



# The Traveling Gardener

exploring the world one garden at a time

away

Away | At Home in Sonoma

## \*Chédigny – France’s Jardin Remarquable village



The Loire Valley village of Chédigny, in its entirety, is a designated Remarkable Garden.” (All photos by Yvonne Michie Horn).

Perhaps I wasn’t on the right road, even though my GPS assured that was so. Rolling hills with fields of yellow rapeseed and green grains stretched on either side of the one-way lane, with nary a church steeple in sight.

I’d left the Loire River behind an hour ago, heading east on my way to a dot-on- the-map. Chédigny. Dot on the map it might be, but in France’s garden world, the village of Chédigny, population 537, is a star.



In a unique move, the entire village of Chédigny was designated a “Remarkable Garden.”

More than 4000 towns and villages throughout France’s 23 regions are designated *Villes et Villages Fleuris* (Towns and Villages of Flowers), officially recognized for enriching the lives of residents and visitors via horticultural and other beautification efforts. Ratings vary between one and four “flowers.” In 2012, Chédigny became one of a small handful awarded “four flowers.”

In addition, but some 300 French gardens, privately owned and public, carry the prestigious *Jardin Remarquable*, (Remarkable Garden) sign at their entrances. In a unique move by the Minister of Culture and Communication, which oversees the program, in 2013 the entire village of Chédigny was deemed a *Jardin Remarquable*, placing the tiny village squarely in the heady company of such world-famous gardens as those surrounding the chateaux of Chenonceau and Villandry.

## A vision of roses ...

My GPS alerted that Chédigny was around the next bend. I should be on time for the 10 o’clock group tour of the village. Led by volunteer “passionate gardeners” it would be the first of tours scheduled on the second Friday of each month, beginning this year, 2015, the second Friday of April, and continuing through September.



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Appearances  
Upcoming

*Appearances Upcoming  
2015*

Burma/Myanmar

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*\*Kandawgyi Gardens –  
Myanmar’s “hill station”  
botanical garden*

Yangon  
*\*The Governor’s  
Residence*

Canada

New Brunswick  
*King’s Landing – colonial  
American history comes  
alive*

Vancouver Island  
*Cougar Annie’s Garden –  
gardening in the  
wilderness*

Victoria  
*\*The Butchart Gardens  
\*Abkhazi Garden –  
Victoria B.C’s romantic  
prize*

China

Suzhou  
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– a classical garden in  
Suzhou*

Croatia

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sleepy Lopud’s  
rediscovered garden*

Denmark

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*Tivoli Gardens – yes,  
there are gardens in  
famed Tivoli Gardens*

England

Bath  
*Invoking Jane Austen*

Cornwall - Marazion  
*Cornwall’s unexpected  
garden – the garden at  
St. Michael’s Mount*





“First Friday” tours are led by volunteer leaders, April –September.

Alain Biard and Brigitte Libéreau, “passionate gardener” leaders for this day’s tour, awaited in the square in front of the 13<sup>th</sup> century village church, Saint Pierre-és- Liens. With my arrival the group was complete. A group of one! Three, counting Alain and Brigitte.

Off we went, after first admiring the spring-in-full-bloom borders brightening Saint Pierre—és-Liens’ exterior gray-stone gloom.



Chedign’s landmark church marks the village’s center.

As the three of us began to walk and talk – two sharing a smattering of English (Brigitte and Alain) , and one with French fluency a bit of a stretch ahead (me) – the universal language of plants and flowers, accompanied by pantomime and plenty of laughter, made short shrift of any linguistic barrier concern.

Along the way, I learned that the transformation of Chédigny began in 1998 when the then town mayor, Pierre Louault, felt Chédigny could use sprucing up. Certainly the bones of something better were there – a winding main street lined with attractive residences and small businesses, a waterway cutting through, not to mention the town’s 13<sup>th</sup> century church centerpiece. With all that, its attractiveness and livability had diminished through the years with noisy, through traffic and parked vehicles lining streets already marred by a festooning of overhead telephone and electricity wires.

To Mayor Rouault, an avid home gardener with a special interest in roses, “sprucing up” meant roses. He turned to André Eve, a Loire Valley rose grower and breeder specializing in the preservation of ancient roses, for assistance.

It took more than a bit of doing to enlist the cooperation of the village. Streets and sidewalks would have to be torn up to provide planting strips and bury utility lines, all of which would mean digging deep into the town’s pocket book. Somehow, Mayor Loualt’s plan prevailed.

Cornwall St. Austell  
*Cornwall – the Lost Gardens of Heligan*

Devon  
*South Devon’s ‘secret’ Blackpool Gardens*

London  
*Chelsea Physic Garden – London’s oldest outdoor classroom*

Northumberland  
*Alnwick Castle’s Poison Garden – British garden is a head twirler*

Wells  
*The Bishop’s Palace Gardens*

France

Loire Valley  
*\*Chateau du Clos Lucé – Leonardo da Vinci’s last home*  
*\*Chédigny – France’s Jardin Remarquable village*

Paris  
*\* Paris’ hidden garden – La Vallée Suisse*  
*\*Paris – Promenade Plantée*  
*\*Les Jardins du Musée de Montmartre*  
*\*Musée de National du Moyen Âge*

Germany

Lake Constance  
*Walahfrid the Squinter’s medicinal garden*

Leipzig  
*Leipzig’s Promenadenring – walking the ring around Leipzig’s history*

Iceland

*Akureyri Botanic Garden*

Iran

*Persian Gardens – of myth and literature*

Ireland

Dublin  
*St. Stephen’s Green – Dublin’s leafy living room*

Israel

Judean Desert  
*Ein-gedi Botanical Garden – thrives on the edge of the Dead Sea*

Italy

Sicily  
*Il Biviere – the garden that wasn’t*

Japan

Kyoto  
*Kokedera – Kyoto’s garden muffled in moss*

Macau

*A tale of two gardens*

Malta

Naxxar  
*Palazzo Parisio echoes the Knights of St. John*

Mexico

Oaxaca  
*Jardin Ethnobotanical celebrates Oaxaca’s botanical and ethnic diversity*

Puerto Vallarta  
*Puerto Vallarta Botanical Gardens*

San Miguel de Allende  
*El Charco del Ingenio – derelict canyon turned botanical treasure*

Myanmar (Burma)

*\*The Governor’s Residence*  
*\*Kandawgyi Gardens – Myanmar’s “hill station” botanical garden*

Namibia

Windhoek



# A prelude of roses ...



Heritage roses are labeled with the date of their introduction to Chedigny.

The planting of 700 rose bushes went underway –espaliered against building walls, trellised to cross the waterway in rose-arched canopies, planted in front of the town hall, bookstore, artisan shops. Today the number of roses in the tiny village has expanded to more than 800 representing 270 tried-and-true heritage varieties – each carefully labeled as to the year of their introduction into the rosario world.

But this was early April, with roses in bloom weeks away. Hence, the tour group of one. On the tour Fridays to come, entire garden clubs, individual rose aficionados, photographers, and those simply checking enchanting villages off their travel list, would pack Saint Pierre-és-Liens’ square.

While it would have been nice to see Chédigny in full-rose glory, Chédigny in April took my breath away. Throughout the village there were daffodils and tulips galore; an array of spring annuals, among them pansies, violas, candytuft; and the first showing of the more than 3,000 perennials planted to keep company later with the hundreds of roses; cherry, apple, and pear trees billowed with bloom.



Spring annuals , bulbs and flowering trees brighten the streets awaiting roses in full bloom.

As the villagers watched their town emerge from duckling to swan, they began to follow suit in their home gardens, making it a delight to peek through garden gates and over picket fences.

*The National Botanic Garden of Namibia*

New Zealand

Plymouth  
*Te Kainga Marire – New Zealand’s “peaceful encampment”*

Taupo  
*Ora Garden of Wellbeing explores relationship between nature and Maori*

Panama

Boquete  
*Panama’s colorful, flowering oasis*

Scotland

St. Andrews  
*Cambo Estate – snowdrop time in Scotland*

Sweden

Stockholm  
*\*Vasa Museum Garden enters lives of long-gone sailors*  
*\*Tanto Allotment Gardens – Stockholm’s green-thumbers dig in*

Turkey

Istanbul  
*Gülhane Park*

United States

Alaska

Anchorage  
*Bell’s Nursery – Anchorage’s “winter camp” for fuschias*

California

Mendocino County  
*Kate Frey’s four-season garden*

San Francisco  
*\*The Tenderloin National Forest*  
*\*Alcatraz – the rock has bloomed for over 100 years*

Sonoma County  
*The Alcatraz Rose Gold Ridge Farm – Luther Burbank’s other garden*

Florida

*Disneyworld – Annual festival of flowers and gardens*

Hawaii

O'ahu  
*Senator Fong’s garden – native species thrive in a patch of paradise*

Michigan

Holland  
*Tulip time – Holland, Michigan has its tulips down pat*

Mackinac Island  
*Grand Hotel Mackinac Island – geraniums rival clip-clops on famous island*

New York

Finger Lakes  
*Sonnenberg – gift from the “Gilded Age” today’s treasure*

Yvonne at Home

To read about Yvonne at home in Sonoma County, click on "At Home" under the banner





As the village's beautification plan went underway, homeowners began to spruce up their gardens.

## Looking ahead ...

I bid goodbye to Alain and Brigitte where we'd met two hours before, in front of Saint Pierre-és-Liens, with me promising to return some day, some year, to see the village's 800-plus rose bushes in full flower. Perhaps. Meanwhile, April in Chédigny, *Jardin Remarquable*, would remain quite remarkably memorable among my Garden Path wanderings.

## If you go ...

Chédigny is located 31 km from Tours, 12 km from Loches, in the heart of the Touraine district.

Friday tours, the second Friday of the month, are scheduled April through September. Reserve via the website **[www.Chedigny.com](http://www.Chedigny.com)**. 6 Euros, The sleepy little town really comes to life each year during the last weekend in May for the *Fetes des Roses*, see the website for details.

Le Clos Aux Roses is a fine restaurant with five B&B rooms (from 65 Euros double). Restaurant is closed Mondays and Tuesdays. **[www.leclosauxroses.fr](http://www.leclosauxroses.fr)**.



