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## February 2024



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### In this edition

President's Message   Early History of OG/JO   It's Spring again  
Garden Openings   Diary Dates   Come and meet us



## Our opening season starts now!



Sue Lambert

President.

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Dear friends and supporters,

I have enjoyed the winter season as it has allowed me time to make contact with the charities we donated to in 2023. I have been finding out how your contribution in whatever capacity you support us, has been making a real difference to the lives of the children and young adults they work with, so our sincere thanks for your help. Many associations were originally started by people whose own child was disabled or had been seriously ill; or by people who had worked with such children and seen their strength in the face of adversity. Their continued dedication to their causes is truly admirable. Please look at the charities' websites to find out more about the sort of activities they undertake.

I was not able to attend all the AGM's I was invited to, so my apologies to those where I was unable to join you this time. However, Ian Cole and I were able to attend the AGM of the Association Réseau Bulle 23. Their president, Marie-Christine Schulz, has subsequently asked if Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts can visit their newly acquired rented property to give advice on the design of a new garden space being created there. I will let you know what develops in due course!



I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sue and John Herring who have recently retired from their role, having been our coordinators for the Lot since 2016. I am delighted that they will still be able to open by appointment for us; and may later in the year consider a “pop-up” opening. They have often gone

over and above the call of duty in helping me and I hope we can find someone to replace them in due course. If this role appeals to you, please do get in touch.

I would also like to welcome three new garden openers so far this year, Jean-Louis Robert, Adeline Poulain and Sharon Moncur and wish them luck with their first openings.

January is always a busy month for us, as this is when many of our Garden Openers start to put an opening date on the website and the team here are getting up and running for another busy season.

As the snowdrops, hellebores and daffodils begin to show their faces in February, March and April, people are offering to open their gardens to hopefully get our fund-raising off to a flying start.

The return of the sun on our backs this week has helped enormously! Don't forget that even if you are not in a position to open your garden, we will be delighted to hear about any garden-based, fund-raising ideas you might have, to increase our donations to our chosen charities during 2024. Our aim is to encourage as many people as possible to find ways to share and enjoy their gardens and have fun in doing so!

During the course of the year, we will be out and about attending various Plant Fairs and helping with Special Events, so don't forget to follow us on Facebook and also to check the website for these and any up and coming birthday celebrations.

## **Happy 10th Birthday Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts!**

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**Mick Moat**

**Honory President**  
mickmoat6@gmail.com



### **The early history of Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts from founder Mick Moat**

I'd been working on my 2.5 acre land for about 5 years. The pond was installed and the wild life thrived; the young shrubs were maturing nicely; the spring flowering of over 500 daffodils was a sight to behold; wild flowers proliferated in

the woodland – primroses, cowslips, oxlips, cyclamen, fritillary, purple orchids, corncockle, wood anemone and many more; grass pathways criss-crossed the woodland itself so that the wild flowers could be appreciated ‘up close and personal’; hedges were tamed and plants in the bog garden threatened to take over. All in all, it could be said that I’d accomplished my dream of creating a thing of beauty.

So why was it that I felt so unfulfilled and incomplete?

The more I pondered, the more I realised that I’d had this feeling before, but not regarding gardening. My other passion was climbing mountains and, most of all, climbing mountains in the winter when there was plenty of snow. The feeling of utter joy when standing on the top of a mountain, with nothing but pure white virgin snow, is, for me, incomparable. There was, however, one thing that made the experience even more enjoyable and that was the opportunity to share it with someone else. Having a beautiful garden, especially one that you have created, is one thing; sharing it with visitors makes it perfect. The example I frequently used when giving talks to various gardening groups concerned an expensive bottle of wine. When you decide to open it, you have a choice: drink it all yourself or fetch 5 friends round and have a glass each. The pleasure derived from the second option will always outlive the first option (and you won’t need aspirin afterwards!). The sheer delight of sipping a wonderful glass of wine with close friends, discussing the quality, reminiscing about other good wines we’ve drunk, swapping stories about trips to vineyards; all this simply because we’ve decided to share something with others. The feeling is unsurpassable.

It was this feeling of wanting to share with others something that I’d created, that first led me to the decision to open my garden. I approached our local gardening club and, with their blessing, we had our first Open Garden event. Four gardens took part, all of which were in the Creuse and our delight was unbounded when we announced that we had raised 250€ for a charitable cause.



This, of course, was the other reason for opening our gardens; if it was wonderful to share our garden with others, it was doubly so to raise funds for good causes.

We had decided quite early on that the beneficiary of our efforts would be the wonderful association

‘A chacun son Everest’, an organisation dedicated to help young people recovering from cancer, founded by the redoubtable Christine Janin, the first

French woman to have summited Everest.

It seems barely believable that 2024 will herald the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts. From such a small beginning, the association now has a presence in over a third of France and it is particularly exciting that, despite being initiated by 'The Brits', it is now truly a multicultural organisation.

Six years into the life of Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts, my wife decided she wanted to go back to the UK and with huge regret, I was forced to resign from the association. My biggest worry was that the association would fold but gardeners are made of sterner stuff. Four years later, there is every reason to be optimistic about its future. The organisation has weathered the Covid storm and other challenges and as long as there are keen gardeners, OG/JO will survive.

Although I am now some distance geographically from the association, my heart is as close to it as it ever was and I am just as excited as ever to read the newsletters, which keep me in touch with the events and developments. I was, then, particularly honoured and delighted to be asked to write a few words about the small beginnings of a large organisation.

I cannot finish without saying a few words of thanks to all of those volunteers, past and present, who have made our association the success it is today. It matters not one jot whether you are a member of the conseil, a gardener, a volunteer baking cakes, helping at the gate, a garden visitor or a supporter in other ways. You have all contributed to raising huge sums of money for those less fortunate than us and for this I cannot thank you enough. I hope I shall still be around in another 10 years time to address the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary!

Best wishes to you all

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## Garden Season

### It's Spring Again

Think of spring and we think of spring bulbs. Many gardens have tulips planted specially for the first burst of colour in the garden. Today depending on our budget, tulip lovers among us can find tulip bulbs to buy that are within our budget. However, have you heard about 'tulip mania' that swept through Holland in 1634?



It was a frenzy for tulips so great that some say that created the first market collapses in Europe.

Find out more about this incredible period in floral history here:

<https://youtu.be/FteeXfPbeWU?feature=shared>

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## Garden Openings

When getting a garden ready for an open day we become a combination of an endurance athlete, power lifter and garden designer all rolled into one. You think you'll never get everything in the garden ready in time. You want everything to be perfect.



On the Open Day, you welcome visitors and feel sure they'll notice all the things you're berating yourself for not doing. Eventually you notice all the smiling faces and delight in being able to speak to other plant obsessives. As the day progresses you realise that perfection in your garden isn't the point, nobody was really upset that you hadn't pulled out absolutely every single weed in your flower beds or potager. The open day is about sharing the love of gardening with others and for some wonderful causes. It's a wonderful feeling.

As your open day comes to a close and the last visitors leave, over the next few days as you get your energy back inevitably you start to think about next years open day 😊

For all of us supporting the Open Garden/Jardins Ouverts Scheme it's always lovely to find out there's an open garden to enjoy and experience within travelling distance of our location.

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## Here are some dates for your diary:

### **03 Allier:**

03310 Durdat Larequille - 26th May - (New for 2024)

03310 Les Trier, Neris-les-Bains - 2nd June

### **12 Aveyron:**

12200 – La Bastide l'Eveque - 26<sup>th</sup> May

### **23 La Creuse:**

23150 Valaize, St Pardoux-les-Cards -10th March

23600 Montmoulard – Boussac Bourg - 2<sup>nd</sup> June

23350 La Celette - 9th June - (New for 2024)

### **33 La Gironde:**

33580 Taillecevat - 16th June - (New for 2024)

### **34 Hérault:**

34230 Popian - Wednesday afternoons, by appointment only. Check garden page on website for exact months of opening.

### **37 Indre-et-Loire:**

37290 Yzeures-sur-Creuse - 28th, 29th and 30th June

### **53 Mayenne:**

53190 La Dorée - 27th and 28th April

53340 Epineaux-le-Seguin - 12th, 19th and 26th May

53110 Niort-la-Fontaine - 26th May

### **87 Haute-Vienne:**

87430 Fonts de Greignac, Vernuil-sur-Vienne - 2nd June.

***People continue to add dates as the season progresses, so keep checking the website for up to date information***

## **Come and meet us**

We're delighted to have a stand at Chateau de La Bourdaisière Spring fair 30-31 March and 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2024

Come along and meet us and say hello and find out more about the Open Garden scheme. It'll be great to see you there.

<https://www.labourdaisiere.com/portfolio/fete-des-plantes-et-du-printemps/>



## **Open Gardens/Jardins Ouverts**

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