

This Free E-Book is brought to you by [Natural-Aging.com](http://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 – July 2004**

**By R A E Mayhew**

**The Journal of a Gardener in Tuscany – July 2004 by R A E Mayhew**

The Journal of a Gardener in Tuscany

July 27th 2004

The second half of summer, also known as the dog days of summer, are upon us and while parts of the garden flourish, others struggle. They are called the dog days as in ancient Greece at this time of year the brightest star in the sky was Sirius, and it was thought the brightness of Sirius contributed to the heat. Now is known as the dog days of summer even though we know Sirius makes no difference, in fact Sirius now rises in winter in the northern hemisphere. All the same it is as if there is a second star baking the garden. The lawn slowly loses its life and green drains to yellow yet the trees and shrubs grow fast. The summer lilies, gladioli and agapanthus provide a soft delicate mix of colour while all around them the garden relies on water from us, as so little comes from above.

What rain that does come from above evaporates so quickly it rarely makes a difference. Only a really heavy rainfall helps, and these are still a month away. This is the hardest time in the garden because one small act of negligence, one pot missed, can mean death the next morning. All the work and time taken over a cutting, a seedling then potted a couple of times in three years, comes to nothing.

The springwater is holding up well and shows no sign of slacking with its incessant gush coming from who knows where. Apart from weeding and deadheading I spent a lot of time cleaning up the garden, dead growth from the furious spring must be cut back and growth encouraged elsewhere. The rose beds are coloured with petals from fallen flowers, and the only disappointment is the aphids, which has led to a certain amount of 'balling' of the flowers. When they are so badly attacked the flower never really has a chance to flower properly and so forms a ball of colour, far less attractive than the real thing. The bugs that eat aphids are late this year and few and far between them. This is a problem everywhere and when in town the other day I saw some dreadfully attacked Oleander and Roses, the life was gone from whole branches.

So ladybirds, who enjoy a feast of aphids, are most welcome here and when I found one the other day near a plum tree I kindly escorted it to the top of a rose bed where it can feed to its heart's content. However, I'm not sure if it quite got there, as the moment I finally reached the top of the rose bed, after slowly walking with the ladybird, once picking her up when she fell to the ground, and with my hand partially closed, it fluttered away, so suddenly I couldn't see the direction it went.

Hopefully, even as I write, it will be where it should be, but who knows, hopefully the end to the balling roses will come and then I'll know. I visited the Garden Centre in Rosano today and the place was empty, of plants as well as people. The end of July is not their busy season and it showed; struggling for anything pretty to buy my Mother for her birthday I settled for a new wicker trug, for her to collect deadheads and, I hope, weeds.

The garden endures the fierce endless battering the sun provides, I have to say, that once the cool rain comes in August I'll be a relieved man, even if our guests won't.

July 12th 2004

The Oleander season is upon us, and having never seen them flower before, the first thing that struck me about them is that they are almost like a Mediterranean rhododendron. Large evergreen shrubs, similar in size, that produce lush colourful flowers in an informal pattern, that lends them to be planted informally.

I am surprised not to have seen oleander gardens in Italy in the same way the Rhododendron gardens and walks abound in Britain. Italian gardens are more formal in their design however, and oleander is a rare variety in the northern countries that favour informal gardens.

We have three oleanders growing between the cypresses facing south and on a bank. A very picturesque Tuscan sight you may think. However, the truth is they conceal a slope built by builders rubble, hardly ideal potting compost, and since I repotted them (when on holiday here at Christmas five years ago) they have hardly taken off. This year they are finally flowering and being tolerant of hardy pruning in the winter, guess who'll be getting a short back and sides for Christmas this year. Along with a dose of fertiliser and a few soothing words.

A sharp thunderstorm this afternoon gave us the first serious rain in about 5 weeks. Much needed, especially on the outer parts of the lawn the water sprayer dopes not reach, as this is a lawn on terraces watering isn't simple. Much was turning yellow and all parts were showing wear and exhaustion. This storm probably won't change much in the long run, ie the next two months, but it will help keep the garden green.

The roses are also taking a breath after a frantic first flowering that still has my mother running round dead heading every evening and declaring this is the worst year for deadheads ever. I fed them, and most of the garden, with a soluble fertiliser too to help them recover from this spurt. Elsewhere the lemon tree is growing lemons and the plum trees are starting to produce plums. A trial run with plum and apple jam went well and much more jam will follow.

The vines planted last year by Antonio are growing furiously, already producing edible grapes, and threatening to take over the bamboo shelter he built. This would be fine, good though it is it looks like a shanty town construction and when the helicopter came and we chose a photo they airbrushed out this bamboo construction without even being asked.

The rain today was a pleasant surprise, I was very glad it rained after having spent two hours watering the roses this morning, and one Scotsman staying here celebrated the rain with a large whisky. I almost followed, secretly pleased in ways the guests weren't.

July 6th 2004

It is a pity that now, when the garden is looking most full and at its best, is the time we are all running around looking after it, while our languorous guests enjoy it and la dolce vita, as they say round here.

Looking after it mostly means watering day and night, deadheading, weeding, and training the

jungle-like growth of some plants. As I write the lawn is receiving its weekly dose of water, and will do until mid morning. After the wet spring we have had about 40 minutes of rain in the last month, of which, according to my venerable Father, about 15 minutes was torrential, (and a quick thanks to the rain Gods for that too, I might add!) The fruit trees are bearing heavy fruit but the leaves are drying in the heat.

A guest, a countryman from Nottinghamshire, suggested directly watering the cherry trees, but Antonio said it was not needed. The cherries are good, especially from the trees I pruned in the winter. I have harvested 16.5lb of pitted cherries and made a gallon and a half of cherry jam. The plum trees are also weighed down under the weight of fruit, but I still worry that no rain will ruin an otherwise excellent harvest.

The roses are holding their own although the first flush of flower is over and the climbing roses seem to have run out of steam, for now. Aphids are lurking as well as ants, never trust an ant; they have the nerve to farm aphids, which is clearly what they are up to. If ants aren't killing their fellow insects they are up to something even worse, here they are encouraging and protecting the aphids and making a bad situation worse (from a human point of view). In this respect, they are much like us.

My mother is appalled at the amount of deadheading to do, it is very important to make sure the flowers, roses and geraniums put their energy into new flowers instead of going to seed, which is why they must be deadheaded. What is also beneficial is removing the dead wilting flowers from spoiling sight of the good flowers.

The lawn is beginning to go green so heavy watering is required. The problem with watering is that all day long it is sunny and hot, and if I water in the day the grass will be burnt, on top of the fact that our guests have the reasonable right to enjoy the garden without being soaked every 17 seconds as the long range sprayer goes about its business.

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@ladocciawelcomes.com](mailto:rmayhew@ladocciawelcomes.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](http://Natural-Aging.com).

**[100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment](#)**  
**Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances**  
**Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!**