is unlikely to have any garden reference books, buy garden magazines (although I admit this is changing) or be much informed beyond what has been learned

from experience or passed down; this can be both liberating and restricting. Professional (?) gardeners in the district tend to be retired rural workers who are great at tending vegetable gardens and pruning but despairingly limited in other fields. What is planted in gardens is what is available at the local nursery or in the garden centre at the local supermarket complex. Apart from the occasional welcome exception, the plants tend to be 'northern' with an abundance of those awful dwarf conifers, one type of lavender, two types of rosemary (standard and prostrate), with not a cistus in sight, etc. Much of what floods the spring market seems to be have been determined in Holland. Too many nurseries seem to be run by merchants rather than plantsmen, as there has been a realisation that these changes I have described have commercial potential. Banal as they may be, these factors are also being influential in determining the appearance/style of many contemporary Tuscan gardens.

With the social and economic changes of the last 40 years now starting to have a stronger and broader impact in 'the garden', the old traditions are in a state of flux and the style of the Tuscan garden is being redefined. Let us hope that a genuine Tuscan and Mediterranean effect can be maintained. These should be exciting times.

A GARDEN WHICH TOLERATES DROUGHT



Heidi Gildemeister

It's fun to have a garden which tolerates drought. It is also sensible and it's easy – at least that's the way it seems to me today, 20 years after we set out. It feels good to garden in harmony with nature, in harmony with the mediterranean climate with which we live. Winters are mild and bring rain, around 500-1200mm, but also in some places much less, as little as 250mm in unfavoured regions. And quantities vary from year to year. Summers are long, hot and dry, terribly dry and painfully long. Yet when I accepted these facts and planned our garden in accordance with them, most of the apprehensions that go with a months-long drought were taken off my shoulders. Once I started to use plants which are native to the mediterranean climate, planted them in autumn and mulched well, once I let plants soak up rain over winter and go dormant over summer, drought was no longer a problem. And our garden is healthy and thrives. Not bare soil with a few cacti dotted about it: on the contrary, it is evergreen and delights us with scent and flowers year-round.

Today I tend to forget the stony field, assorted rocks and giant boulders, and also the derelict oak grove we found upon our arrival which over the years has turned into our garden. They were part of a sheep farm in the western Mediterranean,

lying between the mountains and the sea, which my husband had chosen to be our home.

While we cleared brambles, cut dead branches and tried to get wind-torn trees and shrubs 'into shape', I looked for the landscaping potential which lay hidden under much 'green waste'. Instead of total clearing, the existing plant world was put to good use as it promised a drought-tolerant garden for which its established roots gave a quick start. The solid masses of the century-old oak and the dense canopies of Mediterranean buckthorn (*Rhamnus alaternus*), together with the silver-grey trunks of ancient olive trees would, once a few paths were laid, become a solid backbone to our natural garden. They brought 'instant shade' which helps the establishment of a mediterranean garden and is a primary concern.

Once our future garden had been fenced, a labour- and water-wasting lawn was spread in front of the house, not particularly suited to the mediterranean climate, yet eminently appropriate to underline distant hills and the far-away sea. Although the soft 'English lawn' has by now been replaced by a sturdier one, I still feel that a more suitable alternative should have been found. If I could start again, I would use as much paving as I could afford and shade it by trees, as many as were required. Deciduous ones give shade in summer and in winter let the cherished sun shine through. Trees also cool the house. Within the paving I would reserve open patches in which to plant Mediterranean herbs such as marjoram and many thymes, also African daisies or succulents in large patches. They delight in creeping over the paving with its cool root run and dry surface.

I still remember the anguishing first summer when, with many weeks of summer drought ahead, the lawn turned as pale as coastal sand and no water was left in our tank. Yet an evergreen and flowering, lush and exuberant vegetation was what was in my mind. Thus the notion of drought tolerance came to me and for years it was as obsessive an idea as it was a pleasant pursuit, gradually becoming part of my daily life. I know you will understand should I get carried away and repeat myself.

How to choose drought-tolerant plants, how to take care of them, where to find and how to plant were recurring questions. By trial and error I discovered a code for my garden practices which to many people may be common knowledge. Plants, for example, which are given the same living conditions as those in their native lands fare best (winter rain and summer drought for those from mediterranean climates). Once a suitable site for each had been found according to its demands (should it be sun or shade, northern or southern exposure, a cool root run or hot rock?), once we had planted carefully and mulched generously, the main work had been done. Over the first and second summers, plants were established with additional watering; by the third (sometimes even the second) they mostly did without. In late summer an extra water ration or a protective palm frond brought quick relief. Checking on each in moments of stress, such as after a dehydrating summer wind, slashing autumn rain or a devastating winter storm, became routine. Summed up, this seems little if one considers the arduous fertilising, spraying and pulling around of hosepipes which enslave most of our neighbours.

We planted *en masse* to 'cover all the ground', to keep humidity in the soil as a reservoir for a long dry summer, to preserve the earth from being washed away, to establish a thriving vegetation which clothes the rock, improves the air we breathe and creates a refreshing breeze during hot summer days. We also meant to cover all the ground to avoid the countless weeds which were ever ready to establish themselves. Some were so pretty that I felt sorry for them – not all were banned.

Mulching became our 'secret weapon'. A well-composed green mulch keeps roots protected where little soil is available and it does the fertilising for me. As it decomposes, its particles are pulled into the ground by myriads of soil organisms which prepare sufficient food for the year ahead, to be readily taken up by the roots. We do try to please these vital roots, giving them the bed they like, keeping them cool in summer, protecting them from cultivation and replacing the mulch as it disappears into the ground. We imitate nature which spreads a thick cover of decaying leaves and small branchlets all over the

ground and lets it gradually turn into a dark brown humusy substance, the gardener's 'brown gold'. From here on, I felt we could let nature do it.

Rhamnus alaternus

Treated with consideration, plants repay the attention which has been given them and are healthy. I found that letting drought-tolerant plants rest over summer according to their natural life cycle (summer dormancy) makes for vigorous plants. They may discard older leaves or even a few branches but will come back with autumn rains. 'A bit of watering' usually does more harm than good and with many plants summer watering seems to call forth trouble: fungus invades lentisk; red spider or a rotting root crown afflict tobira. Over summer, there may be a few losses, usually those plants which had been planted at too young an age, too late in winter or where a protective summer roof came too late. Should a pest or disease show up, usually a reason for the mishap can be found and quick remedies brought in time. A home-made spray using the very bitter *Artemisia* deters most aphids. Often, cutting off a few branchlets and all unsightly material does the job. And birds are always our untiring helpers.

The sheep on the other side of our fence were generous neighbours. We 'harvested' their droppings and every now and then they let me add a piece of their over-grazed stony slope to the garden. Their hooves had pushed off all soil, which was carried away by winter rains, until little more than rock remained or maybe a giant oak tree, its stout roots laid bare by time. Bringing in soil was not possible, but we usually did find a rock pocket which provided sufficient soil for a well-chosen plant (no taproots!). Tough pioneer plants such as honeysuckle, germander, laurustinus, rue or periwinkle (*Lonicera*, *Teucrium fruticans*, *Viburnum tinus*, *Ruta*, *Vinca*) often prepared the ground until fallen leaves and mulch gradually built up soil and created the green and flowering oasis our garden is today. It is thanks to Caroline Harbouri that I include rue here; it grows happily in both our gardens and is all too little mentioned.

Over the years I was challenged to find out more about the drought-tolerant plant world. Thanks to seed exchange or contacts with plant enthusiasts, thanks to plant-hunting trips to nurseries, I could assemble many different species which allowed me to select a suitable candidate for each site. Don't leave a single nursery out, since most have at least one plant which we hope to grow. England offers excellent hunting grounds since its gardeners have a fad about our 'silvers and greys'.

However, the glory is not with the number but with the plants' suitability. Plants were required which could cope with our hot and dry summers. Evergreen hard leaves, the mediterranean sclerophyllous foliage, were a major means to achieve this. Soft felty leaves or grey and silvery ones, finely indented, were chosen. Also ethereal oils, waxy coatings and succulence – which all reduce transpiration via the minute leaf openings and thus let plants survive periods of low water supply. Consideration of foliage came first since, well chosen, it guarantees drought tolerance and at the same time provides an unending choice of shape, colour and texture. A cushion shape was favoured as it maintains within it a congenial microclimate and echoes the natural plant growth of the surrounding hills. Next, flowers for enjoyment were given a

thought, harmonious colours over all seasons, avoiding those 'screams' which ill-suit the peaceful countryside around.*

Arbutus, *Hypericum balearicum*, most *Prunus*, as well as box, the fan palm, fig, laurel, myrtle and pomegranate are eminently useful drought-tolerant plants. The shrubby *Coronilla*, its glaucous foliage covered with scented gold for many late winter weeks and easy from seed, accompanies *Bupleurum fruticosum*, whose leathery foliage on upright growth provides a dependable background for all plantings (easy from cuttings or seed). Rosemary and lavender always do as long as drainage is perfect and sun their daily fare. But I rather propose the less-used *Phlomis fruticosa*, with yellow whorls standing proudly above the felty foliage in spring. Beautifully drawn by Derek Toms, it appears on the cover of *The Mediterranean Garden* No. 5. *Phlomis italica* with pale pink blooms is half its size and both are easy from cuttings. All are of a sturdy constitution and respond well to cutting back or shearing. Several species planted together intermingle happily. Not all are taken on by sheep – but this is another story for another day.

Bulbs, once planted, are left in the ground to summer-bake and naturalise. They involve so little labour and give such a generous return. Besides the Mediterranean ones, Cape bulbs (those from winter rain regions) are particularly suited as they live under the same climate as our garden does. I harvest the seed of most drought-tolerant Iridaceae. Some come up forcefully (*Belamcanda*, *Freesia*, *Sparaxis*), others hesitatingly (gladioli), still others not at all. My garden takes advantage of all.

Plants are an unending source for observing and experimenting. Gradually, I found that those which have been raised in their final location (our garden) tolerate drought with more ease than the ones brought in. And whenever we have a few of the same species, which usually means home-made

* Note: large, soft leaves are not a good choice as only generous watering holds them up and wind tears them to shreds. They come from a climate with tropical heat and rain, not from the mediterranean one.

cuttings, we give each one a different location to find out which position suits it best. My young garden help has over the years developed a fine sensitivity towards plants' needs and often draws my attention to a particularly successful site – or to one where we failed.

The garden has a Mediterranean evergreen feel with shiny foliage year-round, highlighted by whichever bulb we mean to add: crocus, daffodil, sternbergias or the sea squill, its giant white spire a herald of autumn to come. But it is in spring that this sedate evergreen setting is transformed into a feast of colour, white and pink rockroses (*Cistus*) unfolding daily, golden broom standing out against an azure sky or *Erica multiflora* covering distant hills with a satiny pink cloth. Very early, almonds, later countless *Prunus* throw a white or pink veil. In summer and for weeks oleander gives colour, a reliable companion. Mastic trees and myrtle (*Pistacia lentiscus*, *Myrtus*) are such an asset when in mid-August their masses turn shiny green as if only real heat and drought could let them thrive. The rounded *Euphorbia dendroides*, its branches a beautiful russet, adds colour and structure to the summer garden even when leafless (summer-deciduous). On the other hand, certain rosemaries (not all!) look rather faint until revived by autumn rains. In winter they attract bees and on the surrounding hills come in many shades of blue, even pink or an occasional white. Nurseries select them for 'good colour', but I find all worthwhile. Used in large patches, not dotted about, plants convey a peaceful mood. Exotics such as *Hibiscus* or *Hedychium* are planted near the house where they receive the water they require while the garden fares on its own.

I still have to mention the stone benches on which to sit and enjoy the garden. They were built by the skillful Lorenzo wherever a shapely rock or fine view proposed them, as not all should be toil and labour.

Mediterranean Gardening, A Waterwise Approach (1000 drought-tolerant plants) by Heidi Gildemeister, Editorial Moll 1995, ISBN 84-273-0749-7, is now also available in French (Edisud 1996). German and Spanish editions will be published before the end of 1996.

THE BRICK-RED CRAB PLANT

Malvastrum lateritium

Tom Wellsted

Some ground covering plants, creepers, crawlers, just invasive clumpers or what you will, are positively dangerous here. Foremost for fast work has been *Campanula takesimana* [now *C. punctata*]. A small cutting planted late one winter was by spring spreading in all directions and by flowering time it was some 3m across, all round. Now, if it had had attractive and readily seen flowers it might have been worth growing confined to a pot, but the flowers are a dull and dirty whitish colour even in the superior coloured clones. At about 60cm tall it is not a good hanging basket plant, yet the only way to appreciate any attraction seems to be to look up into the flower bells. Lying flat on one's back in a flower bed is not always the ideal. Oddly, the prostrate, or near so, campanulas do not spread widely here. Sweet violets and small periwinkles, which do spread, may be controlled and their flowers may be seen. Oxalis of various species are too dangerous, and saponarias obligingly die out. Some ivies are too rampant, while others, such as 'Ivalace', have hardly budged in years. Some heaths have spread slowly on the sandstone strand of my volcanically exposed seaside hillside. The hole and crack filling snapdragon, *Asarina procumbens*, once quite sensibly included in *Antirrhinum*, is a delight but prefers the vertical to the horizontal plane. Bergenias are gross in all aspects and I do not care for them. Thank goodness there is a seemingly much neglected joy in *Malvastrum lateritium*.

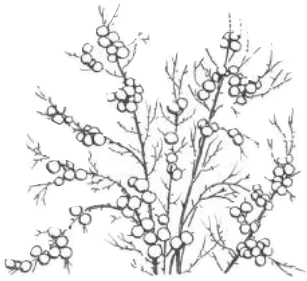
I'm sorry that I do not know of any easier name for this plant, such as apricots and cream or the sunset stunner. These names, if they were in use, might give you some idea of the

extraordinary beauty of the flowers besides identifying the plant. Alas, there seems only to be the botanical name, and by the time you read this it may have changed, since *Malvastrum* is a much dispersed genus; for instance, the better known *Anisodontea capensis* was once a *Malvastrum*.

This is a perennial, nearly evergreen, prostrate plant which grows only as high as is necessary for it to spread its leaves and present its flowers horizontally to the sky. The mid-green leaves are of about the size of field maple (*Acer campestre*) but with the saw-toothed edges of the related abutilons. They occur every few centimetres along the creeping, reddish stems which root at the nodes and grow long thongs in asparagus fashion. In early summer the plants become studded with upright pointing, very malvaceous, green-calyx-clasped pinkish buds, rather like upside down spinning tops. They can take days to open – it always seems ages at any rate – but when they do, what flowers! I know of no flowers such as these for sheer, flat up-faced beauty. At about 5-6cm across, shining like punched out and embossed glossy cardboard, red vein rays from a deep apricot centre to shades of pink and cream and yellow circling through. However, the petals are in fact rather delicate, despite their look of substance. My sole remaining plant – I gave way and gave away – is now some 4m across and trails in one part down a small wall, rooting into the ground below. When smothered in flowers little can be seen of the leaves, but I am not sure that my plant is entirely happy with the wet winters and springs that Provence has had in recent years. It has certainly flowered better in drier conditions, but has not appeared to be too worried by a few degrees of frost. The RHS has told me that the plant is not reliably hardy even in the south-east of England.

My seed came through the good agencies of the RHS surplus seed distribution of some years ago. It has been listed since then, including in the 1996 list. The flower colour given appears to be a literal translation of '*lateritium*' – lateritious = brick-red. If you see the flowers I suspect that like me your eyebrows may take off. Now if the specific had only been '*laterigium*' I could not possibly have quibbled, for the plant does go sideways, in all directions. Or am I being crabby?

DIOSPYROS



Philip McMillan Browse

The Persimmons are a small group of trees and shrubs from the temperate regions of the world belonging to an otherwise large, diverse and wide-ranging genus of trees which also includes the various Ebony Trees. These particular species (the Persimmons) are useful, ornamental, deciduous subjects which have been cultivated and selected for their fruiting qualities, in their home territories of East Asia, for generations. Although the Date Plum (*Diospyros lotus*) of Asia Minor and Southern and Central China and the Persimmon (*D. virginiana*) of the Southern and Central States of the U.S. are suitable plants for cultivation in mediterranean climates and produce edible and acceptable fruit, their value does not approach the dual-purpose role of the Kaki or Japanese Persimmon (*D. kaki*) which has been cultivated and selected in the Far East since ancient times.

This last species grows into a stately, elegant and spreading tree of neat and compact habit which merits its place not only as an ornamental shade tree for its dark green glossy foliage and brilliant autumnal tints but also, in its selected forms, as a fruiting subject of considerable value.

It is a plant very suitable for mediterranean climates and although it would not be classed as a hardy subject it will tolerate temperatures down to -5°C in the dormant condition and indeed will benefit from reasonably cold winters so that the resting buds are chilled and an even bud break occurs during the spring.

The Japanese Persimmon (*D. kaki*) is a drought-tolerant subject which will grow into a spreading tree to 10m tall, though more usually it does not exceed 6 to 7m; the glossy,

broad leaves last well during the summer without scorching but a fuller habit and improved fruiting will occur if one or two deep waterings are provided once the fruit is set. In the autumn the leaves develop brilliant, clear yellow colours but in some varieties gold, orange and reds are produced. Leaf fall is quick and uniform – a useful characteristic when clearing up. This ability to colour during the autumn is an unusual feature in a mediterranean climate which is otherwise limited in this aspect. The fruits are retained well into the early winter and in themselves also constitute an ornamental feature.

Successful fruiting requires a long season of high light intensity and warm temperatures. Fruiting varieties can be produced by grafting on to seedling rootstocks of the local species but longer-lived, more shapely trees with a more prolific fruiting habit are produced using *D. kaki* as a rootstock. This species (and indeed all Persimmons) is dioecious, i.e. it develops into separate male and female plants – although some flowers of the opposite gender may be produced on the same tree. The fact that some female trees do produce male flowers accounts for the descriptions of some varieties as being self-fertile, and although parthenocarpy can occur in unfertilised flowers it is unreliable; a more reliable fruit set will only be achieved with a pollinator.

The fruits are generally rounded, flattish or oblong in shape, glossy-skinned and bright golden-orange in colour. They can be used for a variety of purposes – they can be eaten as fresh fruit, purées, jams, preserves and in ices. They can also be sliced and sun-dried, the nuances of flavour after such a treatment being much enjoyed by afficionados although my view is that the taste is nearer to that of low-grade, corrugated cardboard. The fruit has a firm flesh which is normally astringent and unpleasant to taste, until at maturity the flesh softens to a pulpy consistency and becomes sweet. Some varieties, notably sports of 'Fuyu', have been selected for their non-astringent flesh and can be eaten like an apple. The fruit is highly nutritious.

A wide range of varieties have been selected in the Far East and many of these are available from local nurserymen; they vary in fruit size, shape and colour, as well as in their ability to self-pollinate and in the astringency of the unripe flesh.

'Hachiya' is a standard Japanese variety which develops as a wide-spreading tree of elegant habit. It has proved to be extremely adaptable to mediterranean climates and is widely available. The fruits are large (about 8 × 7cm), broadly conical in shape with a short tip, and are subtended by a well-developed and coarse calyx. They are a deep orange-red in colour and the flesh is astringent until it becomes fully mature and softened. This variety produces only female flowers and, although it may produce fruits parthenocarpically, heavy yields of well-coloured and large fruits rely on pollination from a suitable staminate plant; 'Gailey' is a particularly useful variety for this purpose. 'Hachiya' has proved particularly successful in California especially, both commercially and as a garden subject.

'Fuyu' is another standard variety of Japanese origin which produces smaller, tapered fruit with a rich, glossy, orange skin. It is of excellent quality and is widely grown; it also is a female variety and requires a pollinator for fruit set. Improved selections resulting from sports are nowadays on offer and one such is 'Matsumoto Wase Fuyu': this variety produces heavy crops of large non-astringent fruits which otherwise resemble the parent.

'Tanenashi' is an unusual small tree with a pendulous habit and superb autumn colour; it is self-fertile and produces tapered, astringent fruits.

'Jiro' is another old established Japanese variety in which the fruits are furrowed (as though locular like a tomato); it is probably best grown as one of its bud sports. It requires a pollinator. 'Maekawa Jiro' is a mid-season variety with rounder, smoother, less indented fruits than its parent; these are sweet, non-astringent and richly orange-coloured. 'Ichikikei Jiro' produces good-quality, medium-sized, rounded, non-astringent, mid-season fruits.

'Gailey' is a staminate variety with good pollinating characteristics. It develops as a small to medium-sized tree and although it will develop fruits these are small and of no value. It redeems itself with very attractive autumn tints.

Ferula communis

A GARDEN FOR UMBELLIFERAE

Eliano Pallaro

My garden isn't beautiful but it is, I hope, interesting; it isn't beautiful because it consists of a collection of plants and everything is organised in such a way as to allow the cultivation of many species in a very small space. I am not a perfect collector, in that I avoid uprooting plants from their natural habitat or collecting the only few seeds of a rare species; on the other hand, I am very anxious to exchange seeds and would like more time to correspond with other gardeners.

My interest centres on the Umbelliferae family [now Apiaceae] of which, so far, I have collected hundreds of species, creating a collection organised according to a personal schema which enables me to observe well the characteristics of these umbelliferous plants and the problems inherent in their cultivation.

But what about the value of the Umbelliferae as ornamental plants? I cannot ever forget the surprise on the faces of some of my visitors as they walk along the paths through my collection, fighting their way past great, hostile umbrellas.

Realising this, I now try to surmount this difficulty by holding forth on the details of the distribution of the species in the world and by giving a great panegyric on the importance of the family from ancient times to our own days. No use at all, however. Despite my efforts, the visits usually end in a very formal way with lukewarm encouragement, while the help that I hoped for from my illustrious guests flutters away like a *Papilio machaon*. And yet during these visits many of the species were in full flower in shades of white and pink - but then perhaps the height of the *Heracleum* and the *Peucedanum* were a bit oppressive and the *Eryngium* annoying with their all too original scent of cat pee.

Naturally, I'm not looking for appreciation as regards the form and aesthetic canons of my garden since these are not my objective, but all the same I can't help wishing for some appreciation of all the work which I've done so far, by myself and without financial help or profit.

The cultivated area of my collection is 400 square metres and the density of plants is excessive, I admit, at about five species per square metre. Such crowding causes many problems and clipping has to be carried out daily because often newly-sown seeds, seedlings, young plants and plants in flower all have to coexist in the same place, since umbelliferous plants have differing life cycles – annual, biennial, triennial, moderately perennial and perennial. This characteristic, together with particular times and methods of sowing which are not always fixed, means that propagation is intensive in order to achieve a garden with a good number of species.

The culture substrate is that typical of the countryside in the higher reaches of the Lombardy plain, very clayish and rich in minerals without any significant lacks. Its only great disadvantage is its excessive impermeability; even with the incorporation of considerable quantities of grit, attempts to improve the soil structure are only partially successful. The pH of the soil is sometimes a problem because of the obstinate nature of the clay which renders any attempt to correct it useless over a period of time. The exposure to the sun is adequate for the needs of many of the species, with some useful shade being provided by trees and nearby buildings.

The climate is that of the sub-alpine Po valley subject to Atlantic influxes; it is a predominantly Continental climate which is highy variable and offers excellent conditions for the cultivation of herbaceous species of good size, like many Umbelliferae. Moreover, this climate, rich in rainfall, allows very luxuriant growth even in the hottest months.

The great number of species of the same family present in the garden favours the development of an interesting and varied insect population which causes huge damage to the plants.

Some of the types of Umbelliferae that I cultivate are of ornamental value like *Eryngium*, *Daucus*, *Bupleurum*, *Foeniculum*, *Heracleum*, *Astrantia*, *Angelica*, *Peucedanum* and *Ferula*. Many species of these genera are suitable to the Mediterranean climate and I would be happy to send small quantities of their seeds to any members of the MGS who are interested.

In the garden I also have some minor collections of Labiatae [now Lamiaceae] and Compositae [now Asteraceae] and what remains of past cultivations of plants such as *Teucrium*, *Scutellaria*, *Lavandula*, *Nepeta*, *Phlomis*, *Lamium*, *Salvia*, *Dracocephalum*, *Satureja*, *Inula*, *Matricaria*, *Chrysanthemum*, *Centaurea*, *Cnicus* [now Cirsium], *Cirsium*, *Onopordum*, *Hieracium*.

There are also some Boraginaceae like *Anchusa*, *Symphytum*, *Cynoglossum*, *Borago* and in the less protected area there are some beds with *Rosmarinus*, *Teucrium*, *Ruta*, *Santolina*, *Cistus*, *Ballota*, *Euphorbia*. All species flourish in the open even in winter without any shelter from frost, hoping for a good snowfall. Quick development after a long winter dormancy is a feature which is typical of the Umbelliferae family and allows one the childish pleasure of watching growth so rapid that it is almost miraculous.

This characteristic, together with others like the extraordinary ubiquity of some of the Umbelliferae, has over the course of many years steered me into an increasing interest in this botanical family. It is a family whose members are humble even when imposing; whether the plants are massed together or growing singly, they speak to us in discreet and reserved tones, never aggressive.

OAKS IN A CALIFORNIA GARDEN

Katherine Greenberg

I didn't start out to create a native garden. After several years of drought and water restrictions in the 1970s, I began to realise that the typical suburban gardens with lawns and exotic plants were inappropriate to our mediterranean climate of warm, dry summers and cool, moist winters. To sustain gardens that demand frequent irrigation requires a plentiful supply of water – something which does not exist throughout most of California. While designing a new home and garden in 1980, I began to consider alternatives. Inspired by the natural landscape of the surrounding hills and valleys, I would create a garden in harmony with nature and composed primarily of native plants.

Perhaps the most characteristic feature of the California landscape is the oak. The ridges and slopes of our foothills are dotted with evergreen oaks, and deciduous oaks grow in the deeper valley soils. I selected coast live oaks to define the structure of my garden. On 1.3 acres I have planted close to fifty oaks. Several oaks that began as acorns, planted by birds and squirrels, have grown larger than trees planted from containers. On a north-facing slope, once dominated by annual grasses, an oak woodland is developing.

Oaks are adapted to our climate and require dry summers to survive. Native oaks are valued trees in the garden that can live for hundreds of years. As oaks mature, they develop great character with their massive trunks and branching patterns. Oaks respond well to pruning to shape them while they are young and to allow more light to filter through their branches and reach plants growing below. As leaf litter accumulates under oaks it forms a mulch layer which conserves moisture and inhibits weeds.

After decades of decline caused by over-grazing and development, efforts are being made to preserve the oaks of California. Acorns provided an important food source for native Americans, and now acorns ensure the continued growth of oak seedlings. Oaks deserve a place in our gardens.

Coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*)

The plants that grow under their canopies must tolerate dry shade; a list of some of those that do well under oaks follows.

– *Aesculus californica*, California Buckeye
– *Aquilegia formosa*, Western Columbine
– *Arctostaphylos densiflora*, Manzanita
– *Clarkia concinna*, Red Ribbons Clarkia
– *Clematis ligusticifolia*, Western Virgin's Bower
– *Dryopteris arguta*, Wood Fern
– *Festuca californica*, California Fescue
– *Fragaria californica*, Woodland Strawberry
– *Garrya elliptica*, Silk Tassel
– *Heteromeles arbutifolia*, Toyon
– *Holodiscus discolor*, Cream Bush
– *Heuchera micrantha*, Alum Root
– *Iris douglasiana*, Douglas Iris
– *Mahonia aquifolium* [now *Berberis aquifolium*], Oregon Grape
– *Mimulus aurantiacus*, Sticky Monkey Flower
– *Muhlenbergia rigens*, Deer Grass
– *Polystichum munitum*, Western Sword Fern
– *Rhamnus californica* [now *Frangula californica*], Coffeeberry

– *Ribes viburnifolium*, Evergreen Currant
– *Rosa californica*, California Rose
– *Salvia spathacea*, Hummingbird Sage
– *Satureja douglasii* [now *Micromeria douglasii*], Yerba Buena
– *Sisyrinchium bellum*, Blue-eyed Grass
– *Symphoricarpus albus*, Snowberry
– *Vitis californica*, California Grape
– *Zauschneria californica* [now *Epilobium canum*], California Fuchsia

Garrya elliptica

PROBLEMS OF ACCLIMATISATION: SMALL-SCALE PROPAGATION

Piero Caneti

An interesting phenomenon is to be seen in Italy: some plant lovers are not limiting themselves to their own gardens but are starting propagation on a small scale. Moreover, they are giving preference to plants that are endemic to the Mediterranean region or to geographical zones with a similar climate. This is an encouraging initiative, but at the same time gives rise to some questions which I'd like to consider here.

We all know that the commercial propagation of plants is quite different from propagation at the amateur level. And this not only because of the quantities of species and varieties that are produced, but because of the manner in which they are produced. The moment you expand your activities from a few pots prepared for friends to hundreds of containers, systems of cultivation have to change too because you have to keep in mind the labour-profit equation. The potting compost which was in the first case prepared with compost and soil from the garden, and whose weight never constituted a problem, in the second case needs to fulfil certain requisites: it has to be light, porous but not too much so, and especially it has to guarantee the rapid growth of plants. Commercial nurseries have by now widely adopted peat with the addition of sophisticated and very balanced slow-release chemical fertilisers, with the result that this has ended up by becoming a material which it is difficult to ignore. Anyway, why should one look at alternative methods when everyone uses this one and no authoritative voice has spoken out about the need to change? The situation is definitely complex and yet one cannot keep on ignoring facts that are clear to everybody. Among those who cultivate their own gardens, the first stone should be thrown by anyone who has not seen up to 20% of bought plants die, either immediately or within one or two years of being transplanted.

If by now everyone has recognised that the causes of this death rate are to be found in the forced production methods, then this means that we should no longer keep quiet about it.

Let us hypothesise: in a substrate through which they are over-fed with synthetic substances plants develop that are apparently healthy but in reality weak and incapable of facing natural conditions in the garden without suffering great setbacks, the consequences of which are often fatal. If to this type of substrate we add propagation methods which make wide use of greenhouses and prefer cuttings rather than sowing seed, the whole process becomes more and more complicated; moreover, once started along this path it is very difficult to get out of it. Today it is only amateurs who truly acclimatise the plants they grow. Even botanical gardens these days buy in plants from outside, despite the fact that the *Index Seminum* in the world is still very extensive. In scientific reviews you do not read of studies on this subject because of the lack of research. Who would now be willing to risk considerable losses in order to produce a number of well-acclimatised plants? For this is the problem: by sowing seed you can grow plants in the open; many of them will be killed by the rigours of winter, however those that survive will produce seed from which new plants will grow, which will be more resistant to frost and so on.

Substrate and production methods lead to an irreversible process; plants may appear like colossi but they have feet of clay – their resistance to diseases and parasites is very poor. And thus the necessity arises of encouraging their survival with more and more powerful chemicals, with macromolecules which are toxic to man and nature. Data on the world production of such substances are frightening and there doesn't so far seem to be much hope for a gradual reduction in their use.

We would like to draw a conclusion from these simple observations and it is not hard to do so. Among other things, it is hoped that the MGS will stimulate a new kind of nursery production, so that gardens in the Mediterranean region and other parts of the world with a similar climate will be 'well-tempered' and consequently ever more beautiful. After all, the well-being of the world and mankind should not be the price

that has to be paid for this result. We must try and revive the appreciation of Mediterranean plants at the nursery level too in order to bring about innovations in the way that plants are propagated, looking at so-called biological methods which do not pollute and which luckily are becoming a reality in all advanced countries. It may be a less easy path to take, but if all that has to be changed is the type of plant grown and habits or fashions, leaving what really counts unchanged, then the old commercial methods wouldn't be worth so much effort. Let's talk about it!

A WINE-MAKING ESTATE IN ATTICA

Caroline Harbouri

South-east of Athens lies the fertile plain known since antiquity as the Mesogeion or 'Middle of the Earth' – quite literally *Mediterranean*. For the past couple of millennia olives and especially vines have been cultivated here, and the area has long been known in Greece for its wine. It is here that the vineyards of the Matsa estate are situated.

The family of the present owner, Roxane Matsa, bought the estate in 1875; she herself inherited it almost a hundred years later. It then comprised the main house and two farm workers' cottages – all in a state of dilapidated disrepair – as well as 12.2 hectares of land. This land had long been worked traditionally as a mixed farm: sheep were kept, and vines, olives and wheat grown, as well as fruit (almonds, apricots, pistachios, oranges). Indeed, throughout the whole Mediterranean region mixed farming was the norm; monoculture was avoided so that the risks of losing an entire crop to a sudden, catastrophic, unseasonal storm, an unusually prolonged drought or a plague of insects were more evenly spread. With modern irrigation techniques and the possibility of spraying crops against specific insects or diseases it became no longer so vital to hedge one's bets in this way. Thus when Roxane Matsa concluded in 1976 that something would have to be done about the increasingly neglected land and semi-ruined buildings - she herself describes the estate's condition then as resembling Bertolucci's film *1900* - she decided to concentrate on vines.

Between 1954 and 1960 about eight hectares had already been planted with wine-producing grapes: mostly Savatiano, an old local variety grafted onto American *Phylloxera*-resistant rootstock. Roxane Matsa decided to plant the remaining land with other varieties of grape, both non-Greek and Greek, on an experimental basis. The non-Greek varieties included Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Viognier and Grenache blanc, while the Greek varieties were Asyrtiko and Roditis (both from Attica), Athiri (from the island of Santorini), Malagousia (from the Peloponnese) and Moschato spinas (from Crete, where it is rapidly disappearing; it gives a vin de liqueur).

Apart from her ongoing experimental cultivation, Roxane Matsa now produces two excellent white wines, Château Matsa and Laoutari, the first made from the local Savatiano grape and the second from a blend of Savatiano, Roditis and Asyrtiko. The bottling and distribution of these wines are handled by the Boutari company (50,000 and 25,000).

In Greece, as elsewhere, there has been much discussion in recent years about organic farming. The Matsa vineyards are not organically cultivated. As Roxane Matsa points out, the difference between a good wine and a medium one depends to a great extent on the quality of the grapes. Thus any fungal infection or insect damage which causes the grapes to split is a serious matter. In Greece, however, the general lack of rain between June and September reduces the incidence of fungal diseases and hence the need for spraying against them; the principal agent used is sulfur. As regards insects, the greatest problem is *Lobesia botrana*. Since it is the larvae rather than the adult insects that are the target of spraying, Roxane Matsa uses pheromone traps in order to determine the critical days between April and mid-August when the larvae have hatched. Spraying is thus used highly selectively and kept to a minimum. Roxane Matsa notes rather sadly that more organic means of combating *Lobesia* are up to seven times more expensive than the standard means used, and are thus not economically practicable for her vineyard.

The grapes are harvested during the first fortnight of September. The harvested grapes are pressed at once – which, as Roxane Matsa points out, is one of the advantages of a small

winery compared to a larger-scale enterprise, where each load of harvested grapes will be kept waiting until all other loads have arrived before being pressed. Since the beginning of September is a hot time of year in Greece when daytime temperatures may still reach 40°C, unregulated fermentation would result in extremely high temperatures. Thus fermentation is controlled. The must passes through a refrigeration system two or three times a day, depending on the stage of fermentation that has been reached, to maintain it at a temperature of 18-19°C for white wine and 26-28°C for red wine. September is thus the busiest time of year, with the fermentation tanks being monitored throughout the day and night, and the refrigeration process being adjusted accordingly.

All this hard work pays off, however. In 1992 Roxane Matsa was awarded a Prix Mondial at Bordeaux for the best Greek white wine – her Laoutari.

The fact that Laoutari is made from local Greek varieties of grapes supports Roxane Matsa's firmly held belief in the value of preserving and cultivating local varieties. She points out that Greece has more than thirty varieties of grape, all of which are well-adapted to the local climate and growing conditions. Imported varieties – Chardonnay and Cabernet, for example – may be grown, yet Roxane Matsa's view, based on her own experience, is that it is not really worth attempting to make wines which others, in different parts of the world, can make better. Although the small quantities produced remain a problem for Greek wines on the international market, Roxane Matsa is convinced that the future for Greek wine lies in Greek varieties of grapes.

Having revived a traditional small estate in what has for more than two thousand years been the heart of the Attica wine-growing area, Roxane is putting her beliefs into practice with notable success.

THE COTTON SPINY BOLLWORM
(Earias insulana)

Richard Dight

A number of colourful varieties of *Hibiscus* are grown in the most favoured frost-free Mediterranean gardens. Occasionally gardeners are disappointed because the buds start dropping off before the flowers open. The cause is not over-watering but the caterpillar of the Cotton Spiny Bollworm.

Hibiscus is closely related botanically to cotton and also to *Abutilon*. The Spiny Bollworm is a serious pest of cotton in Africa, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and India. The adult moth (*Earias insulana*) lays eggs on young shoots and buds of cotton and *Hibiscus* plants. The young caterpillars bore into the shoots and buds and eat away the underlying tissue. If you pick up a dropped bud from the ground you will find a small round hole where the caterpillar has emerged. Inside a bud you may find the caterpillar, which is almost colourless with black marks and spines sticking out of its back.

Where this pest is a problem spray *Hibiscus* bushes in the spring with an insecticide. In Spain the insecticide recommended for control of *Earias* in cotton is Dursban (Chlorpyriphos), which is also effective on *Hibiscus*.

Earias insulana - larva

THE GARDEN IN AUTUMN

Jenny Bussey

POT PLANTS

Indoor plants may well need a good tidying up at this time of year. Remove old leaves and check the plants for pests and diseases which often thrive in the hot summer months. A systemic insecticide or fungicide can be watered into the soil where it is taken up by the roots and into the sap, destroying the problem from within.

Growth that has got too straggly can be cut back by half, which will encourage new shoots and flowers. Feed with a high potash fertiliser afterwards. Where salt deposits have built up on the surface of the soil or round the edge of the pot, scrape these off and give the plant a top dressing with some fresh compost.

Increase water and feed for your Christmas cactus and poinsettias now but ensure that they get complete darkness at night so that they come into flower for the festive season.

THE FLOWER GARDEN

Now is an excellent time to sow hardy seeds, whether of annuals, perennials, shrubs or trees. Annuals should be sown *in situ* as they do not like having their roots disturbed. I find sweet peas, nasturtiums and many other annuals that have self-seeded germinate as soon as the first rains come. Perennials can also be sown direct but, as they are slower to germinate and grow, it may be better to start them off in pots or in a seed bed, to be planted out when a suitable size. However, remember that all leguminous plants and many evergreens hate having their roots disturbed so great care must be taken either to plant them in their final position when very small or to pot them on regularly so that their roots can develop without being cramped.

This is also a good time to take cuttings. Succulents can be broken off and planted immediately where they are wanted in the garden. Plants that spread outwards can be split up and replanted now, discarding the older, tired parts of the plant.

Some trailing or climbing plants will conveniently root themselves where they touch the ground, and these layers can be dug up and replanted elsewhere. Many shrubs can be propagated from side shoots and a good gardening book will explain in detail how to do this successfully – some plants are much easier than others, and you will get great satisfaction from those that take. It is a simple and cheap way to fill your garden and, if you get your cuttings from friends or places you visit, you have a memento for life.

Ponds need attention in the autumn. Cut back the dead leaves of water plants and divide the clumps if they have become too big. Thin out oxygenating plants which have often nearly filled the pond in summer – I find I have to take out bucketfuls several times a year to leave the goldfish room to swim. Depending on the size and depth of your pond, it will need emptying and the bottom clearing of mud – which can perfectly well be spread thinly on the garden as a fertiliser – once every three or four years. Autumn is a good time to make a new pond, ready to stock with plants and fish in the spring – again, there are many good books that explain exactly how to go about this but remember that at least part of it needs to be of a good depth so that the water does not overheat in summer.

Lawns need attention in the autumn. A rye grass mixture lawn will need reseeding where the summer heat has weakened growth, and top dressing with a high potash fertiliser. Grama grass lawns, on the other hand, tend to go brown in the winter (which is quite natural) and they can be overseeded with a rye grass mix to keep them looking green until spring - or spray with green paint (as I believe they do in America!).

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

When beds become available as you clear summer vegetables, dig them over and incorporate some compost or very well rotted manure – goat and/or sheep manure is readily available around the Mediterranean and is very beneficial. Make sure the animals have not been bedded on wood chippings and sawdust as this can cause nitrogen robbery in your soil if not

well-composted when applied. For root vegetables, a light dressing of a complete organic fertiliser is all that is necessary.

Potatoes planted any time from early September on will be ready to eat around Christmastime, though you may have to protect them from frosts if you live away from the sea. Onion sets and garlic cloves can also be planted now, for harvesting in spring next year. I also find a sowing of sweet corn ripens in December and is a very welcome treat.

More traditional vegetables, such as root crops, broad beans and peas, spring cabbage and spinach, can all be sown in the autumn when they germinate quickly and grow well. Salad crops do well in the mediterranean climate from sowings right up to Christmas – try radishes, spring onions, lettuce (especially Little Gem or Density) and the various oriental greens that can be eaten either raw or lightly cooked.

Perennial crops, such as globe or Jerusalem artichokes, cardoons, rhubarb and comfrey, can all be propagated in the autumn from offshoots or root cuttings – they establish better than those planted in the spring. Comfrey can be eaten like spinach or used for a herb tea, very good for arthritis or any sort of ulcer, but it is excellent when used as a liquid manure or to spray your plants to keep them healthy and pest- and disease-free: put a good bundle of leaves in a large bucket and cover with water, leave for about four weeks, then use the resultant (very smelly) liquid diluted 1:10 with water, either watered round your plants or as a foliar feed/pest deterrent. Your neighbours may complain, but your garden will flourish.

It is a good idea to put part of your vegetable garden down to a green manure each year. Mustard sown under sunflowers, which give a great bulk of green material when shredded just before flowering (though I cannot resist leaving some to flower at Christmas), is a quick fillip to the soil; alternatively sow grazing rye grass or one of the legumes for a six-month overwintering crop that will bulk up rapidly in the spring and can be cut once or twice before digging in. This improves the humus level in the soil and you will notice the difference in its texture and in the performance of your vegetables.

THE FRUIT GARDEN

Cane fruit bushes must be cleared, cutting out the shoots that have fruited and tying in the new shoots for next year. Blackberries and some of the hybrid crosses, such as loganberries, tayberries, etc. can do well here without excessive watering. Raspberries are more difficult, and it is a question of finding one that suits your soil and climate. All benefit from a humus-rich soil and a thick mulch.

Strawberries will also need clearing up now, by cutting off all the old leaves and fruit stems, by removing any old straw or other mulch and replacing it with a fresh mulch, and by cutting off unwanted runners. Rooted runners can be removed and replanted in a new bed provided the parent plants are healthy.

All top fruit trees benefit from an application of well-rotted manure over the root area (under the outer branches of the tree) and a dressing of phosphates and potash is also beneficial. Established fruit trees can have a green manure sown under them, either a legume or grazing rye grass, to be dug in in the spring.

Watch out for infestations of pests in the autumn. Citrus trees in particular will probably be showing signs of the leaf miner *Phyllocnistis citrella* attacking new shoots, and also the spread of the many scale insects that they are subject to. There are many insecticides to choose from and your local garden centre or agricultural cooperative will be able to advise you.

Loquat trees need to be protected from the fungal disease *Fusicladium eriobotryae* that forms a brown fur over the fruits as they form; a spraying with Bordeaux mixture (copper sulphate) immediately after wet weather is usually enough to prevent an attack, but if it has got hold, then a stronger fungicide may be necessary.

BOOKS

Roses et Jardins
by Marie-Thérèse Haudebourg,
Paris, Hachette, Livres Pratiques, 1995.

Of course one wonders: not another rose book? But this one is truly outstanding – in its coverage, ease of use, accuracy, erudition, imaginative planting suggestions, and good plain common sense. Twelve hundred varieties of rose are classified by family, and by dominant colour within each family. Individual descriptions and tables at the back offer precise information on origins, size and habit, periods of flowering, fragrance, hardiness, specific requirements of soil and feeding, flower description, strong and weak points, fruiting, autumn colour, adaptability for growing in containers, and more. For each rose, there are excellent suggestions about how to use them in the garden.

That is only Part One. Part Two is an advice section covering buying, growing, reproducing, placing, protecting. Everything is provided to help the reader make intelligent and knowledgeable choices before planting.

But there is still more. The chapter introductions giving the history of each family read like a novel, though they are overwhelming in the amount and variety of information they contain. 'How does she know all that?' I keep asking myself. Madame Haudebourg has obviously been researching roses for many years. She knows all the British sources – she can tell

you what William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll each wrote about roses on the Riviera. But also about Louis Sapäth of Berlin, or Manda from South Orange, or the Barbier brothers from Orléans, or Edouard André, who used Wichurana hybrids scrambling over rocky outcrops in Mediterranean gardens. And all about Lord Brougham's property at Cannes, where Busby, his gardener, created 'Sénateur Lafolette' before Clément Nabonnand began himself to cross *Rosa gigantea* with hybrid Teas. Indeed the whole history of the prestigious Nabonnand family of rose producers, so little known and so important for mediterranean-climate gardening, is given here.

For Mediterranean gardeners, this book is a real treasure trove. For once, rose descriptions (as well as histories) deal with growing in different climates. About China and Bengal roses, Madame Haudebourg writes: 'In Mediterranean climates, these varieties are almost perpetually in flower... They should not be grown in shade, particularly under trees, as they need sun to promote long flowering. However in regions of bright sunshine, they accept shade for several hours a day, which means they can be grown against an east or west wall.' Under ramblers, there is a whole section on warm-climate varieties, starting with several types of *Rosa banksiae*.

The hundreds of photographs by Béatrice Pichon-Clarisse have been chosen to aid identification and carefully controlled by the author for accuracy. Many were taken in Mediterranean gardens such as the Roseraie de Berty (the nursery where Eleanor Cruse sells some 300 varieties of old roses), or the Château du Vignal north of Nice, even at the Prieuré de Salagon in the Alpes de Haute-Provence.

What I particularly like about this book is its mix of intelligence and common sense. It clarifies without simplifying. Under buying advice, for example, Madame Haudebourg judges that the quarrel between old and new roses is a false problem. That to pretend one category to be better than another, *per se*, is like claiming that Rembrandt is better than Van Gogh, or vice versa. There has never been, she says, a golden age where all roses were beautiful. She contrasts the conditions of rose development that once

prevailed and those determining production today, then advises choosing a rose, whether old or recent, to fit the need and the place where it is to be planted. Inside the front and back covers are photos of some forty personal favourites, mixing 'Iceberg' with 'Felicia', 'Centenaire de Lourdes' with 'Nozomi', 'Pierre de Ronsard', 'Perle d'Alcandra' and 'Joseph's Coat'.

Marie-Thérèse Haudebourg has been writing for years the Provence-Riviera advice column in the French magazine *Mon Jardin, Ma Maison*, pieces also distinguished by their blend of imagination and common sense. She herself has a garden near Antibes, modest in size and means, but superlative in quality, where she grows some 200 rose varieties. Her current book has been awarded the Prix Saint Fiacre by French garden journalists.

Commendable for both range and depth, this is a precious resource for gardeners interested only in their own small plots, but also for those whose curiosity takes them further afield. It provides much information not easily available elsewhere. My only reservation about this book is that it exists, for the moment, only in French...

Louisa Jones

The New Perenial Garden
by Noël Kingsbury
Frances Lincoln, 1996.

In *The New Perennial Garden* Noël Kingsbury has written the British manifesto for the new school of 'naturalistic' gardening – famous so far mainly for its wildflower meadows. Those who follow the growing number of articles on this approach published in *The Garden* and elsewhere wonder whether its productions can be beautiful as well as ecologically correct. Can it reconcile plantspeople and designers? Does it involve high or low maintenance? Is the wild landscape model adaptable only to large sites such as public parks or can it inspire home gardeners? Mediterranean gardeners further ask themselves if the trend appeals only to northern

Europeans, or if it can mean something to those of us who garden in the land of the olive and the lemon.

Kingsbury's presentation answers all of these questions, even the last, with clarity and intelligence. He shows an awareness of both philosophical issues and specifically professional controversies, while never losing sight of his readers' much more basic, practical needs. He begins by a discussion of habitat gardening, claiming that 'It is this creation of plant communities, artificial versions of natural ecosystems, that makes this style of gardening so new.' He shows that establishing the 'new perennial garden' does involve work, but that maintenance thereafter will be greatly reduced. He suggests specific planting schemes for plots of all dimensions and on all sorts of sites: different kinds of shade, full sun, waterside and damp ground, dry areas. There is a big section on specific techniques and extensive plant tables. The book is a success above all because it proves, as nothing has before, that these gardens can be full of charm and visual appeal.

There is one real problem, however. In the choice of illustrations the publisher has adopted a marketing strategy of aiming the book very narrowly at the British home gardener, sacrificing completely any broader context. The photographs are beautiful, but their attributions given only in very fine print at the back of the book. Here one discovers that many have been taken in Holland – many in the gardens visited by participants in last June's Perennial Perspectives Symposium in Arnhem. Others are of German gardens, in vast public spaces such as the Westpark in Munich. A new rapport between public and private gardening lies at the heart of all this movement, completely eclipsed here. Worst of all, no credit at all is given to any of the very deserving designers.

Moreover the pictures chosen are almost always middle-ground shots which make it hard to read garden contours and planes. Naturalistic gardens do sometimes have problems with outlines and frames. Kingsbury deals with this in his text (simple mowing of paths in or around swathes of grass is one technique he proposes). But the illustrations are deeply misleading not only because they make everything look small-

scaled when many of the gardens photographed are extensive, but also because they reduce a style which is full of movement, seasonal change and soft transitions to the traditional fixed flatness of the old-fashioned mixed border. It is precisely this sense of static, picture-book containment that the new movement is trying to escape. The focus (literally and figuratively) is too narrow.

Kingsbury ranges wider than his illustrations would suggest, however. The Mediterranean world is not forgotten. Some comments, though, do suggest a culture-bound point of view. A remark such as 'The sunlight of summer offers optimum growing conditions' will make southern readers wince. And he subscribes to the popular English belief that bright colours work only in hot climates where pastels cannot hope to succeed – even though many bright gardens in Britain and soft-toned ones in the south now prove differently. But in his discussion of dry-climate gardening, he acknowledges that 'Regions with mediterranean-type climates have a kind of vegetation which is characteristically composed of low evergreen shrubs, with grasses, herbaceous plants and bulbs playing subsidiary roles. Lavender, myrtle, sage, and ceanothus are good examples.' His specific recommendations include acanthus, bearded iris, *Echium pininana* and members of the poppy family: argemone, dendromecon, romneya. Steppe plantings include commonplace centranthus, sedums, campanulas, hypericums, cerastium, helianthemum etc., etc.

Kingsbury's book makes clear that Mediterranean gardeners can profitably adapt the whole concept of habitat gardening. And be seduced by a new 'naturalistic' look, which admits of untidiness, of the surprises of self-sowing, of lighter and more varied textures. Designers are already creating wildflower meadows all over Provence, and gardeners (including myself) are looking at the genuinely wild ones with a newly appreciative eye. Those of us who were lucky enough to attend the Dutch symposium in June also discovered a new scale contrasting smaller details to vast overall pictures. This tendency, too, has already come south. Provençal painters who are producing pictures of vast flowery fields at the foot of the crags of the Alpilles have already adjusted their sights: these

pictures juxtapose fine texture to bold form, the tiny to the giant, without modulation. This kind of scale contrast encourages the Romantic sense of losing oneself in nature that several Dutch gardeners claim as a major inspiration, though some imagine it possible only in woodland wilderness.

The big bone of contention must be evergreen shrubs which the northerners in theory reject as 'green concrete' – too solid, ever-present and invariable. In actual fact, box and yew do appear in their gardens (as in nurseryman Piet Oudolf's) as strong frames and lines, laid out with a typically Flemish whimsy which offsets any suggestion of Gallic or Italianate formality, whereas many contemporary Provençal designers take inspiration from the 'garrigue', where box and laurustinus are not formal elements but genuinely wild plants with marked seasonal change.

If one is not too narrow in sticking to perennials above all, the 'naturalistic' approach is full of interest for Mediterranean gardeners. In Provence at any rate, designers might do well to imitate the northerners, particularly in their concern for variety and texture – that is to say, in their search for horticultural detail. Too many southern French designers use the same old favourites over and over again. Readers of *The Mediterranean Garden* are already making great strides towards enriching our plant palate in their efforts to constitute a Mediterranean Plant Finder, and this horticultural interest may well converge with a new sensibility to habitats. In which case *The New Perennial Garden*, its misleading title notwithstanding, will provide a good guide both for the aesthetics and the techniques of the new style.

Louisa Jones

LETTERS

I read with great interest *The Mediterranean Garden* no. 5, especially the article by Hugo Latymer entitled 'Castaway's Choice'. As I am a nursery manager here in California and have been in the trade for the last six years, I feel I must correct him on one point. It may seem very insignificant but, since I am also a New Zealander, I consider it my duty to rectify the situation.

Hugo incorrectly states that *Metrosideros tomentosum* is commonly known as the Australian Christmas Tree. This is not correct, as *M. tomentosum*, or should I say *M. excelsa* (syn. *tomentosa*), is known as the New Zealand Christmas Tree (or Pohutukawa). It is known by this common name because of the stunning display of deep red flowers it produces in late December in my native New Zealand. Although it is planted to a certain degree in Australia, it is native to New Zealand only.

It is true that it will grow from seed, but not in cold districts. Cuttings are the more common method of propagation of *Metrosideros* and there has even been a certain amount of success using air-layering. However, it does not matter what form of propagation is used, as I wholeheartedly agree with Hugo that it would have to be one of the top ten to be chosen if one were a castaway on a Mediterranean island.

I commend Hugo on his choice of trees and trust that this will help rectify the oversight.

Marshall de Leon,
Pinole, California, U.S.A.

I was interested in Grace Kiernan's article on ants (*The Mediterranean Garden* No. 5). However, my main pest problem here is moles. Our garden is just to the north of Lake Trasimeno in central Italy and we have a good deal of lawn, which stays fairly green even in the dry months of summer thanks to the underground streams that flow down from the hills into the lake. They also provoke the presence of numerous worms, the favourite diet of moles. Though we are having a brief respite now (August), in most of the year every

morning when I look out of the window there is a fresh mound of earth to disfigure the grass.

I have tried everything. American friends sent us a sound-emitting stake which you drive into the ground and which is supposed to frighten them away. In our case they just moved a few metres further on. I bought two mole traps in England, but the moles treat them with contempt, sometimes throwing up a hill right over them. Mole smoke cartridges have had better success, at least temporarily, but I have not been able to find them here. The local people suggest putting an old sock or urinating into the holes, as moles apparently do not like human smells, or getting up at 5 a.m. and standing patiently by the mole hills with a garden fork, which you plunge into them when they start to tremble. I am running out of socks and at 5 in the morning I usually have another priority. As a last resort I pour a little old engine or diesel oil in the holes, and this works as well as anything else while the grass does not seem to mind. Have you or your readers any other suggestions?

Richard Oxby,
Tuoro-sul-Trasimeno, Italy

'The Lily Beetle' (*The Mediterranean Garden* No. 5) is a most interesting article from Richard Dight. Here it goes for my lilies and *Arthropodium cirrhatum*. The larva is often undetected until damage is seen as it tends to eat upside down, so to speak, on the underside of the leaf. The beetles themselves are also known to eat leaves and will readily fall feigning death if disturbed. Despite their splendid scarlet overcoat they can be amazingly difficult to find on the ground.

Also from issue no. 5 it would appear that many of your correspondents must be entertaining on a lavish scale. I think that we eat well here, but despite all our waste going gardenwise we cannot compost. On the topic of food, though, Helene Pizzi's Rosemary article is most welcome. I wonder if our 'two-legged lamb' secret would be appreciated by others? Besides plenty of wild rosemary we are able to get most excellent turkey legs. I do not know how available really good

turkey legs are around the Mediterranean, but here they can be superb and if roasted on a bed of rosemary, with slits made in the skin for rosemary sprigs and plenty of garlic, lightly oiled and seasoned with salt and pepper, stunning moist 'lamb' results. Guests from many countries have, I regret to say, been taken in. Cut off from the drumstick if the 'whole leg of lamb' is presented at table, and admit or not afterwards.

Re Louisa Jones' letter and acanthus: if you are tempted to plant this do make sure that it is in a place where it will not need to be removed to make way for later plantings. Once settled it seeds and spreads; if dug out every bit of root must be removed or they will form new plants undermining the new planting.

TomWellsted,
Malouesse, France

(*Editor's note:* We apologise for errors that crept into Tom Wellsted's letter in *TMG* No. 5. For *Amelanchier oralis* read *Amelanchier ovalis*, for *Glaucium corniculatum amarantiacium* read *G. corniculatum* var. *aurantiacum*, for *Platycapnos spinata* read *Platycapnos spicata*, for *Unispermum* read *Urospermum*.)

For those who have read or watched the T.V. presentation of QUEST FOR THE ROSE by Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix the fact that roses were alive and well in ancient times in and around Turkey is well known. But even in Turkish publications there is little history of the rose. Is there any reader of this journal who could point me to sources or to people who would be able to help? I am interested not only in species roses, but also in hybrids and cultivars.

There are many roses, in addition to the Chinas and the Teas, that do well in Mediterranean gardens. Louisa Jones points out the Nabonnand list, and there must be those still in cultivation in the Near East.

Bill Grant,
Aptos, California

What should we mulch this rock-hard soil with, in southern Greece, or is it sufficient to dig a 'catchment area' around each

plant and let the soil dry out on top? It seems damp enough underneath when scratched up with a trowel.

Why can't I grow (and certainly not buy) the lovely dark mauve and purple buddleias which flourish in the U.K. and in Cyprus? Is it because I live on a fairly small island? Too near the sea? The same goes for wisteria, which flourishes in Athens.

Anne Yannoulis,
Aegina, Greece

Does anyone know if it is possible to breed ladybirds? I should like a few to put on the roses, as I hate spraying against aphids.

Ann Manning,
Puerto Pollensa, Mallorca

In *The Mediterranean Garden* No. 5 Martin Wood mentions 'Korean moss' as a 'labour- and water-saving measure'. I would very much like to know more about this: what exactly it is and where one can get it, for example.

June O'Neill,
Stoupa, Messinias, Greece

If you will allow a delayed reaction to Diana Farr Louis' request for advice regarding her olives (*The Mediterranean Garden* No. 3), I have just learnt of the existence of *Le livre de l'olivier* by M.-C. Amouretti and G. Gomet, published by Edisud. This book is said to include instructions on the cultivation of the olive but I have not had the opportunity to read it, nor do I know whether it is available in any language other than French. Perhaps someone who has a copy could provide more information?

Russell Read,
Nea Alianthos, Greece

NOTE: The Annual General Meeting of the Mediterranean Garden Society will be held on Friday November 29, 1996 at 8.00 p.m. at Sparoza, Peania, Greece. Members who wish to put forward any suggestion by proxy should contact the Secretary, MGS, as soon as possible.

CONTRIBUTORS

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