Welcome to members and friends in Portugal of the Mediterranean Garden Society. If you know of any others who may be interested in Mediterranean gardening please pass this along to them and remember all are welcome to attend our events.

Queremos dar as boas vindas aos sócios e amigos do Mediterranean Garden Society em Portugal. Se souber de alguém que esteja interessado em jardinagem mediterrânica agradecemos que passa a palavra, ou o favor de dar um destes boletins informativos, e não esquecer que todos estão convidados a participar nos eventos por nós organizados.

We are sorry to announce that Marion ter Horst and Pepper Crofoot have decided to resign as Branch Heads. I am sure everyone would like to join in thanking Marion & Pepper for their hard work on the setting up of the branch and organising events. The Steering Group for the Branch has met to discuss the future and structure of the Portugal branch. Based on the last two years experience the steering group propose the following guidelines for future MGS activity in Portugal

1. Events should be run and organized on a regional basis e.g. North, Central and South.
   - Each area should have its own leader(s) – Ben Weijers has kindly offered to be a contact for the Lisbon/Sintra area and Chloe Parrott for the Minho. Activities will depend on local organized events and volunteers are needed to build a network throughout the country. We strongly urge members to seek out those in their own local area and join together to plan appropriate events. A list of members is available on request from Rosie Peddle.
   - Any MGS member may attend any meeting
   - Rosie is willing to act as a mail box and will maintain contact with MGS office in Athens. The steering group will be pleased to give any advice/support it can.

2. The southern, i.e. Algarve group, will be organized by a loose coalition of members. They propose 2-3 meetings per year on a fixed date basis with ad hoc meetings as and when the opportunity arises. A calendar of events for 2007 will be published later in January – please let Rosie know of any events planned by members or of interest to your fellow members.

3. You are all invited to comment on these proposals – the more input the greater the health of the MGS in Portugal! The steering group hope that members will support a less formal structure based more on collective activity where there is sufficient support. It is intended to use the newsletter to keep members informed and in touch with each other.

4. Quite independently of the MGS, a website “The Portuguese Gardener/O Jardineiro português” is being planned. It will be multilingual and be open to all.

More information will follow when the site details have been finalized. Any queries in the interim to Rosie Peddle – email rosie@thebtf.net or tel. 289 791 869.

LIST OF FUTURE EVENTS being planned for 2007 include a Plant Day in February on the Algarve, Rose garden visits in Monchique in mid-May, talk on Australian Plants and a possible visit to Seville Botanic Garden. The proposed visit to Mallorca for Spring 2007 has been cancelled owing to a lack of support. This may be undertaken sometime in the future if numbers prove sufficient. The MGS Mallorca Branch have been very helpful with information for a future visit.
Camellia Report from Marion ter Horst

Early Spring is the best time to see camellias in flower in the North of Portugal. The International Camellia Society (www.camellias-ics.org) was established in 1962 by Prof E.G. Waterhouse in Australia. It is interesting to learn that this Society has an annual journal with a message from the President in English, French, German, Japanese and Chinese. The representative for Portugal, Mrs Clara Gil de Seabra, whose father has the famous camellia garden in Santo Tirso, kindly invited Arnold and Marion to a Camellia exhibition, forum and guided garden visits lasting a full weekend on 25/26 March in and around the ancient town of Celerico de Basto.

Three remarkable gardens around Celerico de Basto were visited: Solar do Souto, Casa do Campo (www.casadocampo.pt) and Casa da Gandarela. Camellias were clipped into tall mushrooms, cylinders and arbours for shaded seats often with a fountain in the middle. From there the eye would follow a path to a next arbour and a next. Many of these camellias originate from Portugal like e.g. “Estriata Portuense” documented in the 19th century or “Villar d’Allen” and “Clara Gil Seabra”, after the director, from this century. Clara Gil has promised to supply the MGS with valuable information for gardens to visit in the Azores and Madeira. The next Camellia Society visit will be to the Azores on 7 February 2007. Information is available from Eng João Forjaz-Sampaio at forjazsampaio@azores.com.pt. An announcement in Portuguese was included in our March Newsletter for the Camellia exhibition in Oporto on 1 & 2 April.


The Portugal Branch has received news from David Martin and Caroline Davies who are organizing a trip to Portugal from Australia in April 2008. They are keen for their members to visit some of our member gardens and also look forward to a wildflower walk in the Algarve.

'Give the Guests a Good Soaking' – Report of talk on June 27th

An illustrated talk on the different uses of water in the gardens of the 16th & 17th centuries, looked in particular at water tricks, automata, fountains, water chains and staircases. It took place at Palácio Nacional da Pena, Sintra on the 27th June. Water Gardens and Water Technology in the Italian Garden was the subject but our entertaining and erudite speaker led us on a tour of what appeared to be the forerunner of modern displays of wealth and extravagance. The opportunity to “show off” by generously sprinkling guests with cold water from various angles seems to have been the height of fashion. The engineering works involved providing skilled workmen to spread these garden features as far afield as England, Russia and Scandinavia. A welcome and refreshing antidote to the usual concerns of drought tolerant gardening! Many thanks to Helena for a delightful foray into a different aspect of historic gardens.

We were very pleased to have access to the Tower Room in the Palace itself for this afternoon talk followed by a garden visit in the park. A rare opportunity to visit an important garden in the beautiful Sintra area of Portugal in the company of Gerald Luckhurst. He has been involved in the renovation and replanting of the Palace Park.

Helena Attlee is an author and journalist who has made Italy - and in particular its gardens - her special subject. She has lived in Italy and for many years has studied Italian garden history. Her first book on Italian gardens, with award-winning photographs by her husband, Alex Ramsay, came out in 1988 and was republished in 2000. In September 2006 her latest book, “Italian Gardens: A History”, will be published by Frances Lincoln. Helena is a visiting lecturer on the garden history MA courses at Birkbeck College, University of London and Bristol University. She regularly leads lecture tours to gardens in Italy, has scripted a television series for National Geographic and contributed articles to a variety of magazines.

Lavender Day report – Friday 8th September

Confirmation of a visit to the Algarve by Joan Head, a UK National Plant Collection Holder for *Lavandula*, was an opportunity for members and friends of the Mediterranean Garden Society in Portugal to gather for a whole day dedicated to lavenders.

Eager ‘lavandophiles’ gathered near Olhão to take part in a day which commenced with an in-depth illustrated talk on species lavenders from around the world. Joan gave particular emphasis to those that grow here on the Algarve. It was a surprise to hear that Portugal and Spain are ‘lavender-rich’ with 13 species, subspecies and wild hybrids occurring naturally.

This, compared with only four species and hybrids in the whole of France, shows the diversity and richness of the natural flora we enjoy here in Portugal. The talk included distribution maps and excellent botanical illustrations for each of the species mentioned. Some of these were taken from the recent new monograph for Lavenders, published by Kew, which has updated the naming and classification for this important plant family. The particular plants bred for the production of lavender oil were shown together with many lovely photos of fields full of lavender in France, Tasmania and, curiously enough, near Nottingham in the UK also! Perhaps a good example of diversity in response to climate change.

Joan was pleased to report on a newly named hybrid of particular interest to those living in the Algarve. Recently discovered in the area north of Sao Bras on acid soil are plants derived from two local species *Lavandula viridis* and *L. stoechas subspecies luisieri*. These have now been designated a distinct hybrid and named *L. x alportelensis*. A real landmark on the lavender map of the world!

This plant has the novel combination of pale violet top bracts of the *luisieri* (named for a Portuguese botanist, Luisier) and the fat flower heads of the *viridis*. Joan and her husband, Michael, visit lavender hot spots around the world for plant hunting with the camera and had managed to take a good photo of this plant on their last visit to Portugal over two years ago without knowing of the new designation which would be revealed in the lavender monograph. Obviously she has a good eye for a different plant lurking in the roadside vegetation! If readers spot this hybrid we would be interested to map its locations for future botanical expeditions.

Following a lunch which included lavender flavouring in the salad dressing and decorating the napkins & desserts it was encouraging that everyone managed to keep their enthusiasm going on a hot afternoon for the next and more practical session. A sign of the rejuvenating properties of lavender!

Local MGS member, Wim van Putten got the afternoon off to a good start by giving an illustrated quick gallop round the geology and soil types of the Algarve and relating this to the growing conditions favoured by the various lavenders. In the morning, Joan had been very happy to admit that all her lavender growing experience was UK based and the ravishing photos of her garden made many in the audience very envious. The classic combination of roses and a wonderful variety of lavenders made compulsive viewing.

Various plants purchased locally were then turned out of their pots, examined, and, in some cases criticised, for the type of compost used, root growth and shape. Joan did not hesitate to wield the secateurs and gave one particularly overgrown example a very severe haircut in front of an incredulous audience. It was obvious that some people were going to go home and give their lavenders a good trimming for the first time ever! Pruning was much discussed, it can prolong the life of plants and prevent the common problem of top heavy growth breaking branches. Joan recommended growing any particularly good lavenders from cuttings as seed raised plants can be unpredictable. Some species do come true from seed so it is worth having a go as long as you are
aware of the possible variations. *Lavandula dentata* came out tops in the popularity stakes with *L. X allardi* being identified as the common large grey leaved lavender grown locally which, apparently, sometimes fails to flower and which does not set seed as it is a sterile hybrid. This plant needs to be propagated by cuttings. Good drainage all year round was emphasised for success with all lavenders.

As requested, some had brought along plants for identification and Joan succeeded in naming all those put before her, including those which had become more than a little squashed and desiccated in handbags and carrier bags during the day!

Much to the delight of those present Joan had also brought along some seed of hard to obtain species lavenders, *L. pubescens*, *L. aristibracteata* and *L. rotundifolia* being three of them. The latter being endemic to the Cape Verde Islands and looking nothing like a lavender as it has a spreading prostrate habit with pink flowers rising above green frilly edged round leaves.

It was agreed that we should all try and meet again next year and report progress on the plants raised from seed and cuttings from knowledge newly gained at the lavender day. Who knows what might result, perhaps another distinctive named Algarve hybrid for our gardens.

**THE LAVENDER BAG** is a twice yearly (May & November) newsletter for lavender enthusiasts. Its aims are – to facilitate information exchange, to aid identification of species and cultivars, to encourage accurate labelling, to provide a forum for discussion between amateur & professional plantspeople, and to disseminate research findings. Subscription is for a calendar and buys the two issues for that year. Further information [www.thelavenders.org](http://www.thelavenders.org) or contact the Editor, Joan Head, 0044 (0) 115 989 2718 email: jhead@thelavenders.org

**Regeneration - Gardening with Nature** Western Algarve Event - 23/24 September 2006

This event successfully demonstrated what can be achieved by working with nature and the prevailing conditions. Our hosts were more than generous with their time, both enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Our visits illustrated the important part played by knowledge of the local plant community, and patience! The latter sometimes in short supply where we gardeners are concerned.

Our group came together for lunch on Saturday near Aljezur before the short journey to Brejo Longo. Our hosts, Claudia and Udo Schwarz, invited us to start the weekend with a visit to a project where they have been working for ten years and have now made their home.

The woodland was reclaimed 10 years ago following removal of crowded plantations of pine and eucalyptus trees. This included pulling out the stumps to stop the usual multi-stem regrowth which occurs after felling eucalyptus. The soil was disturbed as little as possible and the natural regeneration amply demonstrated how necessary this had been. With no further planting at all, cork oaks now 5m tall, strawberry trees and cistus have all appeared and thrived in the newly created areas freed of eucalyptus and pine.

The many land art installations with geomantic and sculpture features included a geological time line walk made from rock samples from all over the Algarve collected by the (geologist) owner. We could also walk round the classic turf and stone labyrinth set into a flat area adjacent to the time line, the curves of the labyrinth a nice contrast to the more direct arrangement of the rock samples.
Near by were the intriguing “walker” sculptures made from some of the removed pine trees, these were sawn trunks threaded onto rods which rocked back and forth and gave a very real feel of walkers approaching the labyrinth.

The areas near the house mainly consist of created vistas of the natural ground cover cistus species and wild hybrids with some grasses and paths maintained for access. Fruit trees blend into this scene quite naturally. The rear of the house has a walled garden with more introduced plants and an above ground pond complete with a young Lotus nelumbo and many water lilies, behind the wall on the north side of the house there is a vegetable garden and compost beds to take advantage of the shade offered.

An informative tour of the environmentally friendly infra-structures included the reed bed system for waste water treatment, wind and solar energy plants, solar sauna, and the crystal clear newly installed swimming pond.

On Saturday evening, dinner at a nearby hotel was followed with a presentation and discussion on water wise gardening given by Claudia. This was a chance to think about managing gardens in a different and more sustainable way with useful suggestions for water efficient planting using native plants. The illustrations proved how visually satisfying these gardens can be when set into context of the surrounding landscape.

Sunday arrived with bright clear skies, despite the forecast rain. Our walk started at the Monte Clérigo car park. Udo led our walk through sand dunes on the spectacular Atlantic coast of the Western Algarve. Late flowering sea daffodils lined the route at the start. This area is particularly special as it is sand dunes on top of 70m high cliffs. The geology exposed along the coast gave Udo an opportunity to put us in a time machine. Views of crumpled rock strata whisked us thousands of years between changing sea and land levels in the short distance between Monte Clérigo and the Ponta da Atalaia. Along the route Udo pointed out how the juniper played a vital role in sheltering other plants such as the antirrhinum. Where the juniper has died it leaves a tough skeleton of sun whitened wood. Along the route many plants were in flower including the succulents, sea thrift, daphne and scabious.

Our walk ended with a visit to the newly discovered site of the Ribat of Aljezur, an Islamic archaeology site. This walk was 4.5km on level paths affording spectacular views along the coast. This area is part of the Nature Park Costa Vincentina and well worth a visit if you were unable to join our weekend. A well earned lunch was followed by a visit to another nearby natural swimming pond. This one being nearly four years old with a mature aspect and well grown plants surrounding the swimming area. Many took the opportunity to buy water lilies and pond plants at the associated nursery. This was indeed a full two days and many members travelled long distances to take part. For many, a rare opportunity to see a new part of Portugal. Useful Web Sites: [http://www.antemare.pt](http://www.antemare.pt)  [http://www.biopiscinas.pt/index.html](http://www.biopiscinas.pt/index.html)

Questions from a new member, new to MGS and new to the Algarve

1. For planting in pots can anyone recommend a loam based compost similar to John Innes No 2 (UK) instead of a peat based compost ?

2. I have bought a 100 metre x 2.1m roll of mypex. This is the black porous material with a thin green square stripe interwoven into it. I have started to use this as a weed suppressant & then putting flat stones/gravel on top but some of my neighbours tell me that the weeds here will penetrate this. Any opinions
on this material? Also if you have found it useful have you sourced a cheaper outlet, eg, can you buy it direct from the manufactures if there was enough people interested in buying 1-3 rolls each?

3. In my area there is a municipal rubbish dump that operates a Green Waste recycling plant, (much the same as the UK schemes). I have visited the site & although it’s not like compost produced in the UK in that it retains moisture in the soil, it does appear to have a reasonable use as a soil conditioner/mulch material. The good news is it’s not expensive at around 24 euros a ton,I have a large trailer so transporting it to the garden areas at home isn’t a problem. My query is, have you used a similar material, perhaps available near your home, & if so how weed seed free is it? Does it heat up enough in the process to destroy weed seed?

4. On a similar subject do you make use of kitchen waste in a form of a compost heap? I have read Hugo Latymer's book, Mediterranean Gardener in which he dismisses the idea because the compost dries out in the heat. I have thought about making compost bins on a north wall, to reduce the sun, & covering with plastic to hold moisture, any views?

5. Finally! On the subject of mulch material, what can other members recommend as an effective soil cover which preserves moisture and prevents weed growth close to young plants and trees?

Any comments on the above please pass on to Rosie in the first instance.

Garden Design and Appreciation courses run by Alan Mason are being held on the Algarve this winter. Alan is one of the most experienced and best qualified garden designers in Europe. He is a Royal Horticultural Society speaker and regularly gives lectures to groups regionally, nationally and internationally. The courses will be held at the Hotel Garbe, Armação de Pera, central Algarve and are open to non-residents. The course runs from 14-20 January and 4-11 February 2007 and will be tutored by Alan Mason & Marylyn Webb. http://www.gardenexpert.com/ The course will be four 2 1/2 hour sessions with garden visits. The contact person is Vicky Good. There is also a Plants & Flowers of Southern Europe Event in February & March 2007 www.hotelgarbe.com or tel 282320260 for more information.

MGS seed list information is now available, Rosie will post list if required. http://www.mediterraneangardensociety.org/seedlist.html

Would you like to have some wooden structures or furniture made for your garden or house by a master craftsman? These obelisks and pergola are examples of the possibilities - Solar saunas a speciality! Get in touch with Rudiger Schulze on 917 583 699 for more info. Installation & delivery service all over the Algarve.
**Mediterranean Garden Society Annual General Meeting – October 2006**

The MGS AGM for 2006 was based in Uzes, south west France and Marion & Arnold ter Horst of the Portugal branch attended this year. There should be a report in the next Journal with pictures on the [http://www.mediterraneangardensociety.org](http://www.mediterraneangardensociety.org) web site news and views pages. The Portugal Branch Annual Report was prepared by our Branch Head, Marion ter Horst and presented at the AGM. This was printed in the October MGS Journal.

**BOOK STUFF** – if members have any books they have found useful and would like to recommend, please send the details to Rosie

  - New and unused
  - Cost price £55 (ca. 80 euros)
  - Offers invited
  - Peter Eaton tel/fax 282 912 968 or pandk@sapo.pt

**MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION**

Annual subscriptions are payable in January and you should have received a reminder with your latest Journal. Please note that the fees have been increased and the new single membership fee for Europe is now 35 euros.

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’. New members joining during 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 (€35) 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 and receive newsletters either by email or by post.

Further information about the MGS can be found on the main web site [www.mediterraneangardensociety.org](http://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.

**Steering Group members**
Wim van Putten - Peter Eaton – Burford Hurry – John Dommett

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**Next Newsletter planned for March 2007**, all contributions to Rosie Peddle as soon as possible please.