Welcome to this first newsletter for members and friends in Portugal of the Mediterranean Garden Society.

The major part of this newsletter is dedicated to the notes of a meeting held on 24th February, these form the basis on which it is hoped to build the future structure and activities for our new branch. Please send us your comments and suggestions. We would also like to have your ideas for a possible list of contents for future newsletters. What would you like to see and what can you offer for your fellow members?

The next Journal (due out in April) will have our branch listed with two contact addresses, Marion ter Horst and Pepperrell Crofoot, as Co-Heads. This will share the work load and responsibilities. All contact details are given at the end of the newsletter.

The next Journal should also confirm details for the AGM which is taking place in Carmona, near to Seville in Spain from 20th - 23rd October and will include garden visits in the areas of Seville, Cordoba and Carmona followed by one or two optional days. The registration forms should be available next month and full details will be on the MGS website. As this is being hosted by one of our neighbouring branches we hope for a good representation from Portugal.

It is planned to produce this newsletter on an ‘ad hoc’ basis for the moment, as and when there is something of interest or sufficient material available. It will be produced as a Word.doc and emailed to those for whom we have email addresses. It will also be posted out to other contact names and addresses. This should keep costs to a minimum. If you do not have an email address but would prefer to have this newsletter faxed to you, please confirm this with Rosie Peddle and send on your fax number.

Report from the meeting held on 24th February 2005

1. General Discussion on future of Portugal Branch

The activities of the branch should aim to be different to those already provided by garden clubs and should be organised on a national level. There should be joint events with other groups and all events and activities should be open to all, with a small fee of, say, 2 euros, to be charged for visitors (i.e non-members) to events. Whenever possible, events should not clash with those of established groups. An ‘open house’ and welcoming introduction should be the normal conduct for events. Members and visitors alike will be encouraged to attend. Contact and collaboration with the other close branches of the MGS should be part of the programme for each year. Information on each other’s activities should be shared via the newsletter. Branch reports were received from the Lebanon, Languedoc and UK.

Branch finances will initially be on an ‘as and when needed’ basis. If any member of the steering group feels that an exceptional or unfair personal cost is involved they should make this clear to the other members of the group so that funds can be made available to support the administration of the branch. It is possible that some funds could be requested from the main headquarters of the MGS.

Events will be publicised as widely as possible and also to other garden groups or societies willing to distribute information. A list of publications and contacts will be compiled and
members are asked to contribute details of any contacts they feel could be helpful for promoting the branch and it’s events.

Encourage members to use each other’s expertise and knowledge for the benefit of all. **Sharing our experience of Mediterranean gardening** should form a large part of the benefit of being a member. For example, Wim van Putten offers his extensive knowledge of the Algarve region, good gardens and areas for visits. Claudia & Udo Schwarzer have confirmed that they would do something similar for the western Algarve and their expertise with swimming ponds and the local botany. This is planned to take place in 2006.

A list of **recommended nurseries**, garden centres and suppliers of good plants can be compiled with contributions from members and any comments on range/quality/price etc.

Events should aim to offer both **a visit and a talk** - perhaps from the owner or on a relevant topic connected with the visit or area. Peter Eaton’s previously circulated list provides a starting point of possible topics. An identifiable theme or topic for each event with presentations from local botanists or speakers with local or in-depth knowledge as a priority.

Events should include **workshops on specific topics** which will involve attendees in associated activities under the guidance of the workshop leader. A talk and handouts should be provided to guide these workshops.

Events should be **organised on a regional basis** with at least two per year for the northern, central and southern areas of the country. This should give every member the opportunity to attend at least two events each year. Even if attendance is low at first this should be a guide to planning for the future and may help to attract new members.

**A newsletter** will be compiled as a means of keeping members in touch with each other and also with events and activities. This will provide a means of circulating information on recommended nurseries, speakers and gardens to visit. This can be circulated by email and Rosie Peddle offers to send the initial newsletter with notes from this meeting which can be sent to all members and friends. The newsletter can also provide contact details and a guide to the roles of those on the steering group. This can take the form of ‘who, what and where’ from the notes of this meeting.

Information on the branch should be placed on the main Mediterranean Garden Society website and a notice put in the **next edition of the Journal** so that members are aware that the branch is now active and seeking their support for events. Items for a branch page are invited from members. Garden or plant portraits, requests for plants, recommendations for visits etc.

There should be a **mission statement** for the branch and it’s members to guide future activities. This could be taken from the Mediterranean Garden Society aims and objectives as a non-profit making organisation.

### 2. A DRAFT list of events was drawn up as follows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Coordinator(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Sintra area visit, newly restored Monserrate Palace &amp; gardens as focus</td>
<td>Pepper Crofoot</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 May</td>
<td><strong>(date to be confirmed)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>June/July</td>
<td>Algarve visit to Hemerocallis collection</td>
<td>Wim van Putten</td>
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<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Workshop in Central area (garden design suggested)</td>
<td>Marion ter Horst</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>AGM to be held in Carmona, Spain</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20-23</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Lisbon area event</td>
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</tbody>
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3. Roles and responsibilities

Pepperrell Crofoot – Co-Head of the Branch and member of steering group, representative for the Lisbon area and contact on MGS web site.

Marion ter Horst - Co-Head and member of steering group & representative for the north and central areas. Contact on MGS web site.

Wim van Putten - member of steering group and Algarve representative, also offers organisation of events and workshop leader, contact with Dutch Garden Club of the Algarve

Rosie Peddle - Secretary to steering group, email coordinator and compile Newsletter, contact with Bons Jardins garden club of the Algarve, up to date list of members & friends, coordinate publicity for Branch

Peter Eaton - offers help with organising events and mail outs to members

4. Mission Statement for Portugal Branch

The Mediterranean Garden Society is a non-profit making association that acts as a forum for everyone who has a special interest in the plants and gardens of Mediterranean climate regions. It first accepted subscriptions from members on 1st January 1995. The central role of the MGS is to facilitate the exchange of information and experience. Membership passed the 1000 mark in the year 2000 with members in 40 countries. The current President is Cali Doxiadis and she is based in Greece.

A Journal is published quarterly, of some 100 plus pages, subscriptions are due each January and members joining in any 12 month period receive all the Journals for that year.

The Portugal branch will act as a focus for these activities for members living anywhere in Portugal (including the Azores and Madeira). Although much of Portugal does not strictly have Mediterranean climate status, we are happy to include the whole of the country in branch activities and feel strongly that shared experience is one of the main benefits of membership of the MGS.

Members in Portugal are therefore positively encouraged to share their knowledge and expertise by any means available and particularly by organising events and activities in their areas. Contributions to a Branch newsletter are also a valuable means of communication and members are asked to use this method to share their gardening experiences.

Please send in your suggestions for events, topics to be included in a newsletter or with offers of articles or if you wish to help with the running of the branch. This is our opportunity to share knowledge and expertise in any way possible.

5. Membership Information

Members of the MGS are part of a large international group of amateur and professional gardeners, horticulturists, botanists, and others who appreciate the unique climate called...
'mediterranean'. Annual subscriptions are payable in January. New members joining during the course of the year will receive all four issues of the journal published in the year of joining. To join the MGS, fill out an application and send it along with your membership fee (€30) to The Secretary, The Mediterranean Garden Society, P.O. Box 14, Peania GR-190 02, Greece. New members will be automatically added to the membership list with this Branch. Further information about the MGS can be found on the main web site www.mediterraneangardensociety.org. There is a membership page and application form available on the website, if you would prefer to receive these in the post please let Rosie Peddle know and confirm your address or fax number.

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And, finally …… a seasonal extract by one of my favourite garden writers, from ‘In Your Garden’ by Vita Sackville-West - published Michael Joseph, 1951.

‘March 19th 1950

Several correspondents have asked me to say something about that strangely coloured black and green flower commonly called Iris tuberosa, or the Snakeshead iris, which is to be found in florists’ shops during March and April, sold in bunches, rather cheap. I like being asked these questions, because they come as a challenge to my own many failures in gardening and make me examine my conscience to see where I have gone wrong. I have certainly gone wrong over my Iris tuberosa. I planted it in rather too shady a place, under an apple tree, in a rich old soil, and I now see that it ought to be given the maximum of sun, in a gritty, well-drained soil, exposed to as much baking as our English summer will afford.

It should not be difficult to grow. The tuber will cost you from 4s 6d to 5s 6d a dozen, and it should increase itself if you put it in the right sort of place, dry, hot and sunny. An Italian by origin, it grows wild in other parts of southern Europe, all indicating that it would enjoy conditions as near as we can get to the Mediterranean coast.

A wise precaution – mark its position in the garden by a stick or a ring of stones, because it disappears altogether during the summer, and thus is liable to get dug up by mistake.

This may sound rather dull, perhaps; but my researches into the history of Iris tuberosa did not prove dull in the least. It is an interesting plant, in both botanical and mythological terms. Botanically it is not a true iris at all. Its real name is Hermodactylus tuberosus, which being interpreted, means Finger of Hermes (Mercury), and tuberosus, of course, refers to the tuberous root stock, which does indeed bear some resemblance to the fingers of the human hand. Having got thus far, I began to reflect on its familiar sobriquet, the Snakeshead, and to wonder whether the current explanation was correct in attributing the name to a fanciful likeness to the head of a snake. Perhaps, I thought, there may be a double meaning, for although the somber sinister colouring and spiteful shape do suggest the spitting head of a reptile, it is also true that Mercury’s winged wand, the caduceus, the swift and elegant symbol of the most roguish of all the minor gods, was twirled round by two interlaced serpents. Would it be possible, and even probable, I wondered, that the name might have a classical origin we never suspected? I like to think so. I like to think that the messenger of the gods, Hermes in Greece, Mercury in Rome, gave his symbol as the name to one of our messengers of spring.’