

Valérie Burgart  
Geneviève Fournier  
Students studying Provençal and/or  
English civilization & Literature,  
&/or English as a second language

Design and Gardens  
2021-2024

## A remarkable garden : Sainte Claire Park, Hyères 83400 France



Open : Mond-Sund 8:00am-5:30pm

**I**n Summer, Spring, Autumn and Winter students sunbathe between the dazzling flower beds of one of the town's most ornamental parks. There, every square meter seems to be perfectly planned and exquisitely maintained.



Our high school collection of exotic  
plants - [Lycée Jean Aicard](#)

**T**his remarkable garden has the ruins of the old walls of the town which date back to the end of the 12th century. The walls were destroyed by the order of Cardinal Richelieu during the reign of Louis XIII.



Admiring the sight seen in the upper part of the garden...



Sight seen from the **lower part of the garden**



Shrubs and plants are used to reinforce the vistas and make them visually more important. The trees on the left have been planted as background planting.

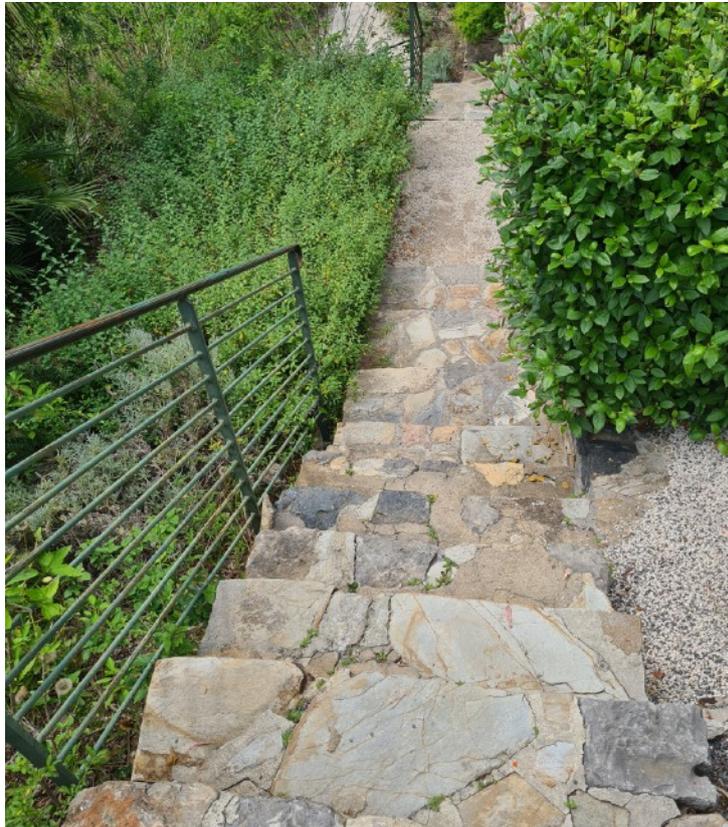
**I**n the 17th century, the site was occupied by a convent belonging to the Poor Clares, originally referred to as the Order of Poor Ladies, and later the Clarisses, the Minoresses, the Franciscan Clarist Order, and the Second Order of Saint Francis – who are members of a contemplative Order of nuns in the Catholic Church. During the French Revolution, the convent was closed, demolished, and the property sold.

**T**his park was first owned by Olivier Voutier a Naval Officer who dedicated a part of his life to archaeology. Born on 30th May 1796 in Thouars, France he died on 18th April 1877 at Hyères 83, France) was a French naval officer who discovered the statue of the Venus de Milo in 1820, and fought in the Greek War of Independence. He acquired this estate located on the hills of Hyères and built a villa named Castel Sainte Claire in 1849. (Source of this paragraph: Wikipedi)



A harmony of adjacent colors, here a combination of pinks.

**I**n 1920 Edith Wharton, the well-known American writer, became the happy owner of this inviting garden sited on the side of a hill of Hyères.



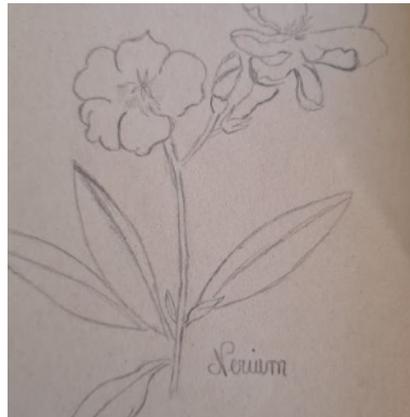
**Steps** made with natural stones **have a functional role but are also a feature in their own right.** They **must always lead to somewhere...** an invitation to discover other parts of the garden.

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**Helichrysum and fennel** (bottom left.) A brilliant combination of light /dark greens and yellows.



**NERIUM** - © drawing by Mussig Ilona 2021



**FICUS ELASTICA** (RUBBER TREE LEAF)  
© drawing by Ménager Jessica 2021

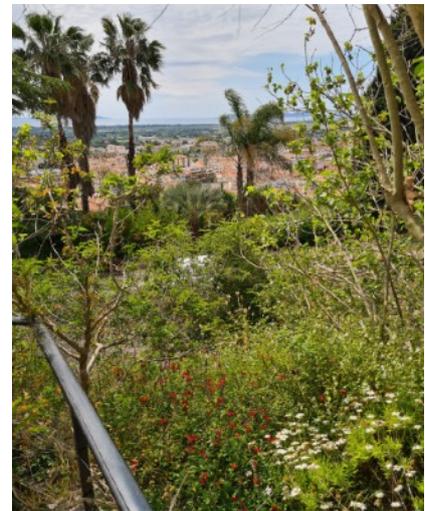


**FERNS AND FIDDLEHEADS** : Fern grew on our Earth before dinosaurs walked on it so they **symbolize eternal life/youth**. To the Victorians, ferns were a symbol of **humility** but for other cultures it represents **eternal youth**... To the Japanese, it symbolizes **family and hope for future generations**. These plants are unique and not common in our area. They represent food or medicine for animals, including people. They **protect our ecosystem**, they release oxygen into the air but also **absorb formaldehyde and add humidity the air**.



In this **upper part of the garden**, the **dramatic and exotic-looking plants** like the sun. They do correspond to the southern mediterranean area.

**I**t is still a popular place to take the air, with a breathtaking view of the old town rooftops but also of the modern part of the town and the distant sea.



Here, there's a **subtle shaping** which reinforces the existing slopes. The garden communicates via a picturesque trail with the Saint Bernard garden and the Villa Noailles. **Rare subtropical species** have been planted... <https://tropicos.org/name/2721388>



Raised bed with **modern irrigation methods**, the subtle combination of planting provides **color and interest**

Today, the garden belongs to the town of **HYERES.**





**Exoticism** is another important element of the Parc Sainte Claire. This focal point of the garden is one of its finest views. Ornamental plants like Strelitzias are essential : we notice that there are tall, medium and low plants. Beds and borders have to be in scale with the size of the house. You can stroll around the exotic part of the garden, then simply sit and admire the view.



**Summer house** and **winter shelter** in this garden (very close to the Strelizias and hundredth of plants, shrubs planted...)

**W**hat we loved in this garden is : *It's simplicity which does not eliminate originality or subtlety.*

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© drawing by Maud Quesney 2021



**STRELIZIA AUGUSTA**, the **emblematic flower** of our town... located in the south-facing area which receives the hottest sun. Here, these plants which love sun-baked areas could be compared to umbrellas... indeed, they offer a **permanent shade** !

**I**ndeed, what this garden does is integrate a strong, positive framework. It's style is different from the other gardens we usually see in our area: from the Villa to the Summerhouse a sens of unity has been created between the buildings (the villa) and the different parts of the garden i.e. surrounding the house, there's a sort of symmetrical pattern which tends to be static and which echoes the pattern of the house : there are walls, edges, self-contained areas etc.



**Cactus garden** : **cacti** (pl. of cactus) is a member of the plant family Cactae, a family comprising about 127 genera with some **1750 known species**. Most cacti live in extremely dry environments... **most cacti are succulents** and have thickened parts adapted to store water. They come from America : Patagonia, western Canada. Some species grow in Africa and Sri Lanka (*Rhipsalis baccifera*).

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Here, there's a lovely example of **functional** (culinary, insect-repellent & medicinal herbs) **and ornamental planting**. Plants for dry, sunny positions.



**Strelizias Regina** (bottom left), and (bottom right) **Thaumatococcus bipinnatifidum**... common names : lacy tree philodendron, a plant native to South America, namely Brazil, Bolivia, Argentina, and Paraguay, but it is also cultivated in tropical, subtropical and warm temperate climates. Usually grown in full sun but it can tolerate and adapt to deep shade.

**m**ore asymmetric patterns seem to be positioned in the upper parts of the garden. The sloping garden shows us retaining walls and steps, beds and paving ... surrounded by flowers, small, medium and taller planting and trees. So, as we walk through this huge remarkable garden we notice on the site changes of level, views, and most importantly changes of the garden itself.

**I**n our bright-light Mediterranean country light and shade are important; in our climate, being able to produce enough shade is essential and in the Parc Sainte Claire garden the hard shadows can also create a positive visual division.

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**T**he American novelist Edith Wharton wintered annually in Hyères from 1919 until her death in 1937.

**S**he also contributed to the garden extension; she considered herself a better landscape gardener than novelist.

Edith Wharton's estate in the Berkshires :



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**T**he garden of Edith Wharton's Villa, Castel Sainte-Claire, is nowadays open to the public. It became one of the most prestigious and visited gardens of the town of Hyères.

**T**he dry part of the remarkable Sainte Claire Park :



**T**he Secret behind the Herbs of the Provence :



**Memories...**  
**The day before the visit .... And D-day!**



Wash-house... half way through the garden

A remarkable fig tree in our school



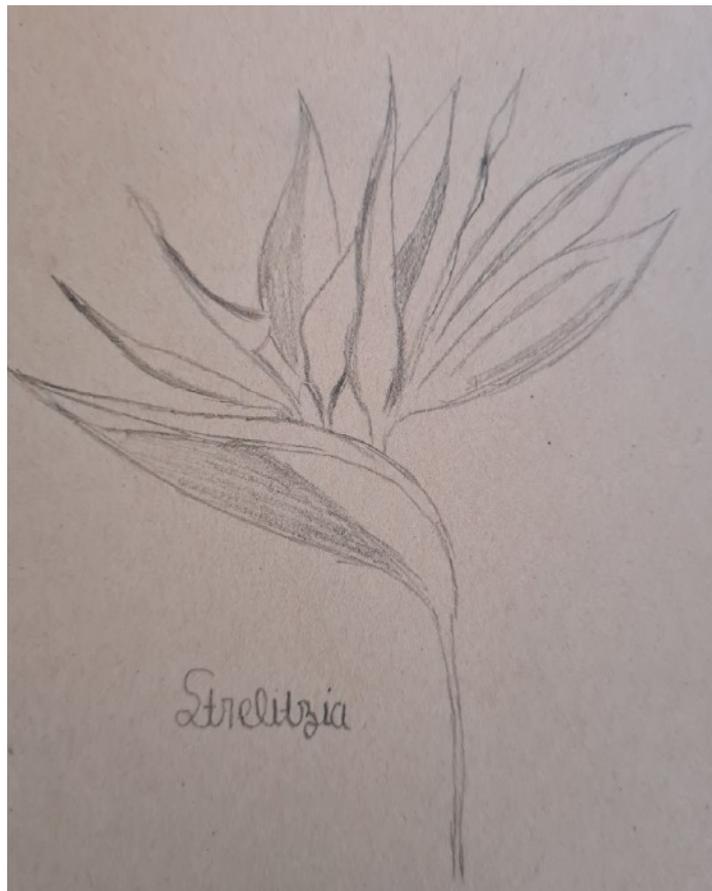
Gazing at plants and trees of our school...



Saint-Paul Square

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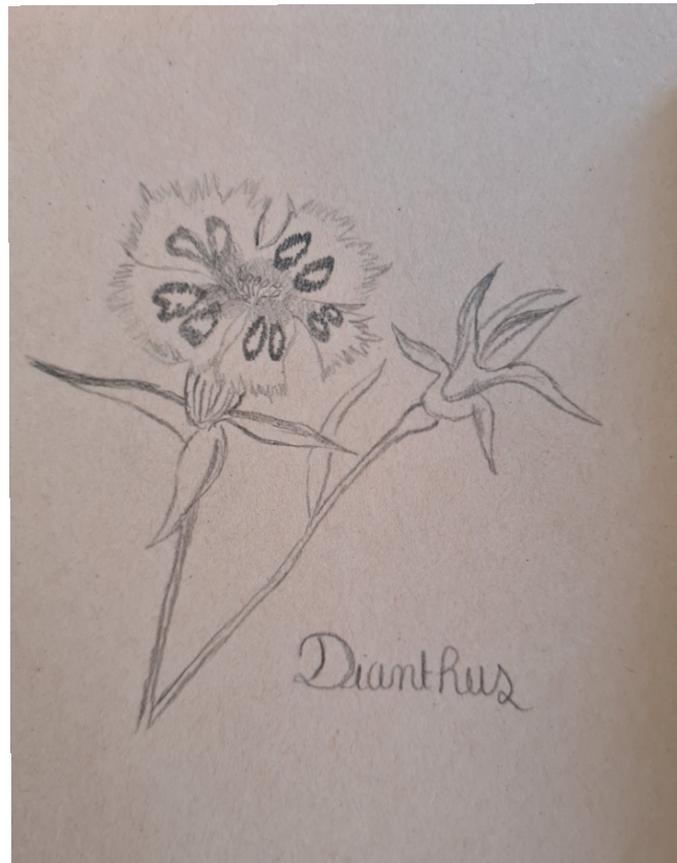
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© drawing by Mussig Ilona 2021 - **Strelizia nicolai**, commonly known as the giant bird of paradise or wild banana, is a species of banana-like plants with erect woody stems reaching a height of 6 meters (20 feet) and the clumps formed can spread as far as 3.5 meters (11 feet).

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© drawing by Mussig Ilona 2021 - **Chinensis** or **rainbow pink** or even **China pink**. Native to northern China, Korea, Mongolia, and southern Russia. It's a herbaceous perennial plant growing

**A** passage taken from Alice's adventures in Wonderland :  
(Lewis Carroll 1832-1898)

'Will you walk a little faster?' said a whiting to a snail,  
'There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's treading on my tail.  
See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance!  
They are waiting on the shingle \_ will you come and join the dance?  
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you will you join the dance?  
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you will you join the dance?

'You can really have no notion how delightful it will be  
'When they take us up and throw us, with the lobsters, out to sea!  
But the snail replied 'Too far, too far! And gave a look askance \_  
Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would not join the dance.  
Would not, could not, would not, could not, would not join the dance.

'What matters is how far we go?' His scaly friend replied. 'There is another shore, you  
know, upon the other side.  
The further off from England the nearer is to France \_  
The turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and join the dance.  
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you will you join the dance?  
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you will you join the dance?



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**E**xample of a subtropical garden - plants that thrive in hot dry conditions :



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**MINISTÈRE  
DE LA CULTURE**  
*Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité*



**Rendez-  
vous  
aux jardins** 4—6 juin  
2021

La transmission  
des savoirs

rendezvousauxjardins.fr  
#RdvJardins

**Provence-Alpes-  
Côte d'Azur**



**L**ast but no least... (a few words in French).

**C**e projet est un **Projet d'Etablissement prévu pour 2021-2024**

**C**odification de l'action : **MODE ET JARDINS**

**L**'objectif principal étant de : -Faire du Lycée un lieu de vie participatif et citoyen, construit sur des valeurs républicaines : liberté, égalité, laïcité, fraternité, non-discrimination.

**L**e deuxième objectif : Le bien-vivre ensemble au Lycée Jean Aicard

**Responsables de la mise en oeuvre** : Valérie BURGART, enseignante en Provençal et Geneviève FOURNIER, enseignante en anglais

**Membres participant à l'organisation cette année**: Claude Bretnecher, Jardinier du Lycée, Service Gestion, Equipe de Restauration du Lycée

**Public concerné cette année** : Classes de 1ères Spécialité Provençal et/ou Langues, Littératures et Cultures étrangères

**Autres objectifs de l'action** : - Créer un bon climat entre Lycéens, favoriser les échanges conviviaux, partager un déjeuner sur l'herbe avec nos élèves, favoriser le bien-être et les échanges entre adolescents/adultes. - Acquérir des connaissances sur son environnement direct : connaître sa ville, ses jardins remarquables, comprendre son héritage culturel, son Lycée.  
- Etablir des ponts entre le passé et le présent, comprendre son héritage culturel et historique et les phénomènes d'acculturation.

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## **A**cknowledgements to :

- The students who contributed directly or indirectly to the project  
(1 LLCE 1 cl. 8 and 1 cl. 4)
- Claude Bretnacher for his help before and during the tour of the garden
- All the persons who helped us : our gardener, the school staff etc.

**V. Burgart &. G. Fournier**