

This Free E-Book is brought to you by Natural-Aging.com.

100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!

The Journal of a Gardener in Tuscany – Early April 2004

By Rupert Mayhew

The Journal of a Gardener in Tuscany – Early April 2004 by Rupert Mayhew

The Journal of a Gardener in Tuscany - April 2004 part I
Early

March Winds and April Showers

April 10th 2004

I replanted two flowering trees at the request of my Father, he cannot remember their names but one has yellow flowers and the other is a 'pink thing'. The 'pink thing' did not enjoy being placed in the shade last year under Lombardo's loggia, or shaded terrace, so we have planted it with the 'yellow thing' on the bank just above the courtyard. This is a new area of the garden after Lombardo build a flowerbed here in which he planted some tulips, his speciality which he brought to us from his own garden.

With bulbs in the base of the wall, roses to be planted a few inches back followed by the slope of wild flowers then the flowering trees, or 'things', and the cypresses behind (so typical of Tuscany) the bank in the courtyard should become a pleasant site in years to come. The trouble with much of the gardening we do here is that it is the future we must think of. We aren't just building a garden for the here and now, but one which will evolve, and I am aware of the three year law for any tree. That after planting we should wait three years before expecting to see anything happen. Painfully slow.

I have started to count and clear the olive trees on the land. We have acres and acres of what were once Olive groves but which have gone to ruin. Scrub and then woodland has invaded the land and it needs work, much of it consists of hacking through the undergrowth, cutting away the scrub surrounding the tree by hand, then pulling it away, an exhausting task which simply cannot be substituted by any machine without damaging the trees. We have a lot of land to cover, and every time I uncover a tree I see another top of silver and green shining among the scrub, I sigh at the thought of the extra exertion and so I head off to clear that too, then I see another, and another, but at least I'll have oil lamps in powercuts and plenty of hair gel in the future...

Olive trees are renowned for longevity and ability to produce fruit despite old age, drought, frost and fire, so although many are covered in vines, brambles and evil thorny wild roses they should still produce fruit once they are pruned, a task Lombardo and I will start next week. A count revealed 120 trees outside the young olive grove below the garden. Once pruned we should see some fruit in about 18 months, painfully slow again, but as farms go, at least it is low maintenance, and olive groves look beautiful all year round.

The PH Sampler from the garden centre proved fun and I spent an afternoon sticking it into the ground and checking the results with my PH Chart, this useful chart tells me, for instance, where I can plant rhubarb depending on the soil, or artichokes or potatoes, should I feel the urge. I don't really trust it though, as it was so cheap, but I do look scientific as I walk the lands, instead of looking like a

neaderthal with stone age tools. The hill sides all across Tuscany are now showing young green or yellow buds, the diversity of colour across the hillsides is a pleasant change from the grey brown of winter, and even better is to know that in a couple of weeks they will all be different shades of soft green.

Wine Pots

April 3rd 2004

A trip to the winery to buy a demijohn of wine ended up in a large flowerpot buying session as well. The Frescobaldi are one of the largest wine producers in Italy, they make wine on neighbouring land to us and have a large local winery. We turned up hoping to fill our 54 litre demijohn of wine and ended up buying some ten half oak barrels once used for wine making as well.

In many Agriturismos in Tuscany the barrels are used first to store wine and then, when their winemaking days are over, as large flowerpots. They never seem to hold more than a few dry pansies or geraniums at best, and the wine barrels, or 'wine pots' as we christened them, are coated along the inside with a thick hard coat of red wine sediment. The barrel smells of wine and whatever we plant will have to reconcile itself with the fact that it is living in a wine barrel, and quite possibly any blooms will smell a little of wine too. We are avoiding Geraniums in these as it's tempting to plant lemon trees in the barrels, so we have wine flavoured lemons jingling in our gin and tonics.

The garden is growing frantically and the banks are covered in a multitude of wild flowers and wild mint, so walking anywhere away from the lawn releases a strong minty aroma underfoot. We took the geraniums out of the greenhouses and are scattering them across the property, nothing is left in the greenhouses and we are now only waiting until May before we buy the lemon trees for the large pot in the car park.

A day in Florence with friends inevitably led to a long lunch at San Spirito Piazza followed by a walk in the Boboli gardens just south of the Arno in Florence. The gardens are filled with Italian curiosities, such as statues and follies, and everywhere you turn you are greeted with another compelling view such as the Palazzo Vecchio one moment, and the Duomo the next, or both. It is a stunning location and the gardens are full of plants that are so successful here such as cypress, bay trees and wild

flowers. The latter would seem to fill the area to many that should be a lawn, but a formal wild flower lawn, in April, can work.

We are planning a row of lavender in front of the rose bed on the terrace, as well as a hedge to line the lawn in the garden of Francesca, beech is a candidate for this, as is something slightly herbal, such as Rosemary, which is flowering across the valley. The plum trees by the villas were pruned heavily, in the hope they will produce some fruit for the first time in four years, and elsewhere fruit trees are making themselves known by showing off their bright blossoms, allowing me to plan where to cut away scrub and prune next winter. The next few weeks will be busy in the garden now as we bring the garden up to scratch and carry out the plans we made over the winter months.

Rupert Mayhew recently moved to Tuscany, Italy, from a career in IT in London. He works in and runs an expanding agriturismo and this new role includes the task of creating a garden out of what is now mountainside. <http://www.ladocciawelcomes.com.rmayhew@pemba-adventures.com>

Villas In Tuscany

By Giovanni Marchi

Travelling through Tuscany can be a very stressful experience, in spite of what all romantic books and guides tell you, if you do not know where to find that great spot or restaurant or museum you are looking for.

The first thing to do when planning a trip to Tuscany is to plan what are the things you would like to do when you are there. Are you looking for relax and just a hint of culture among strolls? Or would you like a full immersion in Tuscany's cultural heritage? Or would you like something in the middle?

It is important to know this because from here you will be able to choose the type of accommodation you want to be in. There are some villas which give you the true Tuscan country experience with 360 degrees breathtaking views, gardens that allow you to spend a whole week with bare feet, far from any other man-made landmark. Then there are villas at one mile from the nearest town, where you can still enjoy lots of privacy, but at the same time allow you to enjoy quick trips to nearby interesting spots.

What is the size of your group? Is it a large size group? Couple? Villas for large groups are common in Tuscany, but you have to get the budget right! At times very large villas can be too expensive, so the best thing is to rent a farmhouse composed of separate apartments in Tuscany. Lots of privacy for a small price!!!

After you have picked your lodging in Tuscany, plan a route towards the nearby cities. The good thing about Tuscany is that it has plenty of small towns within one hour from almost any location, so you will be able to enjoy different kinds of food and wines in just one week's time.

Do not worry about the activities to do in Tuscany. Almost all owners can speak decent English and they are the best source of information on how to spend your holiday in Tuscany and have fun. They will tell you what to do, whether you want to hike, horseback ride, go hot air ballooning, taste wine,

participate to cultural tours, cooking courses, concerts, or anything you like!

I love travelling to Tuscany and giving advice to who shares this passion.



This Free E-Book has been brought to you by Natural-Aging.com.

100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment
Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances
Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!