

WARE'S LANGUAGE NOTES

Talking about the garden

Have you noticed over the past month everyone being busy in the garden? It's the next make-over time, as our neighbours plant bedding plants to brighten up their generally rather conventional lawn and specimen tree gardens.

The good thing about plants is that a lot of them have much the same name in English as in French. Le géranium, le bégonia, l'impatiens (busy lizzie), le rosier, l'iris, le dahlia etc.

Some names are a little bit different, but still recognisable – les glaïeul (gladioli) la pivoine (peony) and some are quite different – le coquelicot (poppy), la marguerite (daisy), la funkia (hosta) l'ipomée (morning glory)

You need to know (do you?) if the plants are vivace (perennial) or annuelle (annual), if they are persistant (ever-green) or caduque (deciduous) or even rustique (hardy). If you are looking for the name of a fruit tree, just add -ier to the name of the fruit – le pommier, poirier, prunier, even le rosier for a rose bush.

The supermarkets tend to have in stock at this time of year the bedding plants that are favourite with the French. And it has to be said, these are the safe plants for a climate that is quite extreme and difficult to predict. Given the summers we have had in the past three years, it is not surprising to see the French penchant for a garden largely laid to lawn (la pelouse) with individual specimen trees and herbacious clumps (le massif) and flowery borders (une plate-bande)

There is a wonderful array of tools available – la brouette (wheel-barrow), la bêche (spade), la fourche-bêche (fork), binette (hoe), le rateau (rake), cisaille à haie (hedge clippers), serfouette (a smaller diamond shaped hoe), plantoir (dibber), transplantoir (trowel), sécateur..... But the English spade is harder to find, though I did find Spears and Jackson stainless steel ones in Jardiland in Angoulême.

In a hot summer you might need un tuyau (hose), un arrosoir (watering can) etc

Then there's the muck to grow things in – le terreau (compost), la tourbe (peat), and la terre dite de bruyère (ericaceous soil for lime hating plants). Then the add-ins – le fumier (manure) and l'engrais (fertiliser). Looking for tomato fertiliser? – choose engrais à géranium.

Mind you the grass needs care, too. Il faut tondre le gazon (must mow the grass), either with a little tondeuse or a big autoportée (ride on). Add it to the list of electric tools no gardener should be without – la motobineuse (rotovator), le coupe bordure (strimmer), le taille-haie (hedgecutter).

What else is there to say. Make your neighbour happy with « Quel joli jardin! » (What a pretty garden!) « Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette plante? » (What is that plant?) « Est-ce que vous voudriez une bouture? » (Would you like a cutting?) « Est-ce que je peux prendre une bouture? » (Can I take a cutting?)

Bon courage!

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