



The Fonseranes 9 locks Botanical trail



BÉZIERS
MÉDITERRANÉE
Sous le soleil, exactement



The Fonseranes 9 locks Botanical trail



The Canal du Midi is a real botanical conservatory as it's been watering farmland in the Languedoc for over 350 years. A Mediterranean garden that Paul Riquet knew and even planted: herbs, shrubs, ornamental trees, fruit trees etc.

The plane trees have now gone and lesser-known species have taken their place to give the structure its original look.

So we'd like you to join us on a journey into the «botanical Canal du Midi» at the 9 Locks site on a trail where scents, colours, medicinal virtues and flavours take you on a sensory experience... We've even brought you a «square of delights» to revisit our herb varieties. We've drummed up the Greek, Roman, Gaul and Celt pantheons to amaze and amuse you. Look at them, smell them but please don't pick them or rip them out. We take care of these plants for you... and future generations.

For full information about the 25 plants on the 9 Locks trail, use your mobile to scan the QR code on each panel at the foot of each plant. You'll find the full guide on : www.beziers-mediterranee.com



symbols and cultural, economic uses



medicinal virtues



culinary uses and more



additional information



1

WHITE POPLAR POPULUS ALBA



It is named after the Latin word «populus» meaning people because poplars were planted in every public area in Roman times. The Celts worshipped it to such an extent that its rustling leaves brought to mind the muffled sound of a crowd. It is also a sign in the Celtic horoscope.



Decoctions of the white poplar bark have diuretic virtues which ease chesty coughs. It used to be used to treat painful episodes of rheumatism.



Its wood is only used to make pulp and matches.

2

ROSEMARY ROSMARINUS OFFICINALIS



The Ancient Greeks used rosemary to improve their intellectual faculties and memory which has now been scientifically proven. People burned rosemary to keep the plague away from the Roman Empire to the 17th century.



As a herbal tea or essential oil, it improves circulation, aids digestion, is a diuretic, anti-stress, anti-fatigue, antioxidant, soothes rheumatism and combats skin problems.



Rosemary is also a herb with a powerful flavour popular in cooking.



3

HOLLY OAK QUERCUS ILEX



The oak is the symbol of Jupiter, who rules heaven and earth, and represents strength, longevity and nobility. Its hardwood is used to make frameworks and furniture. Its leaves and acorns are packed with tannins*.



Its bark has anti-inflammatory, haemostatic (clotting effect), pain-killing, invigorating and antioxidant properties. It's also a remedy for gastroenteritis. Decoctions (*) of holly oak for gargling treat mouth ulcers. Use it in the bath to soothe aches and pains and combat skin ageing. As a compress, it treats eczema and helps skin to heal.

GLOSSARY

***Tannin** : molecule that exists in plants to protect them from parasites. Tannins are used in tanning (turning hide into leather). Wine also contains tannins. Tannins are an astringent and antioxidant.

***Décoction/infusion** : a decoction extracts a plant's active ingredients, poured into water and brought to the boil. That means the ingredients are highly concentrated. An infusion involves pouring boiling water onto a plant in a container and leaving it to infuse to activate its virtues.



4

LILAC SYRINGA VULGARIS



The lilac is a symbol of young beauty and love. It comes from the Balkans and arrived in Europe via Italy in the 17th century. Its white flowers represent innocence and its purple ones are a sign of burgeoning love. Lilac is also the «totem» for couples celebrating their 63rd wedding anniversary... Christians in France use it for communions in spring.



Lilac herbal tea reduces fever, is recommended for stomach ache and eliminates toxins. It's also good for rheumatism and gout. Last but not least, lilac flowers that are dried, macerated for days in oil then filtered produce a soothing massage oil for aches and pains.



Lilac flowers are edible - especially in salads - but don't eat too many as they're very diuretic !



5

INDIAN HAWTHORN RHAPHIOLEPIS INDICA



The tree from Southern China has adapted perfectly to the South of France: it can withstand dry weather and sea spray and thrives on rocky slopes and sandy soil alike. It can withstand frosts up to -10° and is sensitive to heavy, clay and limestone soil. Its flowers and black berries are melliferous (they attract and nourish insects). The etymology of «rhapiolepis»: from the Greek «rhapio» for thorn and «lepis» for scale. That's because its leaves look like thorny scales.



Hawthorn has antioxidant effects, regulates the heartbeat and promotes sleep. But it is wise to avoid too much use: hawthorn then has a... laxative effect



6

MASTIC TREE PISTACIA LENTISCUS



The Greeks extracted mastic (it hardens when it comes into contact with air) from the tree and it brought wealth to the island of Chios (North of Greece, 7km off the Turkish coast) as it produced an essence used in perfumery, cosmetology, pharmacy and even glazing for paintings.



It's antispasmodic, antibacterial, anti-fungal, antioxidant and the mastic tree also combats heavy legs, respiratory issues, digestive problems, cellulite and protects the liver (available as gel in the pharmacy).



You can also add its essence as an aromate to liqueurs and spirits.



7

COMMON MYRTLE OR TARENTUM MYRTLE MYRTUS TARENTINA



Myrtle is a symbol of youth, chastity and beauty (it appears in wedding bouquets and bridal headdresses). The Ancient Romans used it to scent the ashes of the dead to purify them.



It has anti-inflammatory, cough-relieving, antiseptic and antispasmodic properties. As an infusion, it can cure bruises, cuts and ulcers.



Myrtle flowers add aroma to embers and cooked dishes. Its dried berries are used in stuffings and marinades for game. And in beer and wine too (namely Corsican liqueur).



8

CHASTE TREE VITEX AGNUS-CASTUS



The chaste tree is originally from Central Asia (Pakistan) and was widespread throughout Ancient Greece when the Athenians used its berries during ritual festivals to protect women's chastity.



It controls hormones, restores menstrual cycles and soothes the negative effects of the menopause. The World Health Organisation now approves its use for these issues.



It's also known as monk's pepper as it's used in cooking as a substitute for pepper.



ANECDOTE

Berries from the chaste tree were used as an inferior substitute for pepper in medieval monasteries and convents. The fruit is also an «anaphrodisiac» (blunts the libido). So monks and nuns ate it to respect their vow of chastity. In some Italian convents they still cover the ground with fresh flowers from the chaste tree on the path the novices walk on...



9

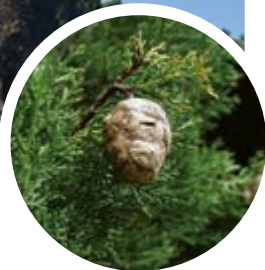
CYPRESS CUPRESSUS SIMPERVIRENS



The Ancient Greeks used it in their cemeteries as they believed that the cypress tree's deep roots communicated with the underworld. Its rot-resistant wood was also used to make coffins (namely for the popes). Because of its slender and tall shape, longevity and dense foliage, Christians see it as a symbol of immortality and resurrection. It's a fantastic windbreaker !



Its essential oil treats circulation and congestion issues, night sweats and incontinence. It has cough-relieving properties... It's a remedy for all sorts of problems!



10

BLACK ELDER SAMBUCUS NIGRA



Its therapeutic values have been renowned since Antiquity when it was nicknamed the «home protector» or «tree of fairies». The Father of Medicine, Hippocrates, even described it as a «medicine chest» !



As a herbal tea or decoction of dried flowers, leaves and/or bark, it treats respiratory infections (bronchitis, common cold, flu), fever, digestive problems, water retention, urinary infections and skin problems (eczema and rashes). It also has a detoxifying effect on the body. Its flowers and fruit are packed with vitamins A, C and B6.



You can use it to make jelly, jam and even wine (with the dried flowers).



11

COMMON DOGWOOD CORNUS SANGUINEA



When the Romans declared war, a priest would go to the enemy's border with a common dogwood javelin in hand as proof of their intentions to do battle. Dogwood symbolises blood (the red colour of its wood brings to mind arteries and veins).



It's an astringent which soothes skin inflammations and diarrhoea; it treats fungal infections and fever. Dogwood bud extract is available at pharmacies to drain the arteries and prevent cardiovascular disease. The berries are poisonous if you eat too many of them. But birds love them.





12

COMMON MEDLAR MESPIUS GERMANICA



Julius Caesar imported the common medlar from Asia Minor (Turkey) to Europe: its flexible wood was used to make tool handles.



Even longer ago, its medicinal virtues have been renowned for 3000 years: leaves, fruit and bark were recommended to aid digestion, cure mouth ulcers and skin problems (especially the leaves). Its fruit is very easy to digest and contains vitamins B and C.



You can eat the medlar in jam, compote, syrup, cooked in dishes, kernels, marinated for several days in white wine.



13

MEDITERRANEAN MEDLAR CRATAEGUS AZAROLUS



The Mediterranean medlar is a species of hawthorn symbolising the purity and protection of innocents in the image of Christ's crown of thorns on the cross. The hawthorn is also one of the main trees in the Celtic horoscope (May 13th-June 9th).



The Mediterranean medlar is a cardiac regulator, provides oxygen to the heart and boosts endurance. It soothes sore throats. It can also be used as a decoction for facial treatments, blemishes and redness.



Its fruit is delicious served in jellies and jams.



ANECDOTE

In Normandy and Brittany, people believed that lightning was one of Satan's misdemeanours, the work of the Devil. So, since the hawthorn symbolises the protection of innocents, families would hang branches of hawthorn to their houses.



14

ALMOND TREE PRUNUS AMYGDALUS



The Romans threw almonds at newlyweds to secure their lineage. The almond tree is a symbol of the Mediterranean civilisation along with the olive tree. It lines streets, vineyards and its blossom is a sign that spring is coming.



Almonds are packed with minerals (potassium, phosphorus, calcium, magnesium) and is a natural appetite suppressant. It's also an antioxidant and helps skin to heal. Almond buds thin the blood in decoctions. It's also known as monk's pepper as it's used in cooking as a substitute for pepper.



Almonds reign over cookery and cosmetics. Sugared almonds for christenings, salted for snacks, in Mediterranean dishes like tajines etc.



15

JEFFERSON'S PECAN ILLINOIS NUT TREE CARYA ILLINOINENSIS



As the Latin name suggests (*Carya Illinoensis*, Illinois nut tree), the pecan or Jefferson's pecan tree is native to North America. A pecan tree was planted in the 9 Locks in early December 2021 to symbolise the friendship between France and America. As you can see from the bronze plaque on the Coche d'Eau wall, the 9 Locks was visited by the American ambassador to France, Thomas Jefferson, during his trip on the Canal du Midi in 1787.



Pecan nuts are high in fibre, aid digestion and prevent colon cancer. They are high in antioxidants and are anti-inflammatory. They are good for your heart, reduce blood pressure and lower bad cholesterol.



Pecan tart is a classic Thanksgiving dessert in the US (the 4th Thursday in November). Pecans are great additions to cookies, brownies, autumn salads and more.

16 THE SQUARE OF DELIGHTS



This little square of the garden is full of the ingredients required for traditional medicine, gourmet cuisine and confectionery: strawberry tree, borage, chervil, sage, angelica, coriander, curry leaf, oregano, sorrel, savory, thyme, wild thyme, verbena and lemongrass.

17

SIEBOLD'S CRABAPPLE MALUS SIEBOLDII



This wild tree comes from Asia. Unlike the regular apple tree, you can only enjoy its blossom. It bears little yellow or red apples that grow until January: they look good to birds but don't taste good.



Siebold's crabapple is used as rootstock in some nurseries. It is rustic, undemanding on soils and withstands dryness. This tree has ecological value too: it is melliferous (attracts bees) and improves pollination for other trees.



18

OLIVE TREE OLÉA EUROPEA



The olive tree is a powerful symbol of beliefs and cultures in the Mediterranean area: peace and reconciliation, victory (the winners of the Olympic Games in Athens were given an olive branch and jar of oil). The olive tree brings long life and hope as the tree is highly resistant to heat, dryness and fire. France is home to thousand-year old trees (Pont du Gard, Filitosa in Corsica etc.). The green colour of its leaves represents hope.



Olive tree leaves combat blood pressure (in decoctions), dizziness, ringing in the ears and is anti-diabetic. Olives are good for your liver. When distilled they produce an essential oil used in cosmetics (soap, anti-wrinkle masks etc.).



Served as a snack, in salads, grilled dishes, stews and more, olives and their oil are a fundamental ingredient in Mediterranean cuisine.



19

MEDITERRANEAN HACKBERRY CELTIS AUSTRALIS



The hackberry may be from the Southern hemisphere but it came to our Mediterranean lands during Antiquity. It was a sacred tree back then and women would cut their hair and offer it to the gods at the bottom of the tree. The Occitan word for hackberry is «fanabreguier» meaning «tree of the temple.» A holy site.



Its fruit and leaves treat diarrhoea and it has astringent (skin healing) and digestive properties.



You can eat its fruit raw, macerated in alcohol or in dishes.



Its light and strong wood is used to make pitchforks.

20

FIG TREE FICUS CARICA



Romulus and Remus were found under a fig tree. However, Christian tradition has it that the fig tree is cursed: Eve bites into a fig (not an apple)... Adam also used a fig leaf to protect his modesty.



This tree has been growing in the Mediterranean for thousands of years. Its fruit is packed with vitamins A, B and C, natural remedies for tiredness. Figs are laxatives too. Cut in half, they make efficient plasters for scratches. The pulp soothes the pain of a mouth ulcer or tooth abscess and helps it heal. Cut the leaves to extract the milk: it will treat your verrucas.



You can eat figs as they are, for dessert, for main, dried, candied etc. Its leaves scent barbecues wonderfully.

21

JUDAS TREE CERCIS SILIQUASTRUM



Legend has it that Judas Iscariot hanged himself from this tree after betraying Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, the price of treason... The Languedoc is teeming with this tree. Its flowers grow on the trunk itself.



The leaves and buds are antithrombotic (stops blood clots forming) and used in Chinese medicine. Native Americans made decoctions from the Judas tree's bark and roots to treat nausea, vomiting, dysentery, fever and whooping cough.



Its flowers are used in fritters, jelly, salad and jam. Its fruit can be cooked and served as vegetables.



22

STRAWBERRY TREE ARBUSTUS UNEDO



The goddess Cardea could «open anything that was closed and close anything that was open», protected from bad spirits and when faced with vampires and witches, she brandished... a strawberry tree branch.



Its roots (decoction) soothe rheumatism and high blood pressure. Strawberries are great for cardiovascular disease, are diuretic, antioxidant and packed with vitamin C.



You can eat them raw or cook them (tart, fruit salad, jam etc.).



23

SMOKETREE COTINUS COGGYGRIA



The smoketree is called «fustet» in the Languedoc which comes from the Occitan word «feustel» meaning dye: its wood used to be used to make an orange dye. It flowers with bouquets that look like smoke. It is also known as dyer's sumach. The smoketree is an ornamental plant.



Its essential oil is anti-infectious, antibacterial, antiviral, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant. It is also invigorating and stimulating.

24

POMEGRANATE TREE PUNICA GRANATUM



Pomegranates have been a symbol of life, fertility and passion since time immemorial because of its countless seeds. The pomegranate tree comes from Central Asia and owes its Latin name «punica» to it being introduced in Rome during the Punic Wars when Rome battled ancient kingdoms that then became Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Pomegranates were a sign of wealth in Egypt and its fruit was fermented to make wine.



Pomegranates are used for cardiovascular disease, to improve circulation, reduce cholesterol, lower blood pressure and soothe the joints. It's an anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial and boosts sporting performance.



You can eat pomegranate as it is, as a juice, syrup or jelly.



25

MONTPELLIER CISTUS CISTUS MONSPELIENSIS



The Montpellier cistus comes from the Mediterranean area and has colonised rocky areas and poor soil in the Languedoc heaths for thousands of years. The name cistus comes from the Greek «kistè» (basket) because of the shape of its fruit. It was also used in disenchantment rituals: it was burnt whilst reciting incantations.



Its essential oil is anti-bacterial, stops bleeding, heals scars, is anti-viral, invigorating and stimulating. Cistus was used to start fires (ovens and fireplaces), especially in Corsica, as it contains inflammable balsamic essence. Labdanum gum (sticky sap from the cistus) is used in perfumery.



ANECDOTE

The cistus flower is the Montpellier Hérault Rugby club's emblem and appears on its shield.



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