

# Historic Fruit and Kitchen Gardens

Newsletter number 4, October 2023



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## Tribute to André Chotard



Monsieur André Chotard, who attended our meeting on 3 February 2022, passed away on 17 August 2023 at the age of 93. Together with his brother Paul, who passed away in 2009, André Chotard ran the famous Gosselies nurseries created by their father Julien Chotard in 1911. The "Chotard brothers" - as they were affectionately known - were nurserymen of excellence and international renown in the production of espaliers. They were also role models for the transmission of savoir-faire in the art of the espalier and of the nursery, notably through their particularly benevolent involvement in the early years of their successors, [Alexandra and Olivier Debaisieux Allard](#) who have maintained the excellence of the [Enghien nurseries](#) ever since.

One will find at the end of the links [an history of pépinières de Gosselies and of Enghien](#), [The tribute of Alexandra Allard et Olivier Debaisieux](#), [The tribute of Marc Lateur](#) (CRAW de Gembloux), [two pictures of André Chotard](#) and the [presentation of the fruit garden of Gaasbeek](#) for which the Chotard brothers produced espaliers.

## Next online conference October 12, 2023

We are very happy to confirm the content of the next conference session on:

### A journey through time in two historic fruit and vegetable gardens:

**Nathalie Romatet, owner of the Château de Mirosmesnil** (France) will present the evolution of her kitchen garden since its major restoration in 1945. In particular, she will show the role played by the owner-gardener relationship in this development.

**Trevor Nicholson, head gardener at Harewood** (United Kingdom) will take us on a journey through the history of Harewood and show the role of public-gardener-owner relationships in the revival of the kitchen garden.

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## WKGN Forum, October 6 and 7, 2023

Friday 6th and Saturday 7th October 2023 the Walled Kitchen Garden Network will host its annual forum at Harewood House, Yorkshire. The theme will look at the historic relationship between the Kitchen Garden and the Kitchen – a vitally important collaboration for the management of Estates and their households historically, and how some are recognising and working together again today.



*Harewood House*

The first day, Friday 6th October, will be at Harewood House with talks during the morning, from our speakers; Trevor Nicholson, Steffie Shields, Claudio Bincoletto and Bent Varming. After lunch, we will spend the afternoon in the 18thC walled kitchen gardens with Trevor and his team, with time for discussions, Q&A and tea. The second day we will visit Swinton Park Estate, Helmsley Walled Garden and Ridding Park Hotel & Spa. For more information and the registration form please go to the WKGN-website : [Forum 2023 - Harewood House and walled kitchen gardens of North Yorkshire - Walled Kitchen Gardens Network \(walledgardens.net\)](https://www.walledgardens.net/Forum-2023-Harewood-House-and-walled-kitchen-gardens-of-North-Yorkshire)

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## Fellow gardeners, save the date of 16 January 2024!

The Chambord conference and the webinars have demonstrated the value of the international exchange of knowledge and experience. That's why Rob Plomp and Hennes Claassen from the Dutch Guild of Gardeners and the conference organisers have decided to hold the

**launch meeting of the European Gardeners' Network on 16 January 2024.**

This meeting will take place in ZOOM. If you are interested, please register at [info@gildevantuinbazen.nl](mailto:info@gildevantuinbazen.nl) or [contact@potagershistoriqueshistorickitchengardens.eu](mailto:contact@potagershistoriqueshistorickitchengardens.eu) or [amisdupotagerduroi@yahoo.fr](mailto:amisdupotagerduroi@yahoo.fr), so that we can send you the link.

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## After Chambord, we will meet in The Netherlands in 2024!

After Chambord, the **second European Symposium on the conservation of historic fruit and kitchen gardens** will take place in The Netherlands on Thursday 5th and Friday 6th September 2024. Later this year we will tell you more about this new event!

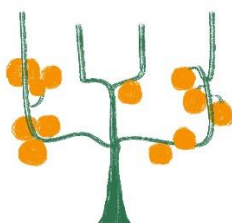
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## Official recognition of one of the specific aspects of the profession of historic fruit and vegetable garden gardener

We are particularly pleased to be able to inform you of some good news for the recognition of the gardening profession, and in particular the profession of gardener of historic fruit and vegetable gardens: an important dimension of this profession has just been officially recognized with the **inclusion of the art of the espalier tree in France's intangible cultural heritage** in June 2023<sup>1</sup>. This inclusion is the result of the efforts of a necessarily French and francophone collective initiated in 2019 by the Amis du Potager du Roi (Versailles) and the Murs à Pêches (Montreuil)<sup>2</sup>. The aim now is to internationalize the collective in order to have the art of espalier included in UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list. Cultivating fruit trees in historic gardens is a theme that we have often discussed in the symposium, and no later than last June with the presentations of Hilary Theaker, Sebastien Conil and Stefan Vidts. We hope that many of you will join the effort for a stronger international recognition of the art of the espalier – and of its associated knowledge and savoir-faire<sup>3</sup>.

### L'art de l'espalier

tailles de formation et de fructification



**Patrimoine  
Culturel  
Immatériel  
en France**

connaître, pratiquer, transmettre

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<sup>1</sup> "The art of the espalier– specific pruning approaches for training fruit trees in different shapes and for fruiting" - has been included in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in France since June 2023. The content of the registration form is on the [art de l'espalier](http://artdelespalier.com) website.

<sup>2</sup> Have also participated to this collective: Alexandra and Olivier Debaisieux, Herman Van den Bossche and Marcel Vossen, from Belgium, Reiner Wahl from Germany and Werner Amgarten and from Switzerland.

<sup>3</sup> As it is not all countries who have signed UNESCO's immaterial cultural heritage convention, one might well imagine different types of recognition in different countries

## Art of the espalier

The 'art of the espalier' is the art of growing fruit trees trained to orderly two-dimensional forms. Espaliers can be trained against a wall ('espaliers' stricto sensu) or on a trellis in open ground ('contre espaliers'). Some well-ordered fruit three-dimensional forms are also called 'espaliers'<sup>4</sup>. The art of training fruit trees in espaliers is the expression of a large body knowledge and savoir-faire developed over the centuries by the accumulation of countless innovations produced by gardeners, the keystone of which is the knowledge and know-how of specific pruning approaches for forming the trees in different shapes and for fruiting. The aim of these pruning approaches is to produce high quality fruit that is both tasty and easily accessible. The result is trees that take up little space on the ground, have a high and regular production potential, a long lifespan and often have esthetically pleasing in shape. Until the middle of the 20th century, the knowledge and savoir-faire of the art of the espalier were the benchmark practice for all fruit-growing activities, used by professionals and amateurs alike. Since then, commercial fruit growing has adopted much less labor-intensive approaches. The art of the espalier has thus entered a transition towards new uses and new practitioners. Today, it is helping to reintroduce fruit trees to the city, where it makes a positive contribution to the environment, biodiversity and individual and collective well-being. The challenge is to ensure that this ancestral knowledge and savoir-faire is passed on and continues to thrive.

### Who are the practitioners of the art of the espalier?

The practitioners of the art of the espalier all have similar goals. First and foremost, the aim is to obtain high quality fruit that is easily accessible on trees that take up little ground space, have a high and regular production potential from year to year and a long lifespan. The spacing between the branches of the espaliers provides better ventilation for the crown of the tree. Ambient humidity is reduced, preventing the development of certain fungal diseases. Vegetation is healthier without the need for any treatment. These trees are particularly well-suited to the relatively small space available in a historic or contemporary fruit or vegetable garden, hence the term of "dwarf trees".

Fruit trees trained as espaliers are often very aesthetic, but this aesthetic pursuit is not the primary objective of the members of the community. Obviously, over time, gardeners have discovered the plasticity of most fruit trees and some members of the community have always pursued, and continue to pursue, aesthetic rather than productive goals: the fruit tree then becomes more like an ornamental tree. Finally, some members of the community use espalier pruning to prolong the life of historic trees such as the Hampton Court vine in the United Kingdom (200 years old) or the Freÿr orange trees in Belgium (300 years old).

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<sup>4</sup> As expressed by Lee Reich, in *Fruiting Espaliers: a fusion of art and science*, "The definition of espalier is as lax as the plant is formal. *Arnoldia* 1999-2000 Winter.



*The fruit garden of Gaasbeek (near Brussels ) © Michel Schlosser*

The members of the community recognize each other in the value they place on the knowledge and *faire* involved in training fruit trees in different shapes and for fruiting, which is the keystone of the art of espalier. They are united in their desire to keep this knowledge and *savoir-faire* alive and to share them with all those who are interested.

The members of the community often come from a variety of backgrounds, but all share a passion for fruit, fruit trees, cultivated nature and nature in general.

We meet in this community many people who are passionate about plant and animal biodiversity (pollinating insects, animals that predate pests, etc.). The members of the community also recognize themselves in the respect they have for a very small number of "masters" of the practice, who are not always easy to identify at national level. Four of these 'masters', Jacques Beccaletto, François Moulin, Thierry Regnier and Denis Retournard, played a very active part in preparing the file. While the members of the community respect the knowledge and know-how of the past or "the Ancients", and while many of them love old varieties of fruit, some are also involved in scientific progress (for example, the *Croqueurs de Pommes* are involved in the genetic analyses of fruit carried out by INRAe<sup>5</sup>). Although the members of the community tend to be relatively old men, there has been a recent increase in the number of young people and women (in 2023, 35% of the members of the collective's mailing list were women).

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<sup>5</sup> INRAe is France's National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment,





*The fruit garden of Gaasbeek (near Brussels ) © Michel Schlosser*

Some of the members of the community belong to groups with a long and strong tradition of the practice: historic centers, historic fruit gardens, castles and historic homes, amateurs who grow fruit trees in their gardens or on their facades, practitioners of trellising walls and trellising, and specialist nursery-people.

Others belong to established arboriculture and horticulture groups who, among other activities, practice the art of espalier planting: fruit arboriculture and pomology associations, shared garden associations, conservatory orchards, etc.

The recent period has seen the emergence of a whole series of new groups who are rediscovering the value of espaliered fruit trees: municipalities and local authorities, new associations in urban and peri-urban areas, players in the social economy, urban and peri-urban farms. Other individuals belong to landscape architects' organizations, professional and scientific organizations, and political and administrative authorities.

Finally, it has to be said that although the community of espalier tree practitioners is truly unique, it is not an isolated community, and its borders with other communities of fruit tree growers are, of course, extremely porous.

The collective was delighted to welcome Les Arbusticulteurs, the French association for the sustainable management of shrubs. In the current period of renewal, the great strength of fruit arboriculture is probably that it is very diverse: the art of espalier, the art of shrub management, peasant arboriculture (fruit hedges, 'joulles', 'trognes', etc.), pre-orchards, professional fruit arboriculture, agroforestry, the art of landscaping with fruit trees, etc. This diversity enables it, for example, to offer a multitude of solutions to meet the needs of small and medium-sized businesses. This diversity enables it, for example, to propose a multitude of solutions to meet the many challenges of creating urban edible fruit landscapes.

The preparation of the application for registration of the knowledge and savoir-faire of the art of the espalier made it possible to initiate networking and exchanges between members of the community belonging to all the groups presented below. This network has taken the form of an open collective, with

new members joining regularly. The collective meets periodically to discuss the activities of its members and the themes of safeguarding and passing on espalier knowledge and know-how. To date, 119 people, out of a mailing list of around 300 associations, institutions and individuals have taken part in at least one of these meetings, and almost 30 people are regular contributors to the discussions on the preparation of the form and the safeguard measures. With the exploration of new uses for espaliers in urban spaces, the number of contacts is rapidly increasing.

**Collectif**  
**pour l'inscription de**  
**l'art de l'espalier au**  
**patrimoine culturel immatériel de l'Unesco**



The art of espalier art is practiced, to varying degrees, all over the world. In Europe of course, but also in America and Asia. In the Anglo-Saxon world it is referred to by the French word 'espalier' (the word designating, as we do, espalier in the broad sense including two- and three-dimensional forms. Espalier training is often presented as an art and a science. It is considered to be an ancient practice that can be beneficial to the environment<sup>6</sup>



*The fruit garden of Gaasbeek (near Brussels ) © Michel Schlosser*

Today, a number of gardens out of France have very fine collections of espaliered trees: Gaasbeek (Belgium), whose creator, Marcel Vossen, is a member of the collective, Kew, The Newt, Wisley, West Dean, etc. (United Kingdom), Würzburg (Germany), Het Loo (Netherlands), Babylonstoren (South Africa), etc.

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<sup>6</sup> Ingels (Chuck), Wave of the Future: Espalier for Harvest and Pest Management, University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR)

## Please let us know your feedback and ideas!

We value your suggestions and feedback on the presentations. Please let us know by sending us an email at [contact@potagershistoriqueshistorickitchengardens.eu](mailto:contact@potagershistoriqueshistorickitchengardens.eu). We also welcome your contributions to this newsletter and any suggestions you may have.

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You receive this email because you participated in one of our online conferences or attended the symposium at Chambord Castle.

Our mailing address is: [contact@potagershistoriqueshistorickitchengardens.eu](mailto:contact@potagershistoriqueshistorickitchengardens.eu)

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