

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 – March 2004 Part II

By Rupert Mayhew

The Journal of a Gardener in Tuscany – March 2004 Part II by Rupert Mayhew

Blossoms and the Busy Season

March 27th 2004 -This is the start of the busy season in the garden centres as they are all stocking plants which means gardeners everywhere are breaking from their winter lethargy and starting to tend their gardens. We have been busy too, planting irises to replace those so selfishly eaten by a porcupine, as well as planting gladioli and some deep late summer lily bulbs. These `Sterling Stars' produce white flowers in the late summer, usually a time when the garden is feeling very worn, and each flower grows to over 3 feet in height.

In between the rain we planted the 4 Agapanthus in the same flowerbed as the Lilies, and we also split and repotted the Hostas, up from 2 pots to 4. These pots provide a delightful attraction under a walnut tree at the bottom of the large stone staircase our guests use. Thinking of Walnut trees reminds me that it is time to beat them. In Somerset they say `My dog, my woman, my walnut tree; the more I beat `em the better they be', as beating the walnut tree brings its sap to the surface of the bark and helps stimulate the growth of the tree. So every April I take a chain to them, it takes an hour for all the trees and is quite a comic job. Unlike old countrymen of Somerset, though, I spare our two dogs, Cassia and Claudia, and also woman. My mother taught me this expression, strangely, but so far I have kept this strictly to walnut trees. After the dry summer last year we had a very poor harvest of walnuts, so a bit of rainfall this summer, a bad previous year and a good beating this week should set up a nice harvest.

I visited an English friend, Boyd, in the Casentino, an area just the other side of the Consuma Pass, and enjoyed a drive through the snow covered Pratomagno hills, reaching to over 3000 feet. The hills were busy with Florentines out enjoying the spring weather and walking through the mountains. On seeing our friend's house above the farmland on the side of a hill we were taken with the amount of primroses everywhere, and the bright look of his fruit trees in full blossom. It turned out these fruit trees were planted thirty years before when such flowering trees were difficult to obtain in Italy. Then Boyd bought several at a Garden Centre in England, strapped them to the top of his car and drove 1100 miles from England to Tuscany with the poor saplings brutally exposed to his fast driving and a strong wind. This seems to have set them up for life though and they are impressive, although when I asked

Boyd if he has plans to make cherry jam he chortled and answered `No!' with a laugh, preferring to spend time in his three libraries.

The wet but both sunny week means the garden is awakening, the rose leaves are small and red, in anticipation of the sun, the buds are appearing while the lawnmower kept jamming from the vast amount of grass growing. The lawn will look good until mid June when it goes brown and then from late August, rain permitting, when it turns green again.

The Tuscan Spring

March 20th 2004 - Spring struck this week with a vengeance, the gloom finally lifted and some very warm days followed. In the orchard early blossoms are coming out, and the mountain is covered with

white flowering blackthorn. It is a stunning sight, as are all the many flowering fruit trees and orchards across Tuscany. Plum, apple, fig, peach and citrus are all grown here, on farms or in gardens, and now they are beginning to show their flowers. We opened our greenhouses and exposed our more tender summer plants, such as geraniums and agapanthus, to the day time, and walking the land after lunch was a hot experience.

I made a stone footpath across the grass triangle outside the front door to La Doccia, the plan being to improve the over worn grass. It is more just trodden down mud than grass so I used a number of flat stones from a stone pile. There are stones all over La Doccia. Being mountainous the layer of soil is thin in places and inevitably these piles of stones accumulate as we work the land and remove them. It is very handy when building terraces or walls though, as we get our own stone for free. It is also a reason there are so many terraces in Tuscany, making terraces is a good way of using the stones, which would otherwise be a nuisance to farming.

I collected the stones and marked out their shape in the ground and dug a hole to match the shape, each hole seemed to resemble the last place missing on a jigsaw puzzle, ideally fitted to the object I was to slot into place. This was the theory, however the practice was much harder and the digging difficult. I dug in 6 stones at ground level, below the grass so a lawnmower can skim over the stones, and then I spiked, watered and reseeded the ground. I hope it will act as a subconscious draw to visitors hauling their suitcases into the house, however, my Father suggested we place large neon signs pointing to this embedded path, smirking that no one will use it.

Personally I don't think Neon signs will improve the environment we are trying to create one bit. However, some well placed cactus could be the answer, failing that I could always ask Lombardo to build another stone wall around the tiny triangle.

Thinking of cactus, we bought a pot of ready made cactus from the alimentari and it has proved a surprising success placed in front of the fireplace. Just three months later they are bursting out of their pots and one has a lanky flower stalk. Cacti are low maintenance and we have plenty of sun, so all this could be the beginning of a cactus garden at La Doccia.

I visited a website which has detailed maps of the region earlier in the week; these are from the

Toscana Region and are similar to Ordnance Survey, covering distance, altitude and buildings etc. On the map I found La Doccia as well as the two cottages on the farm, but more intriguing I found another small building registered on the maps which we didn't know about. This building is on the land below the house but deep in what is impenetrable scrubland. A walk to the approximate area of this building revealed nothing, but only because I simply couldn't reach the area due to the blackthorn and wild roses. Several times I thought I recognised a small building in the undergrowth and my heart leapt, but every time it turned out to be a steep slope or an old wall. However, once I have a tractor that will be the first area I head for. There was once a small building on this land, now it is hidden, but I am sure something is still there.

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.comrmayhew@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!