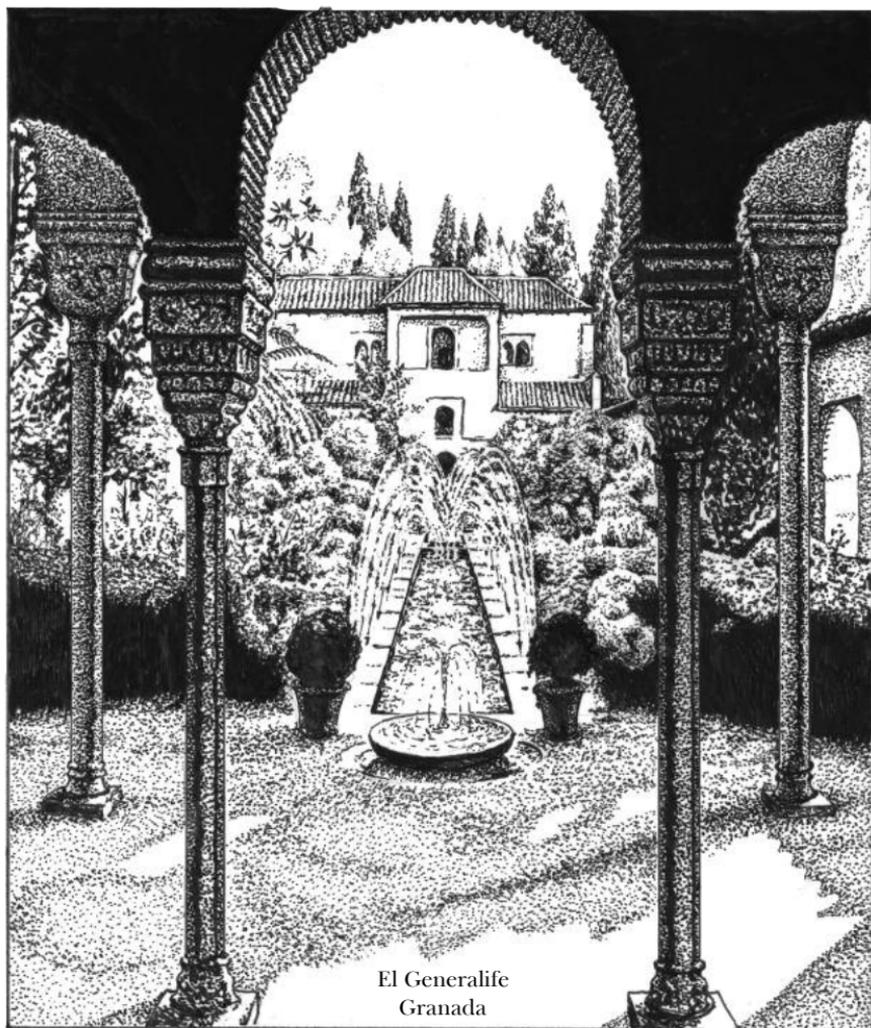


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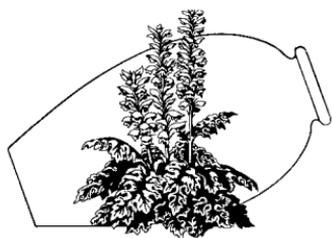


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# **THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN**





## **THE MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN**

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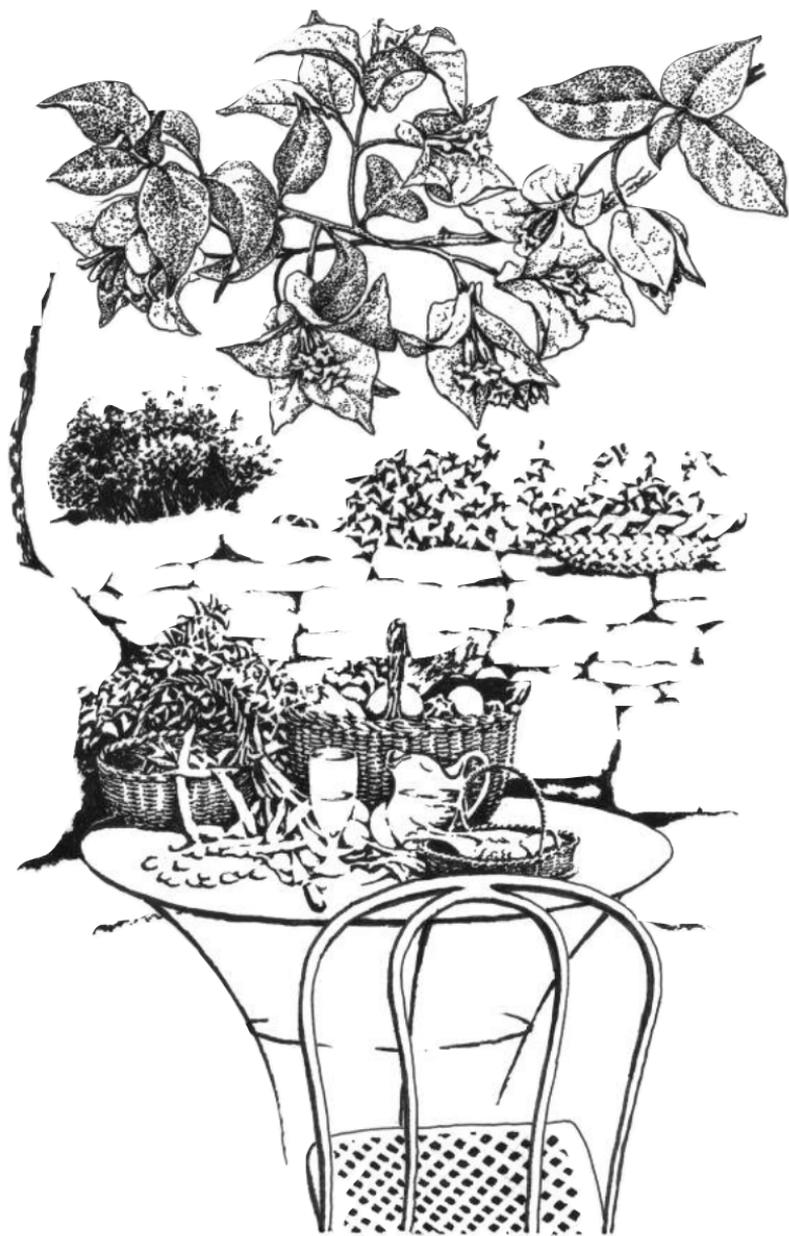
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## MEDITORIAL

As summer arrives, the Mediterranean gardener's preoccupations necessarily focus on water. Some of us may be lucky enough to possess a plentiful supply, while others who are obliged to rely on metered mains water are likely to be thinking anxiously of the bill. Some may simply not have water available at all for use in the garden. And all of us could and should think carefully about wastage. As Heidi Gildemeister writes in her article in this issue, "Indigenous plants take advantage of winter rain and thrive on it... *Nobody waters them in the wild*"; she points out that municipal authorities and hotel administrations could achieve staggering savings in water if they planted mediterranean natives rather than thirsty exotics.

A very pleasing bit of municipal planting spotted recently in Iraklion, Crete, brought the aesthetics of this strategy home to me: on one side of the road lay a meagre flower bed planted with miserable, straggly antirrhinums, while on the other side – in contrast – stood a luxuriant group of flourishing tall red hollyhocks. A form of hollyhock (*Alcea pallida* ssp. *cretica*) grows wild in Crete, though usually pale pink. And hollyhocks thrive in the garden with almost no water (all the same, of course, like most other plants they repay the occasional good soak). Frequently what comes to mind when one thinks of mediterranean plants are the shrubby and/or grey leaved ones: the lavenders and artemisias, the sages and cistuses and rue. Thus one may forget the admittedly humble hollyhock, which nevertheless provides height and colour in the summer garden or indeed the municipal flower bed, just as for that matter one may ignore the sculptural acanthus. Inevitably, since both these plants are so well adapted to Mediterranean conditions, they are also garden thugs who self-seed and spread rampantly (be warned: *Acanthus mollis* is particularly hard to get rid of from places where you do *not* want it).

Water has other uses in the garden, though, apart from irrigation. In issue number 8 of *The Mediterranean Garden* Gianluca Corrazza reminded us that aquatic plants are by no means out of place in this region. A garden pond will of course lose some water through evaporation and will thus need

occasional topping up, yet – apart from the initial outlay when it is filled – a pond is not too demanding waterwise and provides coolness and tranquillity with its waterlilies and flourishing marginals. Indeed, in the present issue Nicholas Stavroulakis, in his informed and informative piece on the design of an Ottoman garden in the U.S.A., describes the reflecting pool as “yet another ‘device’ to induce withdrawal from an ordinary world and entrance into another of beauty, change and peace”. And this other world is perhaps what we are all seeking in our gardens - consciously or unconsciously.

However, to leave the subject of water and return to a more workaday world, this issue also includes information on a valuable project initiated by two members of the MGS. Duncan Ackery and Hamish Warren report on their progress with a database of nurseries supplying Mediterranean plants, which will help us all find a source for some much coveted yet hard to find plant.

Finally, we should like to thank all those members who responded to our plea in the *Meditorial* of our last issue by sending us both articles and drawings.

# DESIGNING AN OTTOMAN GARDEN

Nicholas Stavroulakis

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## **The Missouri Botanical Garden**

In 1819 Henry Shaw, an 18-year-old Englishman, arrived in St. Louis via New Orleans, Canada and New York. St. Louis was the nexus that connected the city with New Orleans by means of the Mississippi River and from thence to the marts of Europe. It was also central to the routes connecting the East and West coasts of the still expanding United States. Shaw prospered through highly conservative merchandising as well as uncanny intuition in real estate. On retirement in 1849 at the age of 40, he was a wealthy man and had built both a town and a country house. Not long after this he returned to England and during a visit to the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth he conceived the idea of creating a botanical garden on a section of his property south-west of St. Louis. In the course of evolving his plan he sought the advice of Sir William Jackson Hooker, the director of Kew Gardens, as well as of Dr. George Engelman, a German physician and botanist living in St. Louis. It was through Engelman that Shaw was introduced to Dr. Asa Gray, a botanist of some stature at Harvard. The four were to join hands in creating over a period of 30 years one of the most prestigious botanic gardens in the world.

Upon his death in 1868 Shaw bequeathed the Garden to the City of St. Louis. Four years prior to this he had established a school of botany and Dr. William Trelease was appointed its first director. Since that time the Garden has grown and prospered under a series of almost visionary directors, and the present incumbent, Dr. Peter Raven, has been responsible for expanding its scientific and public image. Working with the Environmental Planning and Design in Pennsylvania, a master plan has been evolved in which the Garden consists of a series of 'rooms', each playing a special role in the overall design. At present these 'rooms' include a Victorian rose garden, a rainforest enclosed within a geodesic dome, a Japanese and a classic Chinese garden. A bequest was

made in the will of a prominent St. Louis real estate magnate for the creation of an Islamic garden.

The following is a short overview of the considerations that were made not only in evolving the plan but also in determining what kind of Islamic garden would be suitable for the somewhat harsh climate of Missouri. The author was requested by the Garden as well as by EPD to assist in the initial work. The choice of an 18th-century Ottoman garden was dictated by considerations of climate and the fact that by this date Ottoman gardeners had freed themselves sufficiently from the heavy weight of the High Islamic garden traditions of the Near East and Persia and had developed an idiom of their own making. The following material has been taken from several directives used over the past two years to determine not only the form of the garden, but the nuance that it will evoke.

### **General Historical Considerations**

All Islamic gardens, be they in Spain, North Africa, Iran, India or Turkey, have their roots in a quite monolithic religious system which is the source of a common underlying theme. This theme is to be found in the Qur'an, in which paradise is described in some detail as a garden filled with trees, rivers and cool springs. There is an old saying to the effect that among the faithful those who will go immediately to Paradise are *gaziler* (those who fight in the name of Islam) and *bostancilar* (gardeners).

To some degree all of the lands which eventually fell within the realm of Islam already had strong garden traditions. Most of the lands bordering the Mediterranean shared to a certain extent a Greco-Roman tradition and gardens – or at least inner atria that were open to the elements – were a characteristic aspect of domestic architecture.

We know very little of Greek gardens; in fact, the evidence points to an almost total disregard of them as ideal places of retreat. Plato describes excursions of Socrates and his students not into gardens but into the area outside the walls of Athens along the banks of the Ilissos river, but there is no indication that this area was given over to any formal type of control or

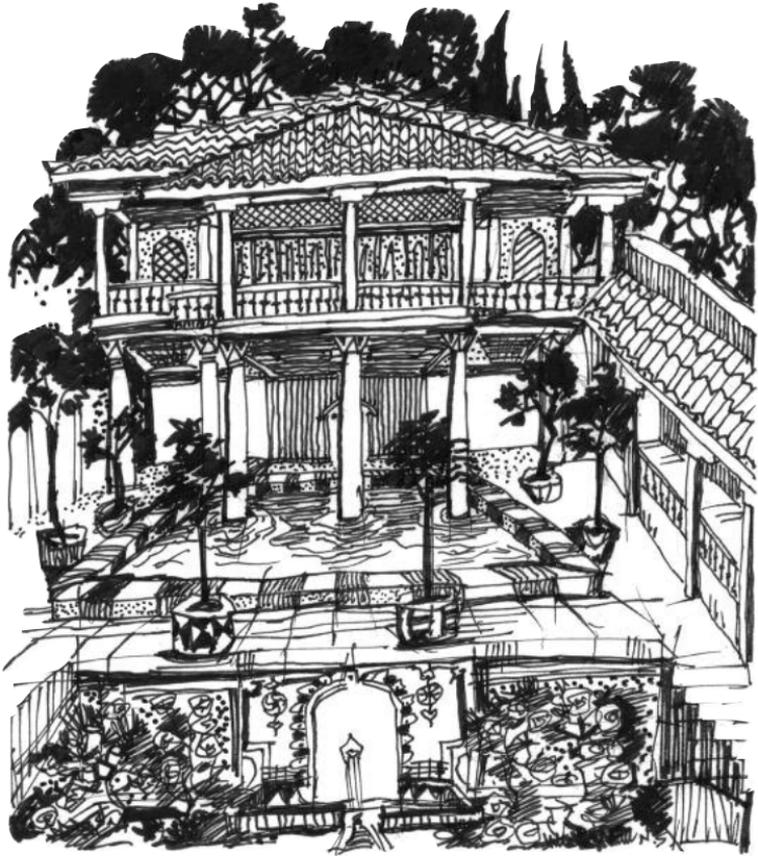
horticultural device. Around the Hephaestium a number of pits have been found that hint at the presence of clay *pithoi* containing trees – but nothing more. The Greeks in general were urban-directed and perhaps during the classical period had a certain antipathy to nature. Like most of the peoples living along the littoral of the Mediterranean, the Greeks developed a domestic architecture that was introverted insofar as that there were few windows directed externally and the energy of the structures was centred on inner atria. Whether or not these were planted is unknown.

The Romans, on the other hand, had a deep sense of nature; despite their Hellenisation and the urban character of much of Roman civilisation, Roman idealism centred on farm or country life. Cicero, Virgil, Seneca and Pliny – to mention only a few Roman writers – all posit rural life as an ideal, and it is well known that all the important senatorial families had their great country estates which included gardens and arbours. Something of this ideal affected the character of Roman atria in domestic architecture. Many were given central pools, others were apparently provided with tanks and other means of collecting rainwater that fell from eaves slanted into the atria. These inner courtyards were in some cases planted. As enclosed gardens they were intimate and by necessity were the centres of most domestic life. Pliny and other Roman writers mention great and extensive gardens in conjunction with estates; however, we have no clear image of how these gardens were laid out. We know that they provided pergolas for grapevines, special beds for various vegetables and, we can assume, other areas for flowers. There is no hint, from either Greek or Roman writers, of any form of theological-cosmic symbolism in connection with either the enclosed or the laid-out gardens.

In Iran, prior to Islam, there was a garden tradition of much more complexity that can be traced back as far as the 6th century BCE<sup>1</sup>. Little remains to give us any sense of what these gardens (which were, for the most part, royal) looked like; we know though that they had two essential elements: an elevated

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<sup>1</sup>For Christian readers, B.C.



Preliminary sketch for the pavilion

viewing pavilion and connected waterways to provide irrigation as well as to cool the air. There is also evidence to suggest that many of these Iranian gardens, part of a tradition that reaches far back into Mesopotamian Civilisation, provided a means of expressing cosmic symbolism and of giving concrete expression to certain concepts of kingship. The king often appeared to his subjects or ambassadors in the midst of a structured and planted garden complete with water courses, intended to reveal his Heaven-designated vicarage over the 'Four Corners of the Earth'.

Islam, as an ideological catalyst, eventually united these lands after the 7th century of the Christian Era; the garden evolved quite naturally out of pre-Islamic types but was tempered and given a new interpretation according to the garden ideal as it appears in the Qur'an. Already by the time of the Umayyad Caliphate (650-75 CE) gardens were an important part of the life of many Muslims. Hisham's palace at Jericho as well as the country retreats of Yazid and others give evidence of extensive gardens that were intimately enclosed or open, with pavilions from which they could be viewed (a garden was not necessarily meant to be walked in), with pools and connected water channels, and richly planted with trees, shrubs and flowers. It is very likely that the Umayyads perhaps adopted very early on a hitherto existing garden tradition. The assumption that the Arabs, being a desert people, were drawn naturally to gardens as a response to the aridity and harshness of the desert ignores much of what we know of early Islam, even during the life of the Prophet. The great complex in which Muhammad lived and taught in Medina had no provisions for a garden as far as we know from various sources. The oasis, an asylum in the desert, a haven from the burning sun and a source of water for both men and animals, appears to have been the ideal that determined the rich images in the Qur'an. But the oasis, as it is, is not a garden.

It is sometimes forgotten that the 'ethnic' Arabs, be they Southern or Northern, who carried out the great and successful conquests of the 7th century CE were eventually a rather small minority in the midst of vast numbers of indigenous peoples, North Africans, Egyptians, Syrians and Anatolians, not to mention the Iranians, who converted to Islam. These peoples, former Christians, Jews, Iranians, Zoroastrians and even Buddhists, were poured into a matrix bringing with them sophisticated traditions of thousands of years' standing. Out of this was to evolve what can be termed High Islamic Civilisation and it is within this period, from the 9th to the 14th centuries, that the Islamic garden in its most recognisable form developed. We know such gardens well from what survives in Spain and North Africa, as well as from descriptions of the great gardens of Baghdad and Damascus.

The Ottoman Turks, beginning in the early 14th century, were to absorb most of the Mediterranean Basin in their expansion, bringing together, and acting as a catalyst within, two great civilisations: that of High Islam in the Near East, and what remained of the Byzantine (East Roman) Empire in the Balkans. Racially quite distinct from the people they conquered and only recently converted to Islam themselves, the Turcmen tribes that were absorbed into the growing Ottoman state were still closely connected with Central Asia and its tradition of nature worship as exemplified in shamanism. The mystical and shamanistic element in the early Ottoman character was inevitably to influence their approach to gardens as Muslims.

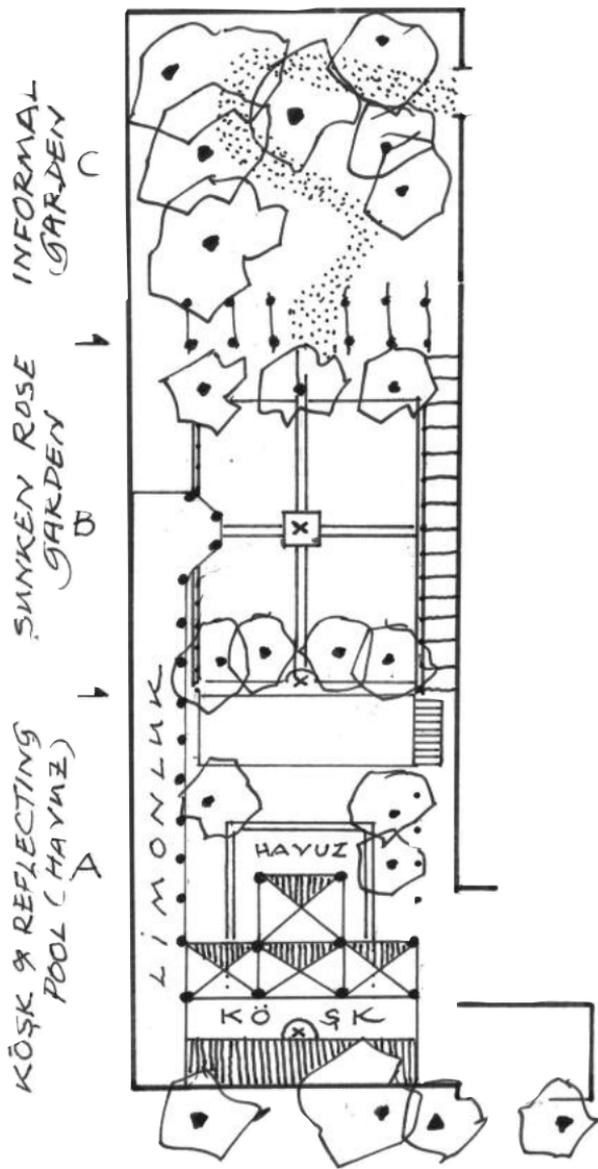
Ottoman gardens fall into roughly three categories: a) those dominated by a pavilion and closely associated with water, b) gardens that are geometrically laid out, usually around a central fountain, c) informal gardens that are intended to mimic nature with little if any human contrivance. As noted above, these three elements – pavilion, geometric layout and a water system – were known not only to Muslims prior to the Ottomans but also to most of the ancient peoples of the Near East. Gardens incorporating one or another or all of these components are mentioned and described by Ottoman and foreign authors from the 16th century onwards. Certain details are also depicted in a number of Ottoman manuscripts. There is also sufficient architectural evidence regarding them for us to obtain a reliable image of what they were like.

What makes the proposal of an Ottoman garden especially realistic in St. Louis is the similarity of its climate to that of north-western Anatolia and especially eastern Thrace where Bursa, Istanbul and Edime are situated. Each of these three cities, capitals at one time of the Ottoman Empire, had extensive imperial gardens, not to mention the scores of gardens that provided places of intimate association with nature and family, within the confines of domestic complexes. We have reliable information about the plants grown in these gardens, and there should be few, if any, difficulties in establishing most of them in Missouri. The gardens of Iran,

North Africa and Syria-Iraq evolved within relatively arid and harsh geographical landscapes. The 'effect' of such gardens – lush with greenery, filled with carefully watered plants, trees and flowers – depends to a great degree on the very sharp contrast that one experiences as one moves from the cramped urban streets that surround them or the harsh dry landscape that provides the setting in which they were built. This initial experience of the garden as a dramatic 'escape' from aridity and harshness is an intentional part of the meaning of the garden in Islam; it is not a place simply to walk in or to look at plants... it is also a place where one undergoes a certain change in thought process: a deepening and broadening of experience within a controlled environment that is built to this end. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to create the geographic setting for a garden of either the Timurid-Iranian or the North African type in the Mid-West.

The extraordinary gardens of Spain and Moghul India, while being constructed in less harsh and arid landscapes, have a distinct atmosphere and character dependent not, as in the cases mentioned above, on geographical terrain, but on interior planting. Citrus trees are an essential element in a Spanish garden of any size. Even today, after 500 years, the tradition is still maintained in every southern Spanish domestic garden, where one will find an orange and/or lemon tree dominating. It is hard to envisage the Alhambra without its citrus groves, and to imagine the great courtyard of the former Grand Mosque of Seville without its orange grove is to extirpate its Islamic character and transform it into a Catholic cathedral (which today it is). Cordoba was famous for its citrus trees. But such trees cannot survive in the US Mid-West under natural conditions. The gardens of Moghul India also depend on vegetation for their real effect, as can be seen by even a cursory glance at the great number of illustrations of gardens that have survived: banyans, bananas and mangos, coconut and date palms are all essential for creating the lush, rich and quite unique combination of texture and contrast in light, dark and shade that is so immediately characteristic of the Muslim gardens in India.

The particular shape of the proposed Ottoman garden in St. Louis permits the three above-mentioned types of Ottoman



Proposed plan of the Ottoman garden

garden to be constructed in quite distinct areas that can be united architecturally and visually. In the following section the site and the proposals for it will be discussed.

### **The entrance**

The entrance to the garden precinct should set the tone for what is to follow; hence it is important that an Ottoman-style gateway be built. It will lead directly into a large hothouse, in Turkish a *limonluk*. A facility such as this would have been normal in any Ottoman garden of any size and importance, as many shrubs, flowers and even small trees were deliberately grown in tubs or other containers to permit their being moved and protected.

The hothouse (*limonluk*) is essential for over-wintering certain shrubs, vines and trees, and was an integral part of the plan of an Ottoman garden. It was customary to grow certain more delicate plants in tubs and pots for two reasons. Many were brought out and moved about at different times of the year to create different effects in the garden. Some would have surrounded, or been set in, empty tulip beds whose moment of glory would have been quite early in the summer. Gardenias, citrus trees, even small cypresses (and later, after their arrival, pots of fuchsias) brought a different life to the garden, which was never considered to be static. This is an important concept to retain in mind. The garden is meant to reflect change and not permanence. Change and flux – in an almost Heracleitan sense – is an important underlying premise in the creation of the garden: nature and man himself are all part of flux and change – only God is beyond its inevitability.

The second use of the *limonluk* was to provide a means for forcing certain bulbs, such as daffodils, hyacinths, lilies, narcissus and especially rare tulips, into early blooming.

Ideally, just within the entrance there should be a fountain to the right. This would be quite small, low, with either running water or a tap that pours into a basin. It is still a custom in Turkey for people to be greeted and to be blessed on departing with water, and in Ottoman times every house – and garden – would have had its fountains at entrances and exits. To throw water after someone in the course of his

departing on a journey is to wish that his going may be as effortless as is the flow of water itself.

The *limonluk* entrance leads directly into the pavilion or *köşk*.

### **The *köşk*, reflecting pool and tulip garden** (Component A)

a) *The köşk*. A pavilion in association with a garden of any worth or size was an essential element, with an authentic and consistent history in all Islamic gardens, not only those of the Ottomans. The plan of this particular pavilion has been derived from a now destroyed *köşk* which was once one of the most dominant features of the great Mevlevi Tekkesi of Salonica. I have chosen this as a model for two reasons: one is that it was quite famous and was reconstructed during the 18th century, incorporating and expanding an earlier *köşk*. It is also very characteristic of the High Ottoman style in its layout and wide eaves. The roof extends a considerable distance beyond the ground plan of the building, providing shade and increasing its overall effect.

The purpose of this pavilion is to provide a graduated and subtle entrance to the garden and thus to create mood and a change in thought and apprehension. It will be relatively dark; having entered it from the *limonluk* – filled with plants and small trees – one will find oneself in a shadowed area of some width, with columns supporting a high ceiling, and through them a vista of the garden.

Roughly half of the ground level of the pavilion will be occupied by a portion of the reflecting pool.

b) *The reflecting pool*. A reflecting pool is an essential element in a garden of this size. The Turks, perhaps more than any other Islamic peoples, have had a consistent passion for water, either stationary or moving. The reflecting pool here will create a rippling surface in which will be reflected the dark ceiling as well as some aspects of the garden beyond. It will be considered to be yet another ‘device’ to induce withdrawal from an ordinary world and entrance into another of beauty, change and peace. Provisions for small jets of water should be made around the edges of the pool that extend beyond the

pavilion. These would function only at desired times.

The pool will also reflect the tulips in the beds around it, or later plantings made in the course of seasonal changes. The garden is to be an experience, even a journey into some form of inner discovery, which is what Ottoman gardens were all about. It will be possible to look directly into the pool from the first floor of the *köşk*. At the level of the tulip garden it will reflect the *köşk* and some of its details, as well as providing a constant pattern of moving images as people move across from the *limonluk* into its lower floor.

c) *The Tulip Garden*. Just beyond, and to either side of the exterior portion of the reflecting pool, will be special beds for planting tulips. The exact choice will be made later after a detailed search for surviving types of Ottoman tulips. These same beds at off-seasonal times will hold either tubs or other means of sustaining plants that have been over-wintered in the *limonluk*. They can also be devoted to growing melons etc. In Ottoman gardens vegetables unabashedly shared a great deal of attention with rare and exotic plants; indeed, in the large garden complexes of the Sultans, produce that exceeded the needs of palace and functionaries was sold on the open market. Thus vegetables and fruits add to the authenticity of this project. Some are also quite beautiful.

This part of the garden will also have sufficient room to plant a number of fruit trees, although the more dramatic flowering types, almonds and damsons, will be reserved for the far end of the rose garden where they will make a good contrast against the dark cypresses which will dominate the informal garden.

It is anticipated that the side wall, currently of wood and separating the site from the parking lot, will be replaced. Along almost half of its present length a stone support base, some two metres high, should be built. On this will be built a stone-backed portico with wooden supports and a tiled roof. This portico will be accessible through both the upper and the lower part of the *köşk* and will be provided with a ramp as well as stairs. At its terminal end it will lead down to a system of connecting stairs and ramps that give access to the rose garden.



A garden in Kula, near Izmir

It is possible to envisage a long trellis connected to the roof of the portico along which scented flowering climbers could be trained. This portico will serve two purposes: it will completely mask the parking lot and will serve as a convenient way of getting 'into' the garden visually should inclement weather make it impossible to go into it physically. From its far end one would have an excellent view of all three components.

Against the brick wall facing the portico an additional trellis could be built, or alternatively especially dramatic flowering

fruit trees could be planted. Ivy would be an important means of breaking up the wall's symmetrical brick pattern. Much of the planting of climbers, fruit and flowering trees in this part of the garden will be determined by the orientation of the site, taking northerly winds and snowfall into consideration, as well as duration of sun during both winter and summer.

### **The rose garden** (Component B)

From this area (i.e. the *köşk* and tulip garden) one descends to the formal rose garden. This entire area has been hollowed out some two metres for two reasons. It cannot be seen when one enters the site under the *köşk*. It is also protected from harsh winds in the winter. Moreover it creates a quite different and intimate atmosphere – one in which other concepts are given expression. The garden is laid out as a square with crossed axes. Against the retaining wall that supports the tulip garden above should be set a somewhat shallow and narrow tank into which water can fall from openings set in the wall. In the very centre is a largish *şadırvan* or fountain. This entire area was considered to be a microcosmic depiction of the macrocosmos. In keeping with very ancient cosmic symbolism, the four sides represent the four ends of the universe as well as the universe itself. In the very centre springs the source of existence and life, the heartspring of the universe, the fount of Reality. In view of the complex tradition of cosmic symbolism at work in medieval Islam, it is not surprising to find that on occasion a viewing *köşk* was built at this centre, not only as a place from within which the king could view the garden in comfortable shade at leisure, but where also on formal occasions he could sit enthroned and be revealed seated amidst the symbolism of the universe itself, the Lord whose vicar he was seen to be. The entire rose garden will be quite lightly cut off from the other two components by means of pergolas as well as a retaining wall with a small fountain, and yet will be linked visually to them.

The rose garden will give ample opportunity to create an atmosphere dominated by roses carefully chosen for their colour and accompanying textures and hues. Lavender, sage, basil, marjoram and many other herbs, as well as delphiniums, calendulas, myrtle and myrrh, backed with trellises of jasmine,

grape and honeysuckle, together with tubs of gardenias and peonies, will make this component quite different from the other two. It would be fitting for certain trees such as pomegranate and persimmon to be planted in this section.

### **The informal garden** (Component C)

The last component will be the informal garden. The Ottomans had a deep love not only for the formal and structured gardens of High Islam but also for more informal gardens that were less dominated and dictated by symbolism and by almost Aristotelian logic. Such gardens were not necessarily grand, and many Ottoman houses had their surrounding informal gardens where one could walk, or more normally sit, and enjoy nature more or less undisturbed by human contrivance. This type of garden is perhaps the most Turkish of all the gardens and is an empathetic expression of a sense of unity with nature that characterised the gardens of the great Turkish and Moghul Sultans. Neither the Arabs nor the Iranians were ever drawn to this type of garden, the likes of which are perhaps only found in China.

The informal garden should have an access that is marked out by a grape arbour to establish a change in tone. The path that winds through the informal garden will be marked out by cypress trees and a profusion of rosemary growing between them. A wall fountain with a receiving pool or tank should be built in the centre of the rear wall. At the far back of the side wall will be planted additional cypresses and where possible other evergreen trees and a few deciduous trees such as hazel, oak, plane or chestnut. If there is enough space, apples, pears and quince trees would be suitable in this part of the garden.

As the garden will be begun from scratch these trees will grow together and thus the deciduous trees will not suffer the difficulties they would encounter if planted in the centre of an area darkened by cypresses. Groundcover in this part of the garden will be highly important. Violets, crocuses, snowdrops and snowflake, buttercups as well as grape hyacinths will create a rich jewel-like carpet. Some of the trees should have ivy trained against their trunks and near the exit figs should be planted.

Our purpose in including such a garden is that it will also mask the empty space at the back of the site, as well as providing a dark background against which many of the jewel-like colours of the garden will be presented. This reflects Ottoman taste itself, a hint of which one can easily obtain from the decoration and decorative devices that were used in both private and palatial rooms. Today, in the 20th century, it is almost impossible to sense the atmosphere that was created in many of the mosques and palaces of Istanbul, described in awe by European visitors. The general dark background of walls and soaring domes was picked out with brilliant darts of colour reflected from Venetian glass windows or jewelled settings and pendants that hung from hidden golden chains. Gilded ostrich eggs, chains whose links were looped with pearls, amber and coral and from which hung emeralds reflected in settings marked with brilliants and diamonds were almost brought to life by the small flickering lamps set in enamelled glass that hung in profusion around the rooms. It is this atmosphere that the garden must also reflect... it is the clue to the Ottoman *zeitgeist*. The choice of trees, shrubs and flowering plants must not only reflect the character of each component of the garden but must contribute to creating this jewel-like and precious appearance of opulence.

# THE MEDITERRANEAN FLORA AND ITS GARDEN USE: THE FLOWERING PARADISE THE TOURIST SEEKS

Heidi Gildemeister

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The following lecture was delivered by Heidi Gildemeister at the International Conference on Tourism and Sustainable Development in the Mediterranean Basin which was hosted last spring by Mallorca and attended by representatives from most Mediterranean countries, including those on its southern shores. This lecture was accompanied by many colourful slides which were selected in order to show the appeal of native plants to hotels and municipalities and in order to make the concise text more accessible.

Diminishing water resources endanger the flowering paradise the tourist seeks. *Mediterranean plants not only save water, they will also become an important tourist attraction.*

In olden times, the Mediterranean region was covered by oak. Except in Turkey, little is left. At the turn of the century, the 'English garden' with its emerald lawns and tropical plants influenced garden styles on the Riviera. It was believed that water and exotics were essential for splendid gardens. This trend has persisted until today. Where farmers formerly raised dry crops such as carob, fig and wheat, people today envisage swimming pools.

Since water will soon become unavailable, Eastern Mediterranean regions have explored water-saving methods. Apparently, *water use is easily reduced by 50%*. However, there is no need to sacrifice beauty for the sake of water conservation. Hundreds of native Mediterranean plants are the brilliant alternative to water-wasting garden practices (*Arbutus, Cistus, Hypericum balearicum, Santolina, Viburnum tinus*). Contrary to the popular image of a water-saving landscape of cacti in a rocky area, drought-tolerant plants provide attractive flowers. They fit every landscape and offer the same variety as the

water-demanding exotics. Many plants in existing gardens (see glorious lantanas) are drought-tolerant.

Indigenous plants take advantage of winter rain and thrive on it. Once established (after a year or two), natives do solely with winter rain, going dormant when the climate turns unfavourable with the summer's heat and drought. They require no irrigation and indeed may even resent it. *Nobody waters them in the wild*. Their exuberant winter and spring blossoming is a great tourist attraction (consider almonds in flower). Indigenous plants which survive summer in style, such as rue, lavender and rosemary, provide an attractive summer look. Moreover, in the hot Mediterranean sun the fragrance that many of these plants give off pervades the air with scent, cherished by tourists who walk through a lavender field. After all, didn't Napoleon recognise his native Corsica from afar by the scent of its plants?

What is more, the strategies native plants have evolved in order to survive dry summers are fascinating. Getting to know them could become a major tourist attraction. A light-reflecting coating to the leaves (e.g. *Artemisia*), leaf reduction (e.g. pines) or indeed the above-mentioned aromatic oils help plants to reduce water loss via their leaves.

But we do not have to use Mediterranean natives exclusively. South Africa, California and southern Australia also have a mediterranean climate and their water-saving plants may be grown together with Mediterranean ones for additional colour (*Hakea*, *Grevillea*, *Plumbago*).

Although most Mediterranean plants are drought-tolerant, they benefit from favourable growing conditions. Mediterranean terracing results from centuries-old wisdom and is a main feature of Mediterranean landscapes. Such terracing lets rainwater infiltrate, holds back soil and avoids erosion to the benefit of a better planting site; yet many native plants survive even on little soil.

Planted in autumn, indigenous plants settle in over winter. Being self-sufficient, they mean low maintenance. Since they are healthy, they do not require harmful chemicals. *Staggering savings in water, chemicals and labour will please local authority or hotel administrations, while tourists applaud the chemical-free environment.*

Mediterranean natives suit all regions. Contrary to wild landscapes, a careful plant selection, grouped according to landscaping rules, allows natives to develop their potential. Like all plants, they look their best when well maintained. Green waste is an ever present concern for hotel gardens and municipal parks; more compact and slower-growing than, for example, the tropical banana, *natives produce less waste!*

Impressive water savings result from reducing the water-wasting lawn, which tends to use three times as much water as most other plantings (it could be replaced, for example, by Mediterranean fan palm and Moroccan oleander). However, where natives are combined with a water-demanding lawn (e.g. golf courses), keep the water-using plants in one area and the drought-tolerant ones in another. Indigenous plants not only save water and avoid considerable expense, but they also *introduce the local flora as a new and captivating tourist attraction*. Fifty-one percent of tourists give priority to unspoilt nature when choosing a holiday destination. Thus city parks and hotel gardens – or indeed all public places which use the flowering native flora – will awaken great interest in tourists. The use of such plants counterbalances the dire consequences of tourism for the land, can upgrade maturing or ageing resorts, and unifies the coastal hotel complexes with the inland. *At little expense, drought-tolerant groundcovers* (such as nasturtium, seen on the Canary Islands) *can turn gruesome wastelands into a glorious sight*.

Indeed, public gardens may preserve the flora threatened in nature. Expenditures rest with the nurseries who supply the market, and sustainability does not involve more than their goodwill. Moreover, planting the Mediterranean edibles, such as almond, date, fig or grape, makes it possible for tourists to feel a sense of connection with the Mediterranean peoples' past and their food. In Greece Mr. George Sfikas of the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature is updating a native plant list for distribution in order to inspire municipalities. *Such ecologically sound attitudes provide the flowering paradise the tourist seeks*.

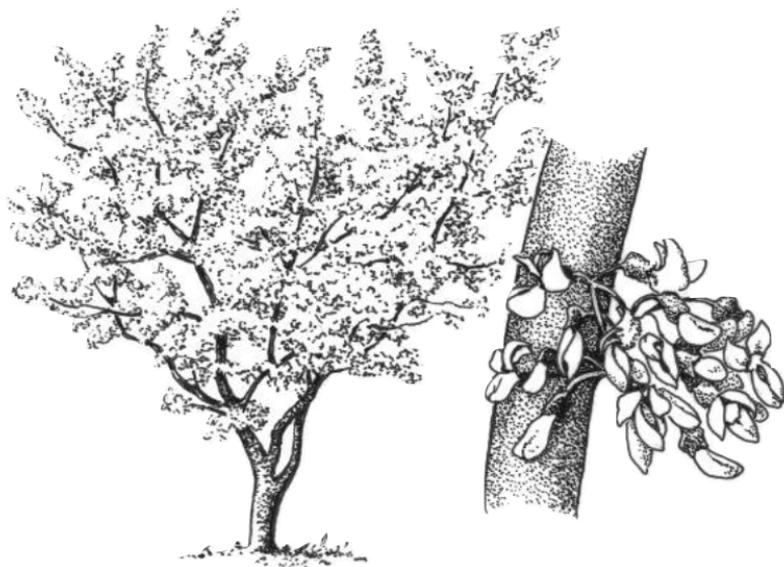
Even the attractive native flora of desert regions can be used for an evergreen and flowering surrounding (see *Flowers*

of Saudi Arabia by Collenette, 1985). I remember in this context the hotel development at Sharm-el-Sheikh. Indigenous plants (here *Cercis siliquastrum*, native to the Eastern Mediterranean) satisfy today's needs *without endangering future ones*. No water for irrigation is needed and it is thus not taken away from the local people – which improves their present and future standard of living.

*Native plants*, ecologically and economically sustainable and without drawbacks, fulfil the Mediterranean Action Plan and the European Union requirements. At little cost, they achieve a notable impact. Above all, *they show to every tourist the city council's (or hotel administration's) ecology-minded attitude and respect for the environment*.

I thank all those who have the Mediterranean at heart.

Heidi Gildemeister's book *Mediterranean Gardening, A Waterwise Approach* describes 1000 drought-tolerant plants. English, French, German and Spanish editions available.



*Cercis siliquastrum*

# GROWING EVERLASTING FLOWERS IN MANI

Ersie & Lou Cajoleas

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On a visit to Holland many years ago, a display of dry flowers in a shop caught Ersie's eye. She said that if we ever had our own garden she would want to grow such everlasting flowers.

Years later, after we had come to live in Greece, we decided to build a small country house on a plot of land – one tenth of a hectare – in the Mani in southern Greece, that had been in the family for generations. It was uncultivated, wild, except for about twenty olive trees and a dry-stone wall on one side. The location was idyllic, quiet, entrancing: a hill behind, mountains to the east, a view of the sea in front, and the village just to the south-west. Anyone who enjoys the countryside can appreciate the attraction and our enthusiasm there to create a garden.

While the house was being built, on each visit we began little by little to lay out a garden. There was much cleaning up of weeds, loose stones, dead branches. The land is on three levels, each about 80cm higher than the next as one looks up the hill from the main road. Although we are in Outer Mani which is green, with endless olive orchards in all directions, we had our fair share of Maniot stone, characteristic of the landscape of Inner Mani. Each of the elevations enjoyed attractive natural outcroppings of rock, with added stones supporting the terracing. These of necessity became incorporated into the planting plans and provided overall interest and variety to the garden. A fence was erected around three sides and a stone wall built in front with a wooden gate, to keep out the wandering cows and sheep that had become accustomed to grazing there.

We were city dwellers seriously intent on learning to garden; there was much to learn. It was soon realised that our alkaline soil was packed hard, difficult to dig into. In those areas selected for planting, we turned over the soil, removed loose stones, added sand, peat moss, compost and manure, thus giving some lightness and air to the intended borders and

vegetable area. The many small and large stones unearthed were put to good use in the garden.

It was important not to wait until the house was completed to begin planting. On our verandah in Athens we had begun a peach and a nectarine – both from seed – before we had any thought of building in Mani. It is a constant delight to grow plants from seed. These young trees were the first to go into the ground. But once we began to dig beyond 30 or 40cm we encountered solid rock. Locating a spot that was free of such underground obstacles became a trial and error procedure. We persisted and managed to plant a few fruit trees and evergreens.

The next step was to locate seeds. A couple of good books on drying flowers became our guide. On a trip to London and visits to the garden sections of large department stores and to Clifton gardens, several packets were collected. Now one can find some seeds in Athens.

In the early spring, seeds are sown in trays on our verandah in Athens and later the seedlings are transported to the south when we relocate for the summer. The first plantings included *Helichrysum bracteatum* or strawflowers, which produce yellows, oranges and rusts, and *Xeranthemum annuum* or immortelle, which produces mauve, pink and white flowers. Since those first successes and over the past ten years, Ersie has become rather expert on dry flowers. Over the years the garden has blossomed with *Helipterum manglesii* (everlasting daisy), *Gomphrena globosa* (globe amaranth), *Amaranthus caudatus* (love-lies-bleeding), *Limonium sinuatum* (statice), *Physalis alkekengi* (Chinese lantern), *Achillea millefolium* (golden yarrow), *Salvia horminum* [now *S. viridis*] (clary), *Celosia cristata* [now *C. argentea*] (cockscomb). Most of these thrive in any soil given water and full sun.

Because we continue to discover seeds of dry flowers, the borders have become wider, and parts of Lou's vegetable garden have been encroached upon. The strawberry patch, however, has remained hallowed. All these annual everlasting flowers grow among other annuals and perennials in the borders.

Harvesting dry flowers in the early evening of a warm summer day avoids the dampness of morning dew or of a



*Limonium sinuatum*

*Celosia cristata*

*Physalis alkekengi*

*Helichrysum bracteatum*

*Xeranthemum annuum*

*Gomphrena globosa*

*Helipterum manglesii*

humid day. Flowers are collected when in bud as the flowers will open soon after and maintain their colour much longer. The flowers remain on their own stems, except for the

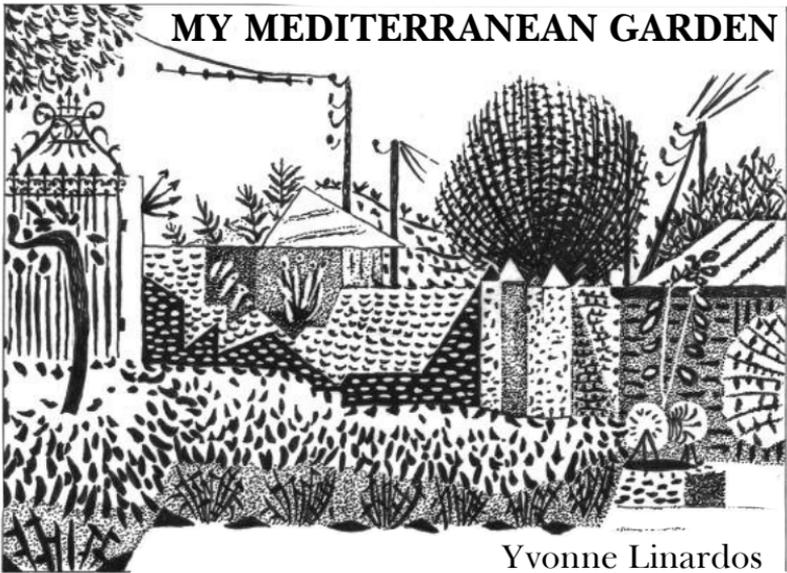
*Helichrysum*, held together in bunches and hung upside down to dry fully in our storage room. Rubber bands are practical around the stems as the stems shrink while drying. The stems of *Helichrysum* are short and ungainly. We gather only the flowers and Lou's job is to go round the garden and the adjacent open fields to collect the strong stems of a certain wild bush (whose identity remains unknown) and to remove the tiny dead leaves. A new stem is inserted into the back of each flower and as the flower dries it contracts around the new stem.

Creating bouquets and posies is the next satisfying stage. Colours and textures may be combined or emphasised. There are vibrant reds, bright oranges, rusts and golden yellows, or pale mauves, pinks and purples, as well as various whites. *Ammobium alatum* (winged everlasting) is a prized addition to white bouquets because it maintains its natural whiteness for years even though the yellow centres become quite dark, almost black, making a dramatic contrast with the white petals. Each bouquet is unique in colours, in size, in shape and in appropriateness to its container and to its potential location.

Some arrangements may be enhanced with such fillers as dried *Gypsophila*, *Delphinium elatum* (larkspur), or the seed pods of *Nigella damascena* (love-in-a-mist), *Papaver somniferum* (opium poppy), or various grasses such as *Briza media* (quaking grass), *Lagurus ovatus* (hare's tail), canary, and hair grass - all of which we find on our land. Recently discovered was *Statice dumosa* growing wild among the water-eroded stones by the seaside.

Our friends and relatives have been appreciative recipients of Ersie's dry flower arrangements from our garden in Mani. These bouquets will last for many years.

*Note: There are numerous flowers which can be dried either simply by air drying, or using desiccants such as silica gel, borax, alum or fine sand, or using glycerine. Tempting as this is, we enjoy growing naturally dry flowers and continue to look for new ones to try.*



Yvonne Linardos

I have a very small crescent-shaped yard to call my Mediterranean garden. It fronts my grandfather's house which is at least one hundred years old. A cousin's house which is three hundred years old and dates back to the Venetians stands to one side. I envy his view which stretches across the Corinthian gulf, looking on to snow-capped Mt. Parnassus, as well as his upper floor which has all the romance of an Angelopoulos film, with glimpses of sky peeping through his roof tiles. Various sickly shrubs, encroaching fig trees and ancient stumps choke my little garden, but also provide privacy from the dirt road. This track leads up to the one antiquity of my village, the Timios Stavros (Holy Cross) chapel, dating back to the 13th century, in whose reliquary shed lie heaps of skulls and bones; they appealed to both the child and to the artist in me.

For two years – this is how long it took me to get started – I thought about my Mediterranean garden (as I cleaned out the basement and house of mouse-nibbled mattresses single-handedly, horrifying the various pig-slop locals and relatives: 'What could that girl accomplish, get an Albanian to do it'.) For the house is a shambles of shabby renovations by incompetent workmen, earthquake damage, damp and age.

Further up the mountain, rivers, streams and irrigation channels (known as *avlakia*) run down or filter water beneath the ground and pass beneath my grandfather's modest little wine cellar/basement/stable (originally the ground floor, as a chimney indentation in the stone wall indicates). On a cool summer night even young bones creak with rheumatism.

I have thought of trying both to restore the old house and to do something informed and artistic with the garden, with help from my archaeological friends from work, the MGS and other specialists, although in a sense it seems a shame to do anything that would jar with the tumbledown shabbiness of its present picturesque condition. With these goals in mind I chose an architect who is a colleague from the Restorations Department of the Archaeological Service, joined the MGS and prowled round with a trowel for cuttings and roots of local flora, so that without very much expense or technical knowledge I could start making my garden (because restoring the house in a structurally correct and proper manner will be expensive as well as exhausting). I have begun to 'bully' a relation and part-owner, to consider earthquake faults below ground, and to expend myself on an accurate architectural ground plan and topographical drawing of the site. So far I have acquired some cacti for the hedge to replace the chicken wire fence, as well as papyrus and bulrushes for the little pond of my imagination.

In his *Pocket Guide to Gardening*, Alan Titchmarsh says: "In reality gardening is 50% common sense, 25% knowhow, 20% perspiration and 5% luck." In my garden it is presently 75% perspiration. The clay soil has at least five levels of broken sherds from roof tiles, is choked with irrelevant roots and 'aggravated' by a comical garden pest, my father, who jokingly teases me by throwing stuff over the porch just after I have cleared away a square foot of ancient debris. I average about one square foot per summer.

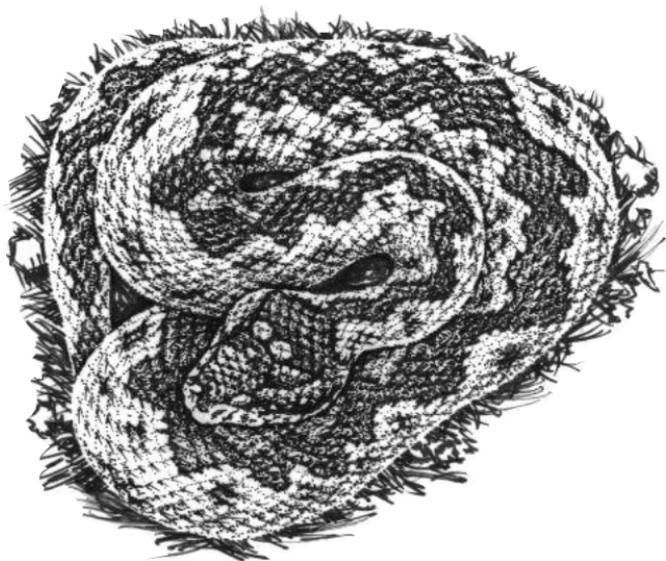
Seventy years ago my father migrated enthusiastically away from these damp problems (many died from malaria bred in the swamps of the area) to drier Australia. But now the trend is to migrate back to the countryside. At least, my trend is. Failing Dad, when I need advice about local matters and techniques, I

ask old ‘uncle’ John Zapheiroopoulos, who used to play with him when they were boys, and cousin Phoula, who farms locally and advised sturdy fences to keep out forest animals. “You have to watch out for martens!” she warned me anxiously. The very next day someone ran one over with his car.

With time (the rest of my life) and the help of Dad, uncle John, cousin Phoula and Alan Titchmarsh, perhaps I can exorcise the flabby ghost of foolish cousin Maria who said in her high-frequency voice, her eyes popping out incredulously, “You mean you’d *actually* go and live there?” From my point of view it beats her groomed lawn and flat in a fancy suburb...

The fields are teeming with life, mostly insect life. Wasps incubate in the earthquake cracks in the mud brick walls of old ruined farmhouses, flies abound due to the barnyard animals. Repulsive brown and white striped spiders visit us boldly at night, seeking flies and people to devour. Mice scuttle irritatingly in the rafters. Last summer I came equipped with an Athens tomcat who went into transports of joy at the mice, rabbits and hunting! The various butterflies might interest a collector. Many birds, large and small, sometimes brightly coloured, perch on the fig boughs and peck at the fruit, providing relief from the reptilian life – little adders that hatch in the autumn. In uncle John’s larger, ‘newer’ cement house swallows nest inside the entrance hall and corridor. Last year an owl visited us, calling “toooo toooo” to us as we rested on the porch at night. Would a Venus flytrap do well in this climate, does any member know? I tried those ecological fill-them-with-water fly traps last year, but you need tons of them and end up with a lot of plastic waste. And an incinerator is last on my list of musts at the moment, although the municipality could use some to prevent spontaneous combustion forest fires due to rubbish dumps.

This year the 75% perspiration involved removing the first of a lot of old rusted barbed wire probably dating from the Industrial Revolution. This wire twined around the shrubs, burrowed beneath the roots of trees and old stumps, surfaced above ground and was lost in the highly flammable clumps of dry grass, which ignite so easily when forest fires rage and ruin valuable forests. Aunt Helen, aged 90 and formerly a school



*Vipera ammodytes*

teacher in this village when the population numbered 300 souls, cried bitterly when a fire ravaged the forests she had planted as saplings with her schoolchildren all those years ago. “The soil will all be washed away” she wept. She is the real owner of my garden.

My first goal is to make the garden comfortably accessible. There is an iron garden gate attached to a stone wall. An ancient mulberry tree stands squashed into one side of the stone wall which encircles the house. One spreading fig stands to the other edge of the wall. Between them a natural entry to the yard is formed. But do I want this rotter of a fig tree? Of the four monster figs in the garden, one or two at the very most would be enough to provide the fruit and shade. Although I expect that in fact they constitute one tree root system. What do the clever experienced members of the MGS suggest for variety, texture, colour? (I favour blues, whites, yellows.) Citrus do not do well at this altitude (750m), I’m told, and although another summer resident has planted an olive from Halkidiki (Northern Greece) in his yard I have it on the

best authority from a Kalamata friend (Southern Greece) that rocky soil is what olives desire, so I will have to consider walnuts for my clay soil, according to a soil technologist.

The fig tree looks pretty growing profusely and wildly and would not bother me were it not for the damp earth (whose source I will discover when/if the heavy renovations are approved by the senior members of the family), which encourages these trees to prosper. In fact I suspect the sewer is responsible for the fig's luxuriant growth. I propose – quite seriously – a Mediterranean Plumbing Society as well! In any case, one could easily imagine a horror film starring these fig trees malignantly strangling a house and its inhabitants.

Perhaps a sweet-smelling jasmine would be a good idea to welcome the visitor up the walk. The walk is long and there are other shrubs – some form of holly bush and three large trees which I have not yet bothered to identify as I am still removing sherds. I have never made an entire garden before. Should one do it like a drawing, roughly blocking in each area, or should one complete it piece by piece, which is easier when you have more determination than physical strength? Also, we do not yet live here year-round; I expect the damp of the house in its present condition would kill us in winter. And then there is the problem of security. Furthermore, although easily accessible from the city by car or bus, transportation to and from comes expensive. It is a pity that provincial buses went out of fashion when everyone bought Mercedes.

I know that the other relatives will be upset if I change too much, and anyway this is not my goal. I just want the front garden to be clean, pretty and sweet-smelling, so I can sit in it and paint and so that the small house can receive more sunlight than it does at present. The oldest inhabitants are the mulberry trees. I was too overworked this year to make jam from their fruit which thickly carpeted the tiny courtyard. And possibly one could replace the fig tree with a vine which does not grow *quite* so high or encroach so menacingly.

For this peace is my real reason for 'burying' myself here, apart from the doctor's advice for my elderly father ("take him back to his village"): to get away from the rat race. It is not that the sort of people who make life intolerable in the city do not

exist here too, but at a pinch here one can go and lose oneself in some wild or empty place and talk to an owl, or look at a darting marten, or wonder at a wild flower, or – if feeling more morbid – go and drink of the river Styx (or Lethe) whose source is conveniently located close by. The history book describes the native flowers and plants found near this famous spring and I list them here for those interested: *Viola chelmea* Hal., *Aster cyllenaeus* B et O, *Globularia stygia* Orph., *Alectrolophus pubescens* Bois et Heldr., *Teucrium aroanium* Orph., and *Orchis cordigera* Fr. [now *Dactylorhiza cordigera*].

Any suggestions for my garden from experienced members and real gardeners would naturally be welcome. This is my first effort and I am just blundering along. What's more, technically it does not belong to me. It is just that the other younger members of the family, born and bred to the troubles of European and Levantine history, are not as motivated as me, the product of a suburb in Australia, nor are they as enchanted.



The Well House

## ANYTHING FOR A QUIET LIFE

Ann Grundy

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Our first house in the Languedoc was a traditional stone village house without a garden, so we built a roof terrace and grew geraniums in pots that struggled to survive from one visit to the next. Five years ago we bought our second house, complete with two and a half acres of wild and overgrown gardens.

We wanted a house with a large garden to be our permanent home and to provide a bit of a challenge – well, a challenge we have.

Many years ago (we think about 150) there was a well laid out garden, or as they call it around here a *parc*, with walks through well cultivated and clipped shrubberies and a wonderful collection of evergreen and deciduous trees and conifers, including three sequoia-type conifers looking a little sad at the moment, as well as a few formal flower beds. A tumbledown grotto at the end of an avenue of lilacs, a well house (complete with well) surrounded by box hedges and plane trees and a summer house urgently in need of repair all added to the charm of the place.

This year we are finally moving in on a permanent basis, so at last we can do some real sorting out. The three or four visits during the first year were spent hacking down the brambles that grew not only over everything but up into the trees as well. The formal flowerbeds have a lot of yuccas in them but are also very overgrown with self-sown *Viburnum tinus*, Judas trees (*Cercis siliquastrum*), ash seedlings and wild clematis.

No real gardening as such has been done yet; simply clearing areas on visits and keeping them clear has been the main task. However, we are now getting a little bit organised. All the plane trees down the drive have been pollarded on a rota system and a record kept. The well house itself has been rebuilt and the box hedge clipped, with new growth appearing in the bare patches.

This spring everything looked particularly colourful; all the wild flowers in the two upper meadows mingling with the wild scarlet gladioli, blue irises and wild roses were wonderful. We hope to keep the whole of this garden looking like a semi-wild place by planting indigenous plants and trying to maintain a natural feel with a few surprises here and there.

The herbs planted in a small area near the front door look after themselves and are doing very well, as are some santolinas planted three years ago. What we really need are some ideas for flowering shrubs (not more than three feet high) for two flower beds, so readers' thoughts would be welcome. It is a shady, sheltered area.

Next year we hope to get the summerhouse renovated so we can use it for overwintering plants. We also hope to figure out the route of the underground water system around the garden. Does anyone know a friendly dowser?



The Summer House

## ***FEIJOA* (ACCA)**



Philip McMillan Browse

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The Pineapple Guava (*Feijoa sellowiana*) [now *Acca sellowiana*] is a member of the Myrtle family emanating from Uruguay, Southern Brazil and Northern Argentina. It is a shrub which is of as much value in the garden for its ornamental merit as for its fruiting qualities: it is a dual-purpose plant of the highest order.

It grows into a small shrub and sometimes a small tree of generally loose habit, to about 3+m, although it can be kept bushy by judicious pruning. It is an evergreen plant with a white felting on the young shoots and expanding leaves. The leaves are a distinct glaucous-green on top and silvery-white on the reverse.

It is an extremely drought-tolerant subject although it will perform more satisfactorily with occasional deep waterings, especially when the fruits are expanding; it will, conversely, grow quite adequately under irrigated conditions.

The flowers, which are of a good size (3cm across) and showy, are produced towards midsummer from the basal buds of the current season's stems. They consist of four white, waxy petals which subtend a boss of very numerous, upstanding, bright red stamens, extremely decorative in their own right. However, in addition they are edible with a mild, sugary taste and a firm texture. This makes them a novel and unusual adjunct to ice creams or desserts and for decorating salads.

The fruit is an elongated, egg-shaped, shiny, yellow-green to grey-green berry, about 5cm long. It has a thick and

smooth-textured skin with the remains of the calyx still attached at the top end. The flesh is greenish white to amber in colour and is very juicy, with a few small black seeds embedded in it. When mature it has a rich and aromatic flavour, which is best described as reminiscent of a well-ripened pear, although by others as having undertones of strawberry or pineapple; whatever, it is pleasant and distinctive. It can be eaten fresh or used for making jam and preserves, or as a constituent of fruit salads.

As a garden plant *Feijoa* can readily be pruned to shape prior to the beginning of each growing season. It will withstand both wind and salt spray and is tolerant of marginal frostings during the winter. It will require relatively high light intensity and warm temperatures to mature its fruits satisfactorily. Failure to produce fruits, however, is just as likely to be attributable to lack of pollination as to unsuitable climatic conditions; it is therefore prudent to grow more than one clone to achieve reasonable cropping levels, and even those varieties described as self-fertile will be more prolific if cross pollinated.

The following varieties are usually available, virtually all of which originate in New Zealand where the crop is grown commercially. Seedlings or selections of unknown provenance should be avoided as yields, fruit size, flavour and quality are likely to be inferior, although the ornamental value is not diminished and the flowers will be usable.

'Apollo' is a less vigorous shrub than is the norm (about 2m) and is self-fertile. The fruits are medium-sized and have a smooth, light green skin with a blue-green bloom; it is heavy yielding.

'Coolidge' is a self-fertile variety which produces small fruits with a mild flavour.

'David' is a heavy yielding variety with medium-sized fruits of typical shape, suitable for eating fresh or canning.

'Gemini' is the most effective self-fertile variety, i.e. it produces the highest yields without cross pollination. It develops into a bush some 2.5m × 2.5m with a spreading habit. The fruits are medium-sized, egg-shaped with a very smooth dark green skin and heavy bloom.

'Mammoth' is an old and established variety which develops into a slightly more upright bush, some 3m × 2.5m. It produces heavy yields of large, oval fruits. It combines best when used with 'Triumph' as a pollinator as they are synchronous in blooming.

'Robert' is an early fruiting variety with medium-sized fruits which mature about two months before 'Mammoth' and 'Triumph'. It develops into a bush 2m × 2m.

'Triumph' is also an old and established variety with smallish fruits which are rounder than those of 'Mammoth'; it is similarly heavily yielding and combines well with 'Mammoth' as a pollinator. It is a late fruiting type and so provides an extended season for fresh fruit.

'Unique' is a vigorous, upright and spreading small tree. It is precocious in flowering and fruiting and is self-fertile. The fruits are large in size, oval in shape and with a smooth, light green skin and blue-green bloom. It is extremely heavy-yielding and a reliable cropper. This is a relatively modern variety and a very useful garden plant.

# EVENING PRIMROSES IN THE ANTIPODES

Caroline Davies

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In November 1793, John and Elizabeth Macarthur moved into the house they had built near Parramatta, in New South Wales, and called it Elizabeth Farm. Pink China roses and lilies were soon growing in the garden, a fragment of which can be seen today, recreated by the Historic Houses Trust of NSW.

The original garden at Elizabeth Farm was the typical square plot of early Australia with straight paths, hedges and neat plantings of shrubs, vegetables, fruit trees and a few flowers. The layout developed as the house was rebuilt on a grander scale, reflecting the growing fashion for lawns and trees planted in the English landscape manner. Among the trees which survive from the Macarthurs' day are ancient olives (*Olea europaea*) and a Chinese elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*) which was propped up in 1987 to prolong its life.

The verandahs draped with climbers are one of the most attractive features of the restored homestead. These were an early addition to the Macarthurs' home, soon after a verandah had been added to Government House in Sydney. Verandahs became popular in Australia because they extended and shaded the house from the hot summer sun. They were also a pleasant place in which to gather on long summer evenings to admire the garden. Today, evening primroses at Elizabeth Farm create a lively splash of yellow for visitors who pause on the eastern verandah. This is the picture I carried away with me after I first visited Elizabeth Macarthur's garden. Among the European, Asian and Australian plants, the American *Oenothera* held its own.

The common evening primrose (*O. biennis*) is believed to have reached Europe in 1619, having been sent from Virginia to Padua. It soon arrived in Britain where the large satiny-yellow, fragrant flowers quickly became a favourite of cottage gardeners. A biennial, the plant was also used as a cough treatment and for skin irritations. In some countries, the root

was cooked as a vegetable or added to salads. Although regarded as a “troublesome weed” by the eighteenth century, the evening primrose was recommended for city gardens as it would flourish in “the smoke of London”. In more recent years, Oil of Evening Primrose has been found to be effective in the treatment of a number of degenerative diseases of the nervous system and to give relief for symptoms of premenstrual tension.

There are more than 80 species of evening primrose. Many of these have sweetly-scented flowers which open at night. But there are a few anomalies. Evening primroses are not primroses but members of the same family as fuchsias and willowherbs: *Onagraceae*. Some of them are not yellow, others do not suffer from insomnia.

In my Melbourne garden, evening primroses are definitely day-and-night flowering. One variety has large pink-veined flowers which open with the sunshine. An endless succession continues through summer. The plants tend to disappear in winter but reappear with the warmer weather, when they spread enthusiastically. Tending to sprawl in the garden, they look wonderful on banks or in hanging baskets.

This rose-pink evening primrose is drought-tolerant and thrived in our recent hot dry summer. It is sold in Australia as *Oenothera speciosa* and also comes in white. I have read that this variety is a spectacular wild flower in Texas where millions of them carpet the ground along the roadside. Mine have no problem in living up to this reputation. In comparison, the Missouri primrose (*O. missouriensis*), with its huge, cupped, yellow flowers, was miserable with our abnormally high temperatures. Another attractive white variety has a luminous quality at night and grows as tall as the common yellow flower. None can match the yellow’s determination to self-perpetuate.

This evening primrose is regarded as a weed in North America, a pretty garden plant in England, and it thrives in a sunny sandy situation. I will always associate the brilliant yellow with Elizabeth Macarthur’s garden at Elizabeth Farm, which she once described as “seemingly the most peaceful place on earth”.



## TALKING TOMATO

Tom Wellsted

When I first thought of writing a few notes about tomatoes it was with the idea of soliciting other views, sources and methods of successful cultivation in a mediterranean climate. All these aims still remain but I seem to have uncovered a fascinating world with my own investigations. I wonder if there is any other vegetable fruit which is so widespread across the globe and that seems to have given rise to so many 'national' dishes? Yet the origin of the *Lycopersicon* species used in the many incredible variations we now enjoy are all Andean. Naturally such a plant has also attracted the unfortunate attention of politicians and other missile throwers. The legislated, standardised tomato is now nearly inedible and there may well be many people who have never had the pleasure of knowing what a good tomato actually tastes like. Moreover, these frightful shop-sold things are often extremely expensive and in some form of limbo from which they can never go on to ripen properly but rot instead.

Grow your own and do grow a few surplus for, as I have usually found, extremely welcome gifts. An elderly neighbour, now some 87 years old, with an ever-expanding family of over 40 individuals, stores in her refrigerator, for short periods, all the surplus I can let her have, until she can distribute them herself to the outposts of her family or visitors. Even the best-quality bought fruits rarely equal those one may grow at home. And what an amazing selection of varieties there is to choose from; what a problem to know which to choose.

Some writers in previous issues of this quarterly have questioned exactly what can be meant by a mediterranean climate – and looking into the tomato world has led me, at any rate, to some surprising finds and facts. California has been

mentioned from time to time, and California in latitude does indeed run on much the same parallels as parts of the North African Mediterranean, in particular Morocco. The seed firm of Thompson & Morgan lists the excellent 'Roma' type 'Brigade' which they say is grown in millions of tons in California. This versatile tomato may be used for almost any culinary purpose, being very good even as a salad fruit. It is probably not surprising that the tomato has been extensively developed in north America but the origin of some of their forms is even odder. Going north, Lake Valley Seeds of Boulder, Colorado list the super 'Bradleys Pink', while Park Seeds of South Carolina have had 'Pink Girl'. Both these varieties produce delicious fruits of perhaps 300g, large, slightly flattened, round, pink – the pink is really more of a deep rose colour. Unfortunately Park is not inclined to send seed abroad. Not all is lost, for Louisa Jones has kindly given me the catalogue of Graines Baumaux, in France, and they do list 'Pink Girl'. Pursuing the Mediterranean up the U.S.A., we come to the most interesting seed firm of Underwood Gardens. They are based at Bensenville on the outskirts of Chicago. Chicago, you may be surprised to read, is on the same parallel as Rome, yes, Italian Rome, and is on the shores of a great lake. In fact Lake Michigan is the largest lake entirely in the U.S.A. and indeed the fourth largest lake in the world, I believe. Is there a Mediterranean connection with water here? Bensenville evidently gets quite warm in the summer, for Mrs. Underwood has told me that a native American test for sowing beans and corn is that if a person can sit on the ground with a bare bottom without getting chilled the ground is ready. Brussels legislators might like to ponder this fundamental but I sincerely hope don't take it up with a standard test in view. Mrs. Underwood catalogues many very interesting, open-pollinated, varieties. Some of these are very old types such as the 200-year-old, or so, variety named 'Big Rosy'. The name was given by an impressed neighbour for the fruits regularly weigh 1-1.5 kg. Some size, and reputedly of good flavour too. This firm also lists 'Russian Plum'. This is one of those very dark, blackish-red forms; Graines Baumaux have the similarly-coloured, round 'Noir de Crimée'. The

Russian connection is even firmer with Johnny's Selected Seeds, of Albion, Maine. You might think that this rather northern American state had no possible Mediterranean connection but in fact Albion is near Waterville, the largest nearby town, and Waterville is on virtually the same parallel as Genoa, and not far from the sea. Amazingly, many of Johnny's varieties seem to have come from Irkutsk, Siberia. Irkutsk is certainly not on a Mediterranean parallel but on about the same latitude as Cambridge, England, yet it does have the water connection, being on the shores of Lake Baikal. Odd, isn't it? Among their Russian selection is the intriguing 'Wonder Light', a yellow, lemon-shaped and sized fruit, also of reputedly good flavour – I hope to find this out later this year.

With so widespread a range it is hardly surprising that hundreds of forms have developed. Of these I have been surprised to find that generally the very popular large red beefy types are outclassed by the large pink, both in flavour and in cropping ability. Most of these large-fruited types are indeterminate in growth and require stakes, stout stakes. I usually use a strong metal post of about 2m against which I lean and tie in, wigwam fashion, canes of about 3m. I pinch out the side shoots of these tall forms but do not stop them. Stopping I have found makes absolutely no difference to earliness of ripening and indeed may slow the plant down, the opposite effect to that intended. Unstopped plants also crop for far longer and despite the assorted collection of Mediterranean winds which are liable to assault them they rarely break but bend over at the top of their stakes.

Many of the cherry tomatoes are indeterminate in growth and, left to their own devices, after regular pinching out for the first 7-8 trusses, they will go on to make a tangled mass of branches – or mess if you are a very tidy gardener. I usually lose count of the number of trusses formed after about 22. Lovely tomatoes though, and indeed the modern forms of cherry types are really delicious with the advent of 'Sweet 100', 'Sweet Million' in so far as I can make out, and to those that have tried it here, identical, and now the superb 'Sungold'. This latter seems to have been pioneered in the U.K. by Thompson & Morgan. Suttons and the newish enterprising

firm of Seymour's Selected Seeds now have 'Golden Cherry' and 'Red Cherry' respectively and both are described as sister types to 'Sungold'. Some cherry tomatoes, unfortunately usually the best-flavoured, do tend to have rather thin skins and, given the uncontrollable Mediterranean cloudbursts, tend to burst themselves. Seymour's also list a bush beefsteak type, 'Bush Goliath', which they say has huge flavoursome fruit. As it is a red-fruited type I'll be most interested in tasting how true it is. What then of ordinary-sized types? When I first started growing tomatoes here I thought that I could do little better than with 'Gardeners Delight'. In England it had grown well for me so that I was greatly surprised to find that here the fruit flavour seemed to be ruined by the extra warmth. In fact it was terrible. 'Tigerella', on the other hand, seemed to improve and produces delicious tomatoes. This is also an excellent cropper with its attractive striped fruit. Other large and medium-sized reds and yellows have proved disappointing but this year I am also looking forward to Thompson & Morgan's 'Green Grape', green and yellow, as well as Johnny's 'Gold Dust', described as tangerine in colour. Both these types are determinate and only require short posts at the most.

Generally I've not had much of a pest or disease problem here. That is, until two or three years ago when my plants were attacked by large, green shield bugs. These vicious creatures are beyond all decency. Their nymphs or grubs, blackish with fine white lines across their bodies, seemed to start on undergrown basil and advanced in hordes up the tomato plants. Before I had realised the scale of the problem the creatures were attacking the fruit, ripe or unripe. By now it was the combined force of adults and children and an all-out war raged. They won. Since that fateful year they have regularly appeared, though slightly fewer in 1996. I do not spray so they have to be spotted and squashed. An unpleasant business. Anyone else for lunch?

A list of seed firms mentioned. This list, it is hoped, will be extended by other readers to include some circum-Mediterranean addresses from which good seed may be *easily* obtained.

Graines Baumaux, B.P. 100, 54062 Nancy Cedex, France

Johnny's Selected Seeds, Foss Hill Road, Albion, Maine 04910, U.S.A. (This firm has a minimum order requirement of \$50 worth for overseas orders)

Lake Valley Seed, Inc, 5717 Arapahoe, Boulder, Colorado 80303, U.S.A. (No catalogue)

Park Seed, Cokesbury Road, Greenwood, SC 29647-0001, U.S.A. (This firm does not generally send seed abroad)

Seymour's Selected Seeds, P.O. Box 515, Guernsey GY1 6EA, Channel Islands, U.K.

Suttons Seeds, Hele Road, Torquay, Devon TQ2 7QJ, U.K.

Thompson & Morgan, Poplar Lane, Ipswich IP8 3BU, U.K.

Underwood Gardens Ltd, 4N381 Maple Avenue, Bensenville, Illinois 60106, U.S.A.

The above list is in alphabetical order and implies no order of merit.

*(Editor's note: We should like to apologise to Tom Wellsted for an error that crept into his article 'A Dry Couple' in TMG No. 8, p.18. His ivy grows 20m up the trunk of a pine tree, not of course 20cm.)*

# THE VIEW FROM THE NURSERY

Hugo Latymer

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When I first started a nursery on coming to live in the Mediterranean, my aim was to produce exotic and little-known trees and shrubs not available from what seemed to me to be an unenterprising lot of Mallorca nurserymen not bold or knowledgeable enough to go beyond the usual run of plants. The choice was limited to such plants as *Celtis australis*, *Melia azedarach*, *Schinus molle*, *Myoporum*, single red *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*, pink oleanders and the purple of *Bougainvillea sandneriana*.

So we planted juniper mother plants in sixty-three different varieties, a couple of dozen different cotoneasters and an acre of such select delights as *Parrotia*, *Stranvaesia*, *Kolkwitzia*, × *Osmarea*, *Choysia*, *Templetonia*, and dozens more. We produced magnificent large ‘liners’ of many of these, half a metre high and wide for 15 pesetas (12 US cents) and offered them to the trade on the island and on mainland Spain. We sold none.

When the father of Spanish Gardening Sr. Panellas came to see us we asked him why we had not been more successful. “No one knows those unusual things” he said. “Get going on privets, oleanders, myoporums and euonymus and produce thousands. Pam, pam, pam. You can’t go wrong. You can’t produce enough.”

And we took fifteen years to find out that he was of course right. Now we sell 20,000 *Myoporum* for every *Metrosideros* although somewhere in my soul is a longing to see huge stands of scarlet-flowered trees, 20m high, along the salty dunes behind the Alcudia and Pollensa beaches. (I too can sense the conservationists shudder, but that is another story.)

So you can hardly blame the nurseries for not being more enterprising in what they offer. What they offer are plants that are asked for because they have proved satisfactory in the climate over years. One is forced to admit that this makes sense and must concede that *Schinus molle* is a more satisfactory plant here than *Stranvaesia*. But there is hope. The choice is widening. Recent plants to have established a large following

would include *Euryops*, *Asteriscus* and *Dipladenia*. What is needed is experiments by members of the Society into the ease of cultivation, attractiveness and healthiness of some new plants under various mediterranean conditions. For instance, I believe that *Koelreuteria bipinnata* is a superlative tree for the small to medium-sized Mediterranean gardens. Who can confirm this?



*Koelreuteria bipinnata*

# A DATABASE OF PLANT NURSERIES FOR MGS MEMBERS

Duncan Ackery & Hamish Warren

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Last year we proposed that a first step towards creating a Mediterranean “Plant Finder” would be to compile a list of nurseries which specialise in Mediterranean plants. With the help of a word-processor this is beginning to take shape and we thought it would be useful to report to members the progress made so far.

*Listings:* We now have a total of 69 nurseries, seed merchants and bulb suppliers. The national breakdown of these is: France 16, Great Britain 14, Italy 12, South Africa 9, USA 6, Spain 5, New Zealand 4, Australia 2, Germany 1.

It will be seen that we have extended our range beyond the Mediterranean Basin to other parts of the world with a so-called “Mediterranean” climate. It seems to us that members might like to take advantage of the wealth of plants from afar, e.g. the bulbs of South Africa. For each nursery we have listed (when available) the details of sale, following closely the format of the British RHS Plant Finder. We have also tried to obtain current catalogues for each nursery.

*Service to MGS members:* So far we have had very few requests for help in finding particular plants. This is doubtless due to the fact that members are unaware of this potential service. We see that we could be of help in two ways. Firstly, in helping to discover the availability of a particular plant by searching manually through the catalogues which we have. We also hold reference copies of the British, French, Italian and German “Plant Finder” publications to help in this task. We should be able to provide an answer by fax within a few days. Secondly, we could provide members with a list of local nurseries for those either living or travelling in a particular area.

*A “Mediterranean Plant Finder”*: It seems to us that the enormous amount of work entailed in mounting such a publication would not be justified. The existing publications mentioned above contain most Mediterranean plants and to reduplicate this information in the form of yet another “Plant Finder” is probably unnecessary, particularly in the light of the apparently small need of MGS members.

*Extending the information in the database*: We rely heavily on MGS members for giving us the names of recommended nurseries and suppliers. It will be noted that we have no entries for Greece, Turkey, Israel and North Africa, amongst other places. We should also appreciate a recommendation for a supplier of indigenous plants from Chile. We urge members to let us know by fax or letter the names of their favourite nurseries. Information may be sent to us by fax to +34 71 150 982 or by mail to Biniparrell 116, Sant Lluís, Menorca 07710, Balears, Spain. If the marketing details of the nursery and a catalogue can be supplied, so much the better.

## **SUNDRIES**

### **PLANTNET WORKSHOP ON TENDER AND SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE PLANTS**

This workshop will be held on the Isle of Wight from Friday 3 October to Sunday 5 October 1997. For further information contact

Simon Goodenough,  
Curator,  
Ventnor Botanic Garden,  
Undercliff Drive,  
Ventnor,  
Isle of Wight PO38 1UL,  
U.K.  
Tel. (01983) 855397, Fax (01983) 856154.

### **L'ÉCOLE MÉDITERRANÉENNE DES JARDINS ET DU PAYSAGE**

Situated in Grasse, in the heart of the Bastide du Peyrard park, L'École Méditerranéenne des Jardins et du Paysage has been providing specialist gardening training for the past four years. It is the only institution in the Mediterranean region which offers training in landscape design.

The School, which currently has 80 students from 10 different countries, is oriented towards both initial training and further education; thus the courses offered cover the following specialities: gardener (four different branches), head gardener, assistant landscape designer, and landscape designer. Its aim is to train professionals through a specialised theoretical education followed by regular practical hands-on experience. Its privileged relations with the owners of many of the outstanding gardens of the Côte d'Azur, as well as with local authorities, allow it to offer its students a wide field of investigation. Nevertheless, with a view to benefitting its students and graduates further, the School is strengthening its links with garden owners and local authorities. As far as the latter are concerned, landscaping questions are increasingly at the forefront of decision-making for the planning, preservation or exploitation of areas.

The School thus acts in concert with various professional organisations, and in particular with the Fédération Française du Paysage. A preliminary agreement has been signed with the School of Architecture of Marseille-Luminy whose aim is not only the exchange of know-how but also the awarding of a common diploma. Negotiations are currently under way with the École du Paysage of Bordeaux. In the same spirit, the School will be organising regular events and public meetings; the next semester's programme will include a course of seminars and conferences organised in conjunction with the Ministry of Culture.

For further information, contact:

L'École Méditerranéenne des Jardins et du Paysage,

Bastide du Peyrard,

B.P. 62,

129, avenue Sidi Brahim,

06130 Grasse,

France

tel. 04 93 40 47 50, Fax 04 93 40 47 52



## BOOKS

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Christine Yeo, *Salvias I*, 1995, 52 pp;  
*Salvias II*, 1997, 52 pp.

ISBN for *Salvias II*: 0-9529954-1-7; *Salvias I* has no ISBN.

Published by Pleasant View Nursery,  
Two Mile Oak, Nr. Denbury, Newton Abbot,  
Devon TQ12 6DG, U.K.

Prices: *Salvias I* – £5.95 plus 50p p&p in the UK (£1.00 in  
Europe and £1.50 elsewhere);  
*Salvias II* – £6.95 plus postage as above.

Once upon a time – and indeed until quite recently – it was the civilised custom for specialist nursery owners to spread their knowledge and enthusiasm through self-financed and self-published volumes, whether luxurious, like those of the Victorian Veitches, quirkily individual, like the publications of the dianthus expert Montagu Allwood, in which potted-pink-history tended to rub shoulders with crackerbarrel philosophy, encyclopaedic, like Will Ingwersen's great *Manual* on alpines, or delightfully autobiographical as well as functionally practical, like Jim Fisk's book on clematis, *The Queen of Climbers*. This tradition slowly faded after the Second World War and seems by and large to have died over the last twenty years (explanations, in no more than two sentences, on postcards, please, to the editor...). Christine Yeo's two recent publications on her beloved salvias, though, are honourable footnotes to it:

she deserves the respect and her books deserve the support of every serious gardener.

I wrote about my own enthusiasm for salvias in an early issue of *The Mediterranean Garden*, so I can't convincingly claim now to be impartial about them. I can claim, though, that if I didn't convince you then of the delights of the genus, Christine Yeo's two little volumes certainly should do so now, since she deals in considerable detail and with scholarly precision both with the Old World macho tough guys and with the New World exhibitionist drama queens. So, whether you are looking for trouble-free workhorses for difficult situations or for the chlorophyll-filled equivalents of operatic top Cs to provide climactic Bravissimos to your high season extravaganzas, in each case she can offer you dozens of possibilities. *Salvias I* includes most of the established 'quality' salvias, of both kinds. *Salvias II* includes rather more rarities and collectors' specials, together with some 'stars of the future' which have only recently arrived in cultivation. Only one other and much slighter work is currently available in English on salvias (though I'm told that another is forthcoming, sooner or later, in America). For the moment, at least, Mrs. Yeo's two pamphlets are the last and fullest word on the subject.

They do, though, have their limits and limitations. Because they are self-published, on an obviously limited budget, they are, if not penny plain, at least penny coloured. There are, indeed, colour illustrations of every plant considered – but the photographs are the author's own, the reproductions are small, and the quality is variable (though always sufficient to be an identification-aid and interest-indicator). Again, because she is trying to deal with as many species and varieties as possible in a budget-limited number of pages (around a hundred different plants in each 52-page volume), the treatment of each is necessarily brief and follows a severely standardised format: place(s) of origin; description of appearance; method(s) of propagation; indication of hardiness. This pattern certainly gives any interested reader an enormous amount of useful information on which to base a judgement about the aesthetic desirability or practical feasibility of specific plants in his or her specific situation. What

it doesn't do is provide much information about her plant-subjects as plants *in the garden*: for instance, what conditions particular species require as regards soil and situation, or any suggestions about suitable plant-associations for them.

So I close with a couple of wishes, the second cancelling the first. The first wish is that for 1999 Mrs. Yeo should plan *Salvias III*, which might usefully be both more personal (surely even she must like *some* salvias more than others, for instance, and how was it that she came to love and to grow and to hold the National Collection of them?) and more concerned with the details of their garden use. The second is that, as happened with Messrs. Allwood, Ingwersen and Fisk, some commercial publisher should spot her original self-publications and, on the strength of them, commission her to write the full-length monograph on the genus – incorporating *Salvias I, II, III* and possibly even *IV* – of which she's clearly more than capable and which for adventurous gardeners has for many years been (that mysterious object which troubled my childhood) a long-felt want.

*Tim Longville*

Pleasant View Nursery also sells seed by mail and anyone who orders a book will automatically receive a seed list. Payment accepted by cheques in £ sterling drawn on a British bank, Eurocheques, International Giro, International Money Order or US dollars.

## LETTERS

*Questionnaires:* I am delighted to report that I have received over 50 questionnaires to date from all around the Northern and Eastern Mediterranean, and also from Australia and California (my apologies to them for asking how far from the Med. their site is – they have kindly said how far the *sea* is and not taken me literally).

The answers are proving to be a mix of predictable and unexpected and will be very useful when putting together the books on *A Year in the Mediterranean Garden*. I feel very humble to think that I am editing these, as many people have much greater knowledge and experience than I can claim; I hope that collectively we can produce something that will be of real use to everyone in this climate, whether novice or old hand.

Several people have brought up subjects or have asked questions that deserve a full article in the Journal, and I shall be letting the Editor have a list of these so that she can find someone to write about them. I shall also be writing to several people in reply to their accompanying letters. If you have not yet sent in your questionnaire, please do so, filling it in to the best of your abilities, as the more replies I receive, the better will be the resulting books.

*Jenny Bussey,  
Alicante, Spain*

Although I wish to contribute to the journal, I believe that neither my English grammar nor my gardening vocabulary is adequate. Gardening language is a language of its own, which can at times become very discouraging to many people like myself. The fact that Turkish is my mother tongue is also a handicap: since all botanical names derive from either Latin or Greek words, it is not easy for me to learn or remember the names of plants. This problem makes me and similar part-time gardeners ignorant of what we are dealing with. Reading *TMG* and any other journals or books without drawings or photos seems like reading a book in Chinese!

I suppose it is for this reason that many common plants in Turkey either bear the same name (i.e. a name shared by several different plants) or have totally different names in different regions. Oleander, for example is called “Crying Blood” (*Kan ağlayan*), *Agave americana* “Patient” (*Sabırlık*) – I imagine since it waits so patiently to flower – and Bougainvillea “Eleven-Month Flower” (*Onbir ay çiçeği*) because it flowers for eleven months and sleeps for a month. These names may sound funny, but they have some truth in them if not local wisdom.

For many years I and some of my expatriate friends who live around the Bodrum peninsula have been discussing this problem of names and have often thought of starting a catalogue of local and common names of plants. I would like to suggest that perhaps we could start such a “lexicon” of common names.

Another problem with articles in *TMG* is that of access to sources of material and ingredients. For example, there is no way I can get John Innes number whatever soil or fertilisers. Besides, ethically and philosophically I am against too many artificial and sophisticated ways of gardening. I chose to live in – or rather commute to – this part of the country 25 years ago because it was “natural”. Thus it really upsets me when I hear or see people bringing their urban customs, instruments and habits to rural areas. Why are they deserting cities then? We must somehow start some kind of insemination to teach people to understand the beauty and richness of nature as it is without consuming it. Thus I enjoyed very much the articles in *TMG* No. 8 on “Synergistic Gardening” and “A Natural Rock Garden”. After reading them I decided to ask another question: can we somehow start collecting local remedies to fight our problems instead of using chemicals? In the past people gardened without them – so why can’t we? (I have a friend, for example, who collects cigarette butts and soaks them in water till it is black as tar, then uses this as a spray to fight any pest on any plant from climbing roses to vegetables and fruits.) I am sure in this way we will help sustain a very rich botanical heritage as well as a great source of knowledge and wisdom which is rapidly disappearing as younger

generations grow up who are totally indifferent to gardening, farming or any related subjects.

And this brings me to my other worry: gatherers of edible wild plants are disappearing along with the plants they gather. How can we sustain this old art, this relation between women and Mother Earth?

*Ceylan Orhun,  
Istanbul, Turkey*

I presume that because of being part – willy-nilly – of a Christian-Judaic culture, your *Meditorial* in the Spring 1997 issue does its best to perpetrate a sense of guilt. In other words, if one is not a writer, a draughtsman or a photographer, is one not entitled to the MGS's journal? Or is the journal not entitled to exist?

I am self-employed, English is my second language, I do not write, draw or photograph, I slave away in the garden through trial and error in generally difficult circumstances because of soil and climate and – not least – the purely nominal presence of nurseries. My schedule is a tight one. This C.V. is surely a blueprint for many of us MGS members. What should we do? Change our lives?

Just because – as you state – membership is scattered, the journal is *the* link, the guidebook to and from our problems. Should it fail us, please count me out.

*Virginia Scaretti,  
Rome, Italy*

A train of thought arises from Virginia Scaretti's letter. (Whilst I supply this journal with illustrations – which I regard as donations to a worthy cause – I am not a member of the MGS and thus the following comments should be regarded as coming from an outsider.)

I sympathise with Virginia Scaretti in as much as she feels that she is too busy to contribute to this journal. I produce the

illustrations in my spare time and fully understand the situation. But surely nobody is suggesting that every member of the MGS should submit articles? Participation in the activities of any society will depend on individual circumstances; it is the general level of involvement, great and small taken together, which determines the success or otherwise of any communal undertaking.

The *Meditorial* to which she refers was not concerned with guilt or sanctity but was intended to inform everyone of the situation. No one doubts the enthusiasm of MGS members, but neither can they be expected to know what is happening unless told. Of relevance here is the suggestion, received on more than one occasion, that potential contributors might be encouraged if we made “our” requirements clearer. The truth of the matter is that the journal itself has no requirements – there is (apart from a desire to avoid political argument) no editorial policy in this respect. The journal must be what the members of the society want it to be, but this remains largely an unknown factor since to date very few people have written in to indicate what they like or dislike about it, or which topics they would like to see aired in its pages.

To put matters into perspective it should be pointed out that, apart from my own peripheral contributions, the regular editorial staff of this journal consists of one MGS member, Caroline Harbouri, who undertakes the responsibility in addition to her normal employment and without payment. (But let us not forget the small band of volunteers who pack and dispatch: unsung heroes and heroines who not only perform a tedious and ever-increasing task, frequently in a rush due to printing delays, but also have to cope with the vagaries of the Greek Post Office.) It could be argued that it is the editor’s job to solicit contributions – and this sometimes happens – but available working hours are strictly limited. The natural answer would seem to be to call on all the other members of the society to contribute whatever they can, whenever they can.

As somebody who had a hand in the founding of the MGS I am well aware that the society came into being without detailed aims or programme. This was simply because none of us who

were involved could predict the future size and shape of the society, nor did we possess the experience or expertise to specify the requirements of its members or how these could be satisfied. It was left to the incoming members to say what they felt the society ought to be doing. Discussion within the MGS (even a sense of belonging to a society) is hampered by geography and a journal which could reach everyone seemed a priority. As a result of its publication a number of seeds have been sown – some of which may have fallen on stony ground though others (see the report on the Nursery Database in this issue) are beginning to germinate.

Whilst one possible view of the MGS is that it should be merely a publishing house for this journal, the continuing growth of membership leads me to believe that many people are hoping for much more than that. The day may come when the society develops into a major institution which can offer a range of services, facilities and events comparable to those of a body such as the RHS. But given wage rates and real estate prices this must remain a pipe dream for the present with the MGS depending, as it has done up until now, on the efforts of dedicated amateurs. This, however, does not absolve the society from deciding exactly what it intends to achieve – and how. On the contrary, the increasing membership makes this a matter of some urgency. Who is going to make these decisions? An international panel of wise men and women linked by e-mail, or the ordinary members submitting proposals to their committee?

It seems likely that the Presidency of the MGS will move to another country next year (should the production of the journal also rotate perhaps?). The incoming President will take over a solid foundation upon which a structure needs to be erected: there will be plenty for him or her to consider. But in the meantime there is plenty for you, the members, to discuss. Letters should be addressed, please, to the editor.

*Derek Toms,  
Korbi, Attica, Greece*

## CONTRIBUTORS

**DUNCAN ACKERY** is a retired physician now gardening in Menorca.

**ERSIE CAJOLEAS & LOU CAJOLEAS** are a former fashion designer and a retired university professor, respectively. Both began gardening when they lived in Beirut, and now live in Greece.

**CAROLINE DAVIES** gardens in Melbourne, Australia. With a background in writing and editing, she now runs garden tours and historic walks with partner David Martin.

**HEIDI GILDEMEISTER** now gardens on a Balearic island. Her particular interest centres on the use of drought-tolerant plants; her book *Mediterranean Gardening: A Waterwise Approach* was published by Editorial Moll in 1995.

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