



## Agenda

- Why should we not water the garden?
- How can we achieve this?
- The garden at Montiano
- Key plants
- Colour in every season

## Why should we not water the garden?

- The old concept of an “English style garden” is totally unsuited to the natural environment and climate in central Italy.
- Water-wise gardening is fundamental: the cost of water can only rise and water resources are becoming ever more scarce.
- We want to preserve the ‘spirit of place’ and create a garden in harmony with the surrounding countryside.



Mediterranean Garden Society  
Associazione Giardino Mediterraneo



3

## This approach does NOT apply to ...

- Vegetables
  - We want our veg to grow quickly and to mature within a single season
  - They need all the water and nourishment we can give them
- Plants in pots
  - They cannot seek out water and nutrients for themselves

4

## How much water would we save?

An 'English style' lawn:

- Needs on average 6 to 8\* lt of water per day per square metre
- During a watering season of 150 days this means about 1000 lt of water per square metre per year
- A small lawn measuring 5m x 10m requires  
**50.000 litres of water every year**
- And in the end it's still only grass.



*\*Data provided by Vivaio Salto del Prete*

5

## How can we achieve this?

- The answer can be found in the surrounding countryside: we should imitate these conditions.
- In the Mediterranean 'Macchia' the plants grow happily without being watered or fertilised.
- Wet winters are followed by hot dry summers with sporadic but heavy rain storms.
- The plants are trimmed by goats and other wild animals.



6

## Choose the right plants

- Indigenous plants that grow in the countryside don't get any care.
- Cistus, phlomis, broom, dog rose, stachys, thyme, helichrysum, euphorbia, orchid, anemone, poppy, euonymus, dog wood, juniper ...

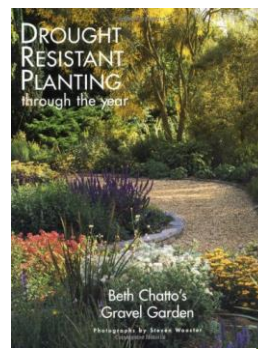
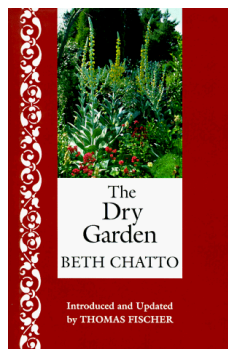


7

## The right plant in the right place

Choose the plant according to its needs:

- Drought tolerance
- Winter cold resistance
- Sun or shade
- Alkaline or acidic soil
- Clay or sandy soil



8

## Plant correctly

- The right moment is in autumn
  - Mediterranean plants do not grow in summer
  - In autumn the soil is softened by rain which allows the roots to penetrate better down into the soil
- For more effective watering, make a 'basin' around each plant approx. 60cm wide and 20cm deep
- A square hole for trees stimulates the penetration of the roots into the soil
- Group plants quite close together to create a cooler micro-climate



*Photo: Olivier Filippi*

9

## What if I can't find the plants in autumn?

- This can be challenging
- Many vivai only stock up in spring
- If necessary, you can also plant in March
- Otherwise keep the plant in a pot until autumn
- Any plant that you put into the ground after the end of April is going to really struggle ....
  - ... even if you water it all the time

10



## Plants start off best in square pots

- Round pots make roots grow the wrong way
- Square pots stimulate vertical root growth and prepare the plant for searching out water and nutrients



Photos: Olivier Filippi

11

## Water wisely

- 5 to 30 litres at a time every fifteen days (or more) in the first year
- Water in the evening?  
.... Or in the morning?
- Water slowly by hand
- Group together plants according to their water needs:
  - place pots near to the house and more resistant plants further away
- Remember that plants indigenous to Mediterranean climates not only need no watering but **suffer** if watered in summer as it can cause disease and promote excessive growth which will reduce their lifespan. Let them aestivate in peace.



Photo: Olivier Filippi

12

## Make use of hard landscape features

- Use raised beds, terracing, dry stone walls to imitate nature: this creates drainage and captures moisture



Centranthus ruber 'Pink Sensation', & 'Albus'; Cistus x purpurea; Iris

13

## Make use of hard landscape features



Rosa Pompon de Paris; Ceanothus repens

14

## Prune a just little

- Choose the right plant for the right space and don't try to constrain its growth habit.
- Avoid excessive pruning – but trimming evergreens into spheres can emphasise their natural forms, thereby accentuating the Mediterranean atmosphere in the garden.



*Foto: Trimmed spheres, Garden of Gary, MGS Italy member*

15

## Mulch and Compost

### **Compost YES!**

- Compost is an intelligent way to recycle garden way and can be used to improve the structure of stony soils

### **Fertilizer NO!**

- There is absolutely no need to give fertiliser – in fact it stimulates lush growth that cannot be sustained by the plant in a drought. Plants in pots and roses are the exception

### **Mulch YES!**

- Mulch helps keep down invasive weeds and reduces water evaporation from the soil
- It can be organic or mineral, e.g.
  - Bark
  - Gravel

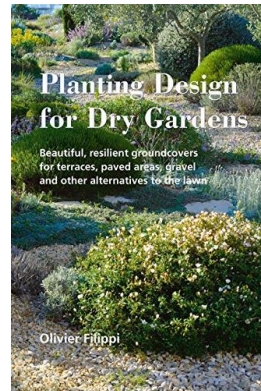
16



## Reduce, replace or eliminate the lawn

Various types of alternatives to lawns recommended by **Olivier Filippi**, pioneer of dry gardening, developed through experiments in his own vivaio e garden:

- *Non grass lawn*
- *Gravel Garden*
- *Wild lawn*
- *Tall ground cover*
- *Flowering Steppe*
- *Mixed ground cover*
- *Flowering Terrace*



Also consider using **Bermuda grass 'Yukon'**

17

## Reduce, replace or eliminate the lawn



Flowering Terrace



Flowering Steppe



Mixed ground cover



Wild lawn

Photos: Olivier Filippi

18

## The lawn at Montiano



Saturea, Teucrium aurum, Teucrium ackermani, Achillea umbellatum, Sedum 19

## Create shade



Rose Lady Hillingdon, Centranthus ruber, Cistus x purpureus, Phlomis fruticosa, artichoke 20

## Shade for the soil

- Plants for **ground cover**: create shade which will lower the soil temperature and thereby reduce evaporation



*Vinca major*

21

## Water Wise - in summary

1. Select plants carefully by observing the local countryside
2. The right plant in the right place
3. Plant carefully
4. Plants raised in square pots
5. Water intelligently
6. Use hard landscaping to imitate nature
7. Avoid excessive pruning
8. Use mulch and compost
9. Reduce, replace or eliminate the lawn
10. Create shade for the plants and for the soil

22



## The garden at Montiano



In the beginning ... a sea of mud

23

## The challenge

- Colli del Trasimeno; altitude 435 m asl
- Summer: 40 degrees and no rain
- Winter: -8 degrees with rain (but not always) or snow
- Soil: alkaline, clay and stony

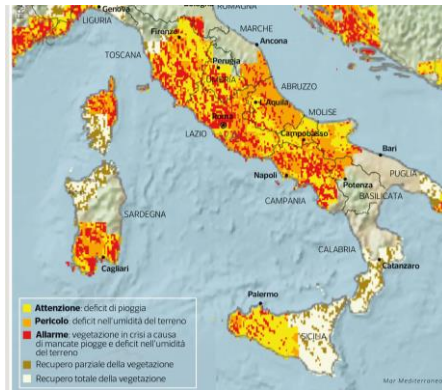


24



## The winter-spring drought of 2017

Drought situation as at 20 August 2017



- In the first 6 months of 2017, central Italy received only 20% of the amount of rain that would normally be expected to fall
- Is this going to be the norm?
- Should we water our gardens in winter?

Il Corriere della Sera 30 August 2017 (data from European Drought Observatory)  
[http://www.corriere.it/cronache/17\\_agosto\\_30/effetto-deserto-100-giorni-italia-clima-ab597d36-8cfe-11e7-b5e1-7559ef64c47b.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/cronache/17_agosto_30/effetto-deserto-100-giorni-italia-clima-ab597d36-8cfe-11e7-b5e1-7559ef64c47b.shtml)

25

## Spirea survives



August 2017



October 2017



April 2017

26

## The olive grove as garden



27

## Planting on the terraces





The olive grove after two years



29

Gravel garden



30

## Gravel garden



31

## Key plants



32



## Key plants

- We selected certain plants – well known to everyone – that when repeated, form the structure of the garden.
- These plants are well suited to the conditions here.
- Mediterranean plants often have characteristics in common that make them recognisable:
- Leaves that are
  - Silver or ‘fat’
  - Thin or deeply cut
  - Aromatic

33

## Key plants

- Searching further, we find there are lots of interesting varieties even among the more common plants:
  - Cistus
  - Teucrium
  - Santolina
  - Phlomis
  - Rosemary
  - Euphorbia
  - Silver plants
  - Grasses

.... and a word about Roses

34

## Cistus



Cistus incanus



Cistus x florentinus



Cistus x purpureus



Cistus x tardiflorens

35

## Teucrium



Teucrium fruticans 'Azureum'



Teucrium flavum



Teucrium aureum



Teucrium cossonii

36

## Santolina



*Santolina chamaecyparissus*



*Santolina benthamiana*



*Santolina viridis* 'Primrose Gem'



*Santolina rosmarinifolia* 'Caerulea'

## Phlomis



*Phlomis fruticans*



*Phlomis purpurea*



*Phlomis purpurea* 'Alba'

38



## Rosmary



*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Sappho'



*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Boule'



*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Majorcan Pink'



*Rosmarinus officinalis* var. *albiflorus*

39

## Euphorbia



*Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*



*Euphorbia myrsinites*



*Euphorbia* 'Blackbird'



*Euphorbia rigida*

40



## Silver plants



*Artemisia arborescens*



*Ballota pseudodictamnus*



*Helichrysum italicum*



*Atriplex halimus*

41

## Grasses that go well with rushes & reeds



*Festuca glauca*, *Leymus arenarius*, *Lygeum spartum*, *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Yaku Jima', *Poa labillardieri*, *Stipa tenuissima*

42

## A word about Roses

- Are roses too needy for a Mediterranean garden?
- No, but we must choose the right type of rose.
- Many antique varieties are better suited to a dry climate, for example:
  - China
  - Tea (not Hybrid Tea)
  - Noisette
- All these do well without watering or pruning
- Just give them some rose feed in winter



43

## A 'dell' of China Roses



*Rose chinensis*

44

## Some reliable roses



R. banksiae lutescens (Botanica)



Papillon (China)



Felicité et Perpetué (Semprevirens)



William Allen Richardson (Noisette)<sup>45</sup>

## Colour in every season





## Colour even in winter



*Lonicera fragrantissima*



*Iris Unguicularia*



*Jasminum nudiflorum*



*Cotoneaster*

47

## Spring



*Rosa* 'Paul's Himalayan Musk' (R), 'Seven Sisters' Rose (L)

48



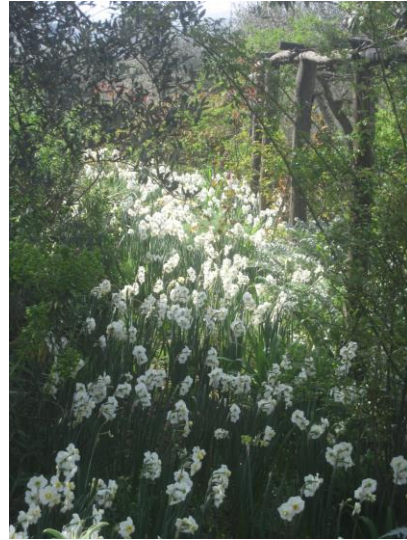
## Spring bulbs



Anemone Coronaria de Caen



Anemone Blanda Blue



Narcissus 'Cheerfulness'

49

## The same pergola 40 days later



50

## Botanical species bulbs



Tulipa Sprengeri, Narcissus 'Thalia'



Narcissus 'Minnow'



Tulipa Clusiana 'Lady Jane'



Tulipa Humilis

51

## White shrubs in spring



Spirea arguta Bridal Wreath



Viburnum sterile



Philadelphus



Poncirus trifoliata

52



## Yellow shrubs in spring



Medicago



Ulex europaeus



Coronilla glauca



Coronilla glauca 'Citrina'

53

## Pink shrubs in spring



Syringa x persica



Cercis siliquastrum



Sambus nigra 'Black Lace'



Cotinus coggygria 'Royal Purple'

54



## Summer



Achillea 'Walter Funke', 'Summer Wine', 'Terracotta'

55

## Blue plants in summer



Eryngium x tripartitum



Catanache caerulea



Perovskia



Caryopteris x clandonensis

56

## Yellow plants in summer



Bupleurum fruticosum



Achillea filipendulina



Hypericum



Heremocalis

57

## Summer bulbs



Madonna Lily (*Lilium candidum*)



Allium Sphaerocephalon (Drumsticks)



Gladiolus byzantinus

58



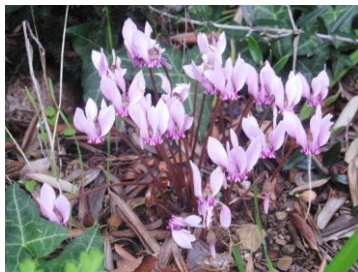
## Autumn



Reflowering China roses

59

## Autumn bulbs



*Cyclamen hederifolium*



*Tulbaghia fragrans*



*Sternbergia lutea*



*Crocus sativus*

60



## Autumn perennials



*Salvia microphylla*



*Epilobium canum* 'Western Hills'



*Sedum spectabile*



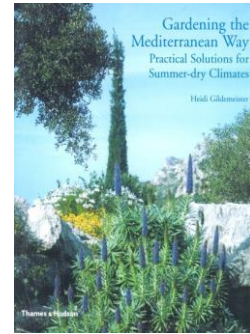
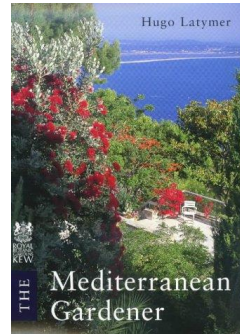
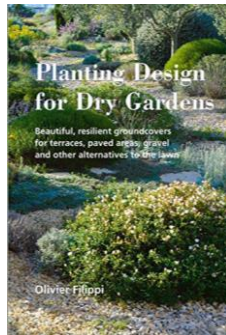
*Gaura Siskiyou pink*

## Conclusions



*Choisya ternata*

## Useful books



63

## With thanks to ...



Lucia Scovacricchi & Eugenia Natalino  
Vivaio Salto del Prete  
Città della Pieve  
<http://www.vivaiosaltodelprete.it/>



The Mediterranean Garden Society  
<http://www.mediterraneangardensociety.org/>  
MGS Italy branch  
Associazione Giardino Mediterraneo  
<http://www.assoziazionegiardinomediterraneo.it/>

64

