

Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle



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On previous page...

Penny for your thoughts? The florets of *Narcissus* ‘Verdant Sparks’, an all-green jonquil-type daffodil bred by Dr. Harold Koopowitz, Santa Ana, California, USA, are quite small. Here, a single floret (on a stem that possessed two) is compared to a 2020 Lincoln cent.

Wow! What a year! In my lifetime, I have never seen anything quite like 2020, and I have seen some tough times. However, as I look back over the past months, I think I have grown as a person. I have learned to stress less over the little things, and I have also come to appreciate small milestones and recognize blessings in disguise that I might have previously overlooked. If anything, the year has taught us that life is fleeting and nothing, including health and financial stability, should ever be taken for granted. Life can throw a curveball in an instant.

As I reflect on this year, I do so with gratitude that I was able to enjoy my garden, even if I was unable to make it to a single daffodil show. A number of my daffodil crosses were successful in producing seeds, and I anxiously await seedlings of promise in 2021. I introduced some new plants to the garden, which is always exciting. Before the summer was over, I even received an invitation to speak to an Atlanta garden club in Autumn 2021, which reminds me that 2020 is merely a passing season, and normalcy will return. And I even managed to reconnect with old friends in the American Daffodil Society, at a time when most of us have felt isolated and alone.

On May 26, 2020, I received an e-mail from my friend and fellow daffodil judge Jaydee Atkins Ager, past president and past executive director of the ADS, inviting me to serve as registrar for the ADS Fall Forum, an event previously slated to be held at a hotel at the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). Logistically, the plan had been to allow board members and others interested in attending the World Daffodil Convention in Canberra, Australia, an opportunity to assemble for the

annual fall board meeting just before their flights down under (where it would be springtime), with LAX being the obvious jumping off point.

However, COVID-19 had other plans, and the fall board meeting was transformed into the ADS Visionary Venture, which allowed daffodil lovers from the USA and well beyond, not just board members and those with extensive travel budgets, to gather for multiple weeks of symposia to glean from internationally-renowned experts, all from the comforts of their own homes via ZOOM. While my position became more time-consuming than I had expected, I enjoyed hearing from daffodil lovers from around the globe, many of whom I had not chatted with since my very brief time as editor of *The Daffodil Journal*. I even managed to make some new friends. How about that in a year of “social distancing”!

The Visionary Venture wound down weeks before Thanksgiving. However, my interest in garden-related subjects has been revived. Through it all, I have tried to make the best of it. It seems my plants have, too.

As we welcome a New Year, let us remain focused on what matters. Let us strive to do better on all fronts. May we spend more time in the garden and less time arguing politics on social media! Given the state of the world, our little sacrifices can make all the difference.

Greg Freeman, Publisher

What’s Inside?

- **3 – Vintage Mediterranean Post Cards Prove Captivating**
- **8 – *Coq au Vin*: A French Classic**
- **13 – Garden Picks of 2020**
- **16 – If at First You Don’t Succeed...**
- **20 – Photograph: *Crocus sativus* in The Climbers**

Vintage Mediterranean Post Cards Prove Captivating

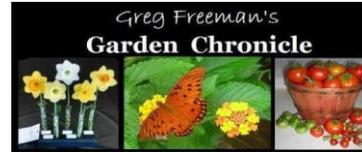
For years, I have collected vintage post cards and ephemera related to the American South, and a number of items from my collection are featured in the Cotton States Archive department of my first digital publication, [Southern Edition](#). In fact, many people visit the site just to see those items, which are artifacts of a bygone era. When I began decorating my small creative studio space, The Nook, and chose to include my terrarium, *Mediterranea*, as a focal point, I decided that some wall space should be devoted to late 1800s/early 1900s photographs and post cards from the Mediterranean region. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, I have been unable to canvas my favorite antiques shops in Atlanta and Greenville as I once did, but I have found some real treasures in online auctions at quite reasonable prices. A few of these cards and their localities, as well as the people depicted in at least one of them, merit discussion.

La Côte d’Azur – Jardin fleuri

Long romanticized by authors and painters, the Côte d’Azur, or French Riviera, is a magical coastline along the Mediterranean Sea in southern France that perennially beckons film and fashion lovers to Canne, lures jazz lovers to Juan-les-Pin’s Jazz à Juan festival in Antibes and sends out a siren call, seducing the fabulously wealthy jet set crowd to Nice where seemingly “everyone who is anyone,” at least on an international scale, has been rubbing shoulders and sunbathing since the days of Queen Victoria (1819-1901). After all, the French Riviera has appealed to everyone from Henri Matisse (1869-1954) and Dame Agatha Christie DBE (1890-1976) to Charlie Chaplin (1889-1977) and Aristotle Onassis (1906-1975).

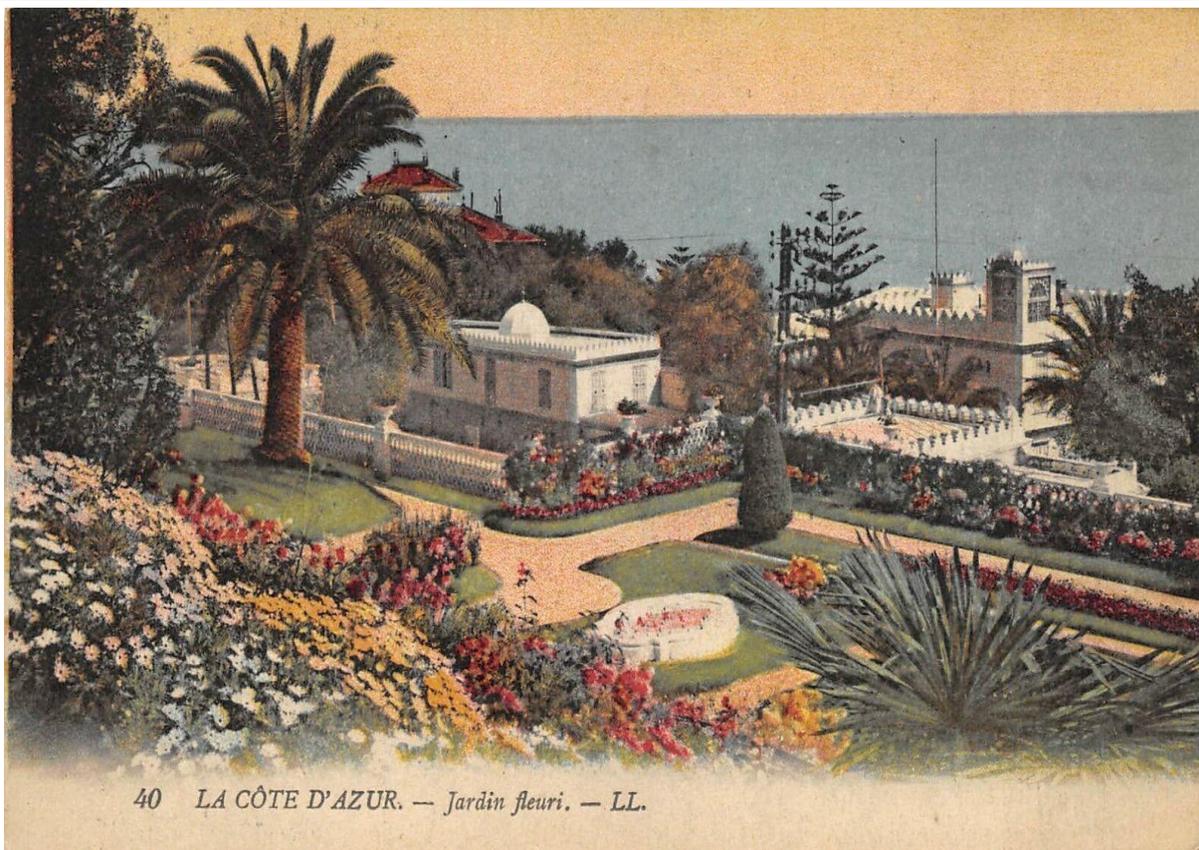
The post card included here with the title “*La Côte D’Azur – Jardin fleuri*” pictures a stunning seaside garden surrounding buildings of magnificent Moorish architecture, quite possibly the design of renowned French architect Pierre Chapoulart (1849-1903), who designed numerous Moorish-influenced villas along the Côte d’Azur, including La Villa Mauresque (1881), now a luxury hotel, in Saint-Raphaël between Cannes and Saint-Tropez. Postally unused, this post card is believed to have been published in the 1910s. Acquired from an American dealer, the card could have been brought to the States by a returning serviceman following World War I, or it might have been purchased before or after the war and kept by its original owner as a keepsake, a reminder of time spent in the French Riviera.

With its vivid colors, varied textures and architectural elements, the garden is awe-inspiring. Complementing the Moorish-styled structures, the garden appears to have a strong sense of design and formality to it, very reminiscent of garden layouts in predominantly Muslim nations. Scenes like this one must have left an indelible impact upon all who visited the Mediterranean coastline,



Be sure to check out www.GregFreeman.garden for original video content and other helpful information.





La Côte D'Azur – Jardin fleuri

whether by rail in the old days aboard *Le Train Bleu* (the inspiration for a Christie novel), by motor car in modern times, or even by sea, particularly in the case of Onassis, whose yacht, *Christina O*, was hardly an unfamiliar sight along the Côte d'Azur in his day.

Monte Carlo, Monaco

An administrative area located in the Principauté de Monaco, Monte Carlo is particularly known today for its legendary casino and Grand Prix auto race. Abutted against France's Alpes-Maritimes, Monaco is counted among the smallest nations in the world, and is the sort of place where virtually every nook and cranny is occupied by buildings, streets or pedestrian space. The city-state's area has been increased with the expansion of Port Hercule, and there are now plans to reclaim more land from the Mediterranean Sea. Rainier III (1923-2005), Prince of Monaco, whose marriage to American actress Grace Kelly (1929-1982) garnered international headlines, was regarded as the 'building prince' and his legacy continues with his son, Prince Albert II (b. 1958), whose role is as much that of corporate executive as monarch. That said, the principality is not devoid of gardens, but one can bet that any new costly expansions are not for growing roses and planting shade trees.

Writing for *National Geographic*, Richard Conniff aptly stated, "Monaco is where the rich, the famous, the nouveaux riches, and the infamous all come to shelter their wealth from taxes and

show it off for one another” (1996, p. 82). In Monaco, one is bound to encounter more Bentleys and Lamborghinis, or spot more yachts owned by Russian tycoons, Arab sheikhs and global entertainment moguls, than rare botanical treasures of the Côte d’Azur. Still, Monaco, particularly Monte Carlo, is not without its lovely flora surprises, most of which are found in the milieu of urban landscaping.

When I acquired a Monte Carlo post card with a 1907 postmark, I was struck by how it portrays a seaside attraction not unlike what we see today. Certainly, twenty-first century Monaco is now a dizzying array of highrise buildings, seemingly clinging to crags and terraces, but the tiny nation



**Monte-Carlo, Monaco
(Vintage Post Card, postmarked 1907)**

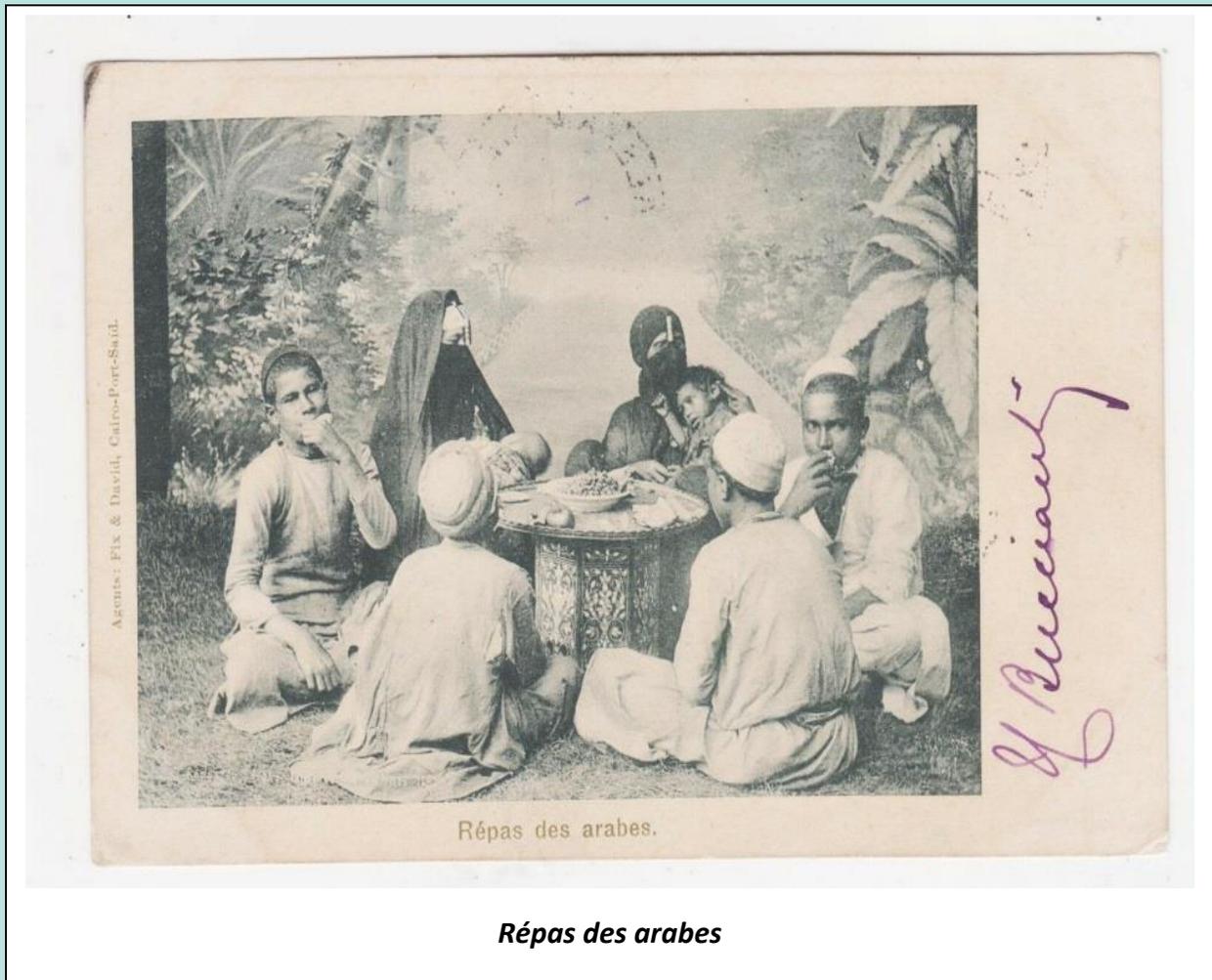
continues to attract visitors from around the world, who stroll along its waterfront, promenades and alleys just as they did over a hundred years ago during the *Belle Époque* era. As they explore the microstate, they encounter *Chamaerops humilis* (European fan palms), *Lavatera maritima* (sea mallow) and other gems, including the indigenous *Lilium bulbiferum* (orange lily). Another plant worth discovering is the stunning *Hibiscus sabdariffa*, which is primarily an ornamental plant in Monaco, but is grown elsewhere for human consumption. “Cultivated since remote times, its precise origin country is unknown,” Pietro Puccio states in his entry for the *Monaco Nature Encyclopedia*, but the plant, believed to be from Africa, “has naturalized in various tropical regions, where [it] grows in open areas and at the margins of water streams, from the sea level up to hilly altitudes.”

On YouTube, there are a number of videos devoted to walking tours of Monaco. Through these videos, one can get a sense of what can be found, should she or he ever travel to the French Riviera

with plans of stopping in at Monaco along the way. My favorite [video](#) was posted by 4K WALK, and it proves that plant lovers will not be disappointed should they visit Monte Carlo.

“Répas des Arabes”

Though it was published in Cairo and depicts a family feasting amid a lush, beautiful garden, this post card has a 1903 postmark from Alexandria. Offering a glimpse of pre-Modern Egypt, the card predates the onset of World War I in 1914 and the subsequent fall of the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled Egypt from the 1500s to 1867. Even Modern Egypt is not considered to have begun until the nation gained independence from the British Empire in 1922. That year also has significance for historians, archaeologists and Egyptologists, because the tomb belonging to Egyptian Pharaoh Tutankhamun (c. 1342-c. 1325 BC), colloquially dubbed “King Tut,” was discovered in 1922 by British aristocrat George Edward Stanhope Molyneux Herbert, 5th Earl of Carnarvon (1866-1923). (It is also worth noting that Lord Carnarvon had been born at Highclere Castle in Hampshire, England, the setting of *Downton Abbey*, the phenomenally successful historical television drama series and 2019 film.)



Répas des arabes

Images like the one depicted on this post card would have likely seemed mysterious and exotic to most Westerners in 1903. After all, the conquests of Colonel T. E. Lawrence CB DSO (1888-1935), otherwise known as Lawrence of Arabia, and the novels of Agatha Christie, namely *Murder in Mesopotamia* (1936) and *Death on the Nile* (1937), would not cast the spotlight on the Middle East for years to come. Upon Lord Carnarvon's discovery of King Tut's tomb, Egypt and its environs arguably captured the imagination of the mainstream like never before. In many ways, today's Middle East is light years away from how it might have appeared to Lawrence or Christie, but vestiges do remain. The historic steamship, *Sudan*, for example, continues to travel the Nile River from Luxor to Aswan, and it is on this vessel that Christie would, later in her writing career, find inspiration for her *Death on the Nile*.

As for Cairo, a teenage Christie and her mother, who was not entirely well at the time, had spent the winter of 1907-1908 at Cairo's Gezirah Palace Hotel, four years after this post card was mailed. Though Cairo and its suburbs did not boast of a population of over 20 million as it does today, it was certainly a bustling metropolis over a century ago. A place of contrasts, Cairo was a city where wealthy British travelers enjoyed polo and stuffy soirées in relative safety at a comfortable distance from the filthy slums and abject poverty in certain areas of an otherwise historically significant, culturally rich and passionately religious urban centre.

Titled "*Répas des arabes*," or "Meal of the Arabs," the Cairo post card reveals the long-prevailing assumption that all Egyptians are Arabs. However, the *Egypt Independent* has reported evidence to the contrary. "After over 10 years of analyzing DNA samples from hundreds of people," Hend El-Behary writes, "the National Geographic Genographic Project (NGGP) surprisingly uncovered the fact that Egyptians are not Arabs as most of them believed" (2017). I do not find her reporting particularly shocking as most of my North African acquaintances through the years, whether they be from Morocco or Algeria, have always insisted that they are Berbers, not Arabs. As the NGGP analysis revealed, Egyptians are quite diverse in their ancestry, with North African lineage dominating, and even some Southern European and Jewish Diaspora connections being present.

While this post card clearly shows a conservative Muslim family on what appears to be a picnic outing, perhaps in a beautiful garden such as the Azbakeya Gardens, or maybe their own private space, I surmise from the image that these are not impoverished Egyptians, but rather well-to-do or upper middle class. Tell-tale signs include the exquisite table and the boys in the foreground, who are all well-dressed, well-mannered and well-fed. The image is not lacking ambiguity upon closer examination, however, as the one boy is clearly eating with his left hand. In many parts of the world, including the Middle East and India, the left hand was (and in many cases, *is*) used for toileting and to eat with the left hand in an era before access to frequent handwashing was taboo and considered unclean. As for the women, one lady holds a sleeping infant, and another holds a squirming toddler, but even the mothers behind their niqab veils project that they are more than mere commoners, as the family feasts on bread and an array of fruits.

The surrounding garden is dense, lush and beautifully maintained. When one thinks of Egypt and plants, it is difficult not to harken back to Genesis and the recounting of Baby Moses in a basket floating among the bulrushes. Though the identity of the plants pictured on the post card is difficult to ascertain, one can assume that this family enjoyed an oppressively hot afternoon in the shadow of various palm trees, particularly *Phoenix dactylifera* (date palms) and *Salix subserrata* (Egyptian willows), flanked by a variety of flowering plants and tropical shrubs. There might have even been some *Cyperus papyrus*, the source of papyrus paper used by the ancient Egyptians, among the plantings. Given the Nile's tendency to flood and distribute silt beyond its

banks for thousands of years, it is no wonder that the survival of Egyptian civilization has relied on the river, including the fertile farmland resulting from its floods. The same soil that provided sustenance is the same soil from which magnificent gardens and thriving oases have sprung forth.

Growing Collection

Though I do not wish to festoon my wall with an excess of framed photographs or vintage post cards, I am inclined to add just a few more. As a collector, I enjoy the thrill of the hunt, and I particularly enjoy locating an item that has a fascinating story to tell. This philosophy generally applies to my purchase of plants as well. As I grow my collection, perhaps I will discuss my new purchases in the future. Meanwhile, these few post cards featuring gardens, along with some others depicting Gibraltar and Algiers, as well as a print of the famous photograph, *Terra del Fuoco* (c. 1895), by Wilhelm von Gloeden (1856-1931), have gotten me off to a good start and proven more captivating than I could have originally anticipated.

Conniff, Richard. "Monaco," *National Geographic*. May 1996.

El-Behary, Hend. "DNA analysis proves that Egyptians are not Arabs." *Egypt Independent*. 17 January 2017 <https://www.egyptindependent.com/dna-analysis-proves-egyptians-are-not-arabs/> Accessed 26 December 2020.

Puccio, Pietro. Beltramini, Mario (translator). "*Hibiscus sabdariffa*." *Monaco Nature Encyclopedia*. <https://www.monaconatureencyclopedia.com/hibiscus-sabdariffa/?lang=en> Accessed 26 December 2020.

Coq au Vin A French Classic

France's wine production is only exceeded by that of neighboring Italy, and it should come as no surprise that many of the nation's best-loved dishes include wine among their ingredients. Through the years, I have learned to incorporate wine into various recipes, but I am neither a wine connoisseur nor a regular drinker. Certainly, I have tasted some of the wines that I use for my cooking, but that has largely been the extent of it due to my conservative nature and distaste for alcohol. When I mentioned this to a friend from Georgia, she replied wittily, "I cook with wine, too, and sometimes I actually put wine in my cooking!"

One dish that would not exist without the addition of wine is *coq au vin* ("cock/rooster in wine"). The recipe, reportedly predating the earthly life of Christ, originally involved braising a rooster with wine to not only add complexity of flavor but to make tender the tougher meat of what

was usually an older bird, not the young, tender fryers available in supermarkets today. Of course, coq au vin has evolved to basically mean “chicken with wine,” and some recipes call for whole chickens, breasts or thighs.

I have reviewed any number of different recipes, particularly some from famous chefs, living and deceased, including Julia Child (1912-2004), Jacques Pépin (b. 1935) and Ina Garten (b. 1948), the Barefoot Contessa. It is from these and others that I have adapted my own recipe. Perhaps it is blasphemous of me to prepare my coq au vin in as much as half the time of many labor-intensive recipes that abound, but I make no apologies for my process. I think my coq au vin is quite good, and I would urge you to give it a shot.

The Chicken

One of the last times I prepared coq au vin, I used bone-in chicken thighs. I generally use boneless thighs, but one can also make wonderful coq au vin with drumsticks or breasts, or even an entire bird. I tend to favor the dark meat, because I think it has better flavor, but the choice is rather a personal one. Any recipe should be versatile enough to make it one’s own. Coq au vin is no exception. It is important to remember that any bone-in chicken requires more cooking time.

The Wine

While most recipes call for Burgundy wine, I generally opt for a Bordeaux. Both Burgundy and Bordeaux are regions in France from which some of the world’s finest wines are produced. One need not be a purist when cooking this French dish, however. I have used the popular Tuscan wine, Chianti, with good results, and I have a 2018 bottle of Frontera Cabernet



Greg Freeman

Mouton Cadet, a Bordeaux, is a perfect choice for *coq au vin*.

Sauvignon from the Concha y Toro portfolio of Chile that I suspect would work quite well, too. Though it is generally expected that red wine will be used for coq au vin, I know some folks have

gone down a divergent path, choosing a white wine instead. It is important to use a quality drinking wine, not a so-called cooking wine, which could be laden with salt, sugar and no telling what else. Remember that a fine wine worth serving guests is the best wine for this recipe, but it should not be a rare, expensive vintage or some hyped-up brand.

My typical go-to wine for coq au vin is Mouton Cadet, a readily available and affordably-priced Bordeaux, which bears the name of Baron Phillippe de Rothschild (1902-1988), a Parisian-born aristocrat who was born into a banking dynasty. He would take over his family's famous Château Mouton Rothschild estate at the age of twenty, by which time he was earning quite the reputation as a playboy. Quite adventurous, he even raced his own Bugatti in the 1929 Grand Prix in Monte Carlo.

Mouton Cadet, statistically the most popular red wine in the world, is produced from Cabernet Sauvignon and other grape varietals from multiple Bordeaux appellations, as opposed to the de Rothschilds' high-end Château Mouton Rothschild Pauillac, a wine produced exclusively at the family's historic vineyard in Pauillac, a commune located along the Gironde estuary. The latter wine is coveted for its vintages as well as its labels designed by commissioned artists such as Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) and Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) in 1958 and 1973, respectively. Considering an unopened bottle bearing the Picasso label is currently listed in an online auction for over US \$500, one might wish to stick with the Mouton Cadet at US \$14-16 when preparing coq au vin.

The Preparation

The great thing about coq au vin is that most of the ingredients are inexpensive. The wine is the most costly aspect of the dish, but the cost of the chicken can be reduced by using thighs instead of breasts, for example. Like many French dishes, the foundation of coq au vin is a *mirepoix* of tasty vegetables. I maintain that one can never add too much garlic, and I like a lot of celery and onions, too. My coq au vin recipe produces a rich, velvety sauce that could easily gloss over lesser quality ingredients, but I always use the freshest and best-looking produce I can find to prepare the mirepoix. Homegrown is even better. It is all about standards, really. And when I cook, I cook with the best ingredient of all: love.

As for cookware, I generally employ both a skillet and my cast iron pot with lid that can be used both on the stovetop and in the oven. This allows me to prepare the chicken in advance in the skillet and cook the bacon in the cast iron pot. By the time the mirepoix is ready, I can easily deglaze the cast iron pot with the red wine and begin the process of reducing the sauce.

The Recipe

Six boneless chicken thighs

Six strips of thick bacon (preferably with lots of visible fat), cut in small pieces

Three large carrots, half chopped, half cut in two-inch long pieces

Four stalks celery, chopped

Three medium onions, finely chopped

Ten to fifteen pearl onions, peeled and used whole

Six (or more!) garlic cloves, minced

Pint of button mushrooms, sliced or whole

Two tablespoons tomato paste

Flour (in bowl for coating sides of chicken or adding pinch or two for thickening)
Tablespoon canola oil
One bottle Bordeaux or Burgundy wine
One bay leaf
Sprigs of thyme
Sprig of rosemary
Salt
Pepper
Pepperoncini (red pepper flakes)

Beginning with the chicken thighs, pat dry with paper towels and sprinkle salt and pepper on each side. Flour each side of chicken. In skillet, add tablespoon canola oil, more if needed. On medium high to high heat (around 375° Fahrenheit), depending on stove, add chicken thighs to hot oil, browning each side and turning occasionally, being careful not to overcook or burn. After twenty minutes of cooking, remove thighs and allow to rest on plate.

Add bacon to skillet and cook until crisp. If resulting bacon fat is more than a tablespoon, drain excess. Add mirepoix (carrots, celery, chopped onions) and sauté about five to seven minutes, or until desired tenderness. To deglaze, pour in a few ounces of wine, scraping bottom of skillet with spatula to remove any remaining stuck-on bacon pieces. As wine reduces, add mushrooms, garlic and pearl onions. Reduce heat to a gentle boil. At this point, I generally transfer the contents of the skillet to my cast iron pot before adding more wine, a bay leaf and some sprigs of thyme. Continue cooking on stovetop. One might taste along the way and add salt or pepper to suit. Those who enjoy a little extra spice might like to add a few flakes of pepperoncini. When the mushrooms have cooked down and the other vegetables have become tenderer, I add more wine to the mixture, being careful to cook out the alcohol, which might require ten minutes or so, before adding the chicken thighs. In an oven preheated to 250° Fahrenheit, I place the cast iron pot, which is covered with lid, and cook contents for approximately an hour. Before serving, remove sprigs of thyme and bay leaf. If presenting on a serving platter for family-style serving, arrange chicken pieces, top with sauce and garnish with sprig or two of rosemary. If plating individually, consider garnishing each serving with a few needles of fresh rosemary.

Serving Coq au Vin

A properly prepared coq au vin is rich and hearty and needs little else, but I generally enjoy serving it with boiled and buttered new potatoes or mashed potatoes. A side of pasta would not be out of place, but potatoes are hard to beat, and they are even better with some of the wine sauce drizzled over them. Some lightly toasted bread, perhaps slices of a baguette, on the side is ideal. As for the sauce itself, the tomato paste on the list of ingredients contributes flavor *and* color. Nothing is less appealing than a drab, overcooked sauce that has the appearance of something between used motor oil and muddy water. Plus, I focus on achieving a thicker wine reduction. In my opinion, chicken should never swim in a pot of wine. The sauce should not be so thin as to require a soup spoon, but rather the consistency should be conducive for using pieces of bread to mop up any excess from one's plate.

Planting for Coq au Vin

Unless one lives on a farm or other rural property where he or she might raise chickens for consumption, the homegrown ingredients of a coq au vin are likely to be limited to the vegetables and herbs. Carrots, celery and onions are so cheaply purchased that it seems counterintuitive to bother growing them. That said, those delightful little Cippolini onions are hard to resist. Among its 2021 offerings, [John Scheeper's Kitchen Garden Seeds](#) includes Borettana Cippolini onions and Scarlet Nantes carrots, both of which are tasty heirlooms. As for the herbs, *Thymus vulgaris*, or common English thyme, as well as *Rosmarinus officinalis* (common rosemary), or its various selections such as 'Arp' (which I grow in my garden), can be acquired at most big box stores, including Walmart garden centers and home improvement stores such as Lowe's and Home Depot. Gardeners outside of the USA can take advantage of a number of mail order nursery and online seed sources, including [Thompson Morgan](#), in addition to local plant nurseries.



Greg Freeman

Greg Freeman's Coq au Vin

Pictured with sauce spooned over young potatoes and lightly floured and fried chicken thigh. The chicken is normally allowed to simmer in the sauce, but the end result, even if quite tasty, is not often photogenic.

Garden Picks of 2020

In a year that has witnessed so much uncertainty, gloom and chaos, I enjoyed trying a few new plants – affordable therapy, if you will – in my garden. To be exact, the plants, or even their cultivars, are not especially new to the marketplace, but they were new to me. Among the plants that I acquired, there are a few standouts that I recommend.

Hibiscus ‘Hawaiian Punch Orange’

Marketed by Delhi, Ontario, Canada-based Fernlea Flowers, Ltd., under its HibisQs® brand, Hawaiian Punch hibiscus is a sun-loving tropical plant with unusually long-lasting blooms. Low-growing (12-14” in height), it is well-suited for small spaces and containers where it puts on quite the show. My choice of colors was orange, but it is available in pink, red, yellow, orange-yellow and white. When many other hibiscus species and cultivars had ceased blooming with the onset of autumn, this little plant kept flowering. It was brought indoors with the threat of frost and continued to bloom for several more weeks. Since then, the plant has remained verdant and continues to grow near a sunny window. This tropical plant is not cold hardy, but overwintering the plant indoors might allow me to return it to the



Greg Freeman

Hibiscus ‘Hawaiian Punch Orange’

garden in Spring 2021 and enjoy it for another season.

***Gerbera jamesonii* ‘Royal Prince™ Neon Violet’**

A far cry from the species (albeit lovely in its own right), first described by Robert Jameson in South Africa in 1889, the show-stopping Royal Prince™ cultivars from the breeding program of Takii, which has operations in Japan, the USA, Europe and Brazil, are widely available in the USA, thanks to plant nursery giant Monrovia® of Azusa, California, USA. These Gerber daisies feature large, vibrant flowers on compact plants that are perfect for garden borders and containers, and they come in red, orange, neon violet and bicolor red variations. To prove the point that these flowers are attention-getting, I spotted some in a retail display outside a local convenience store that sells, among other things, fresh produce. From afar, the vivid color beckoned me to take a closer look, and I was immediately sold! An annual, this plant is said to be hardy to 32° Fahrenheit, but my plants have endured much colder temperatures and still show signs of life as of late December!



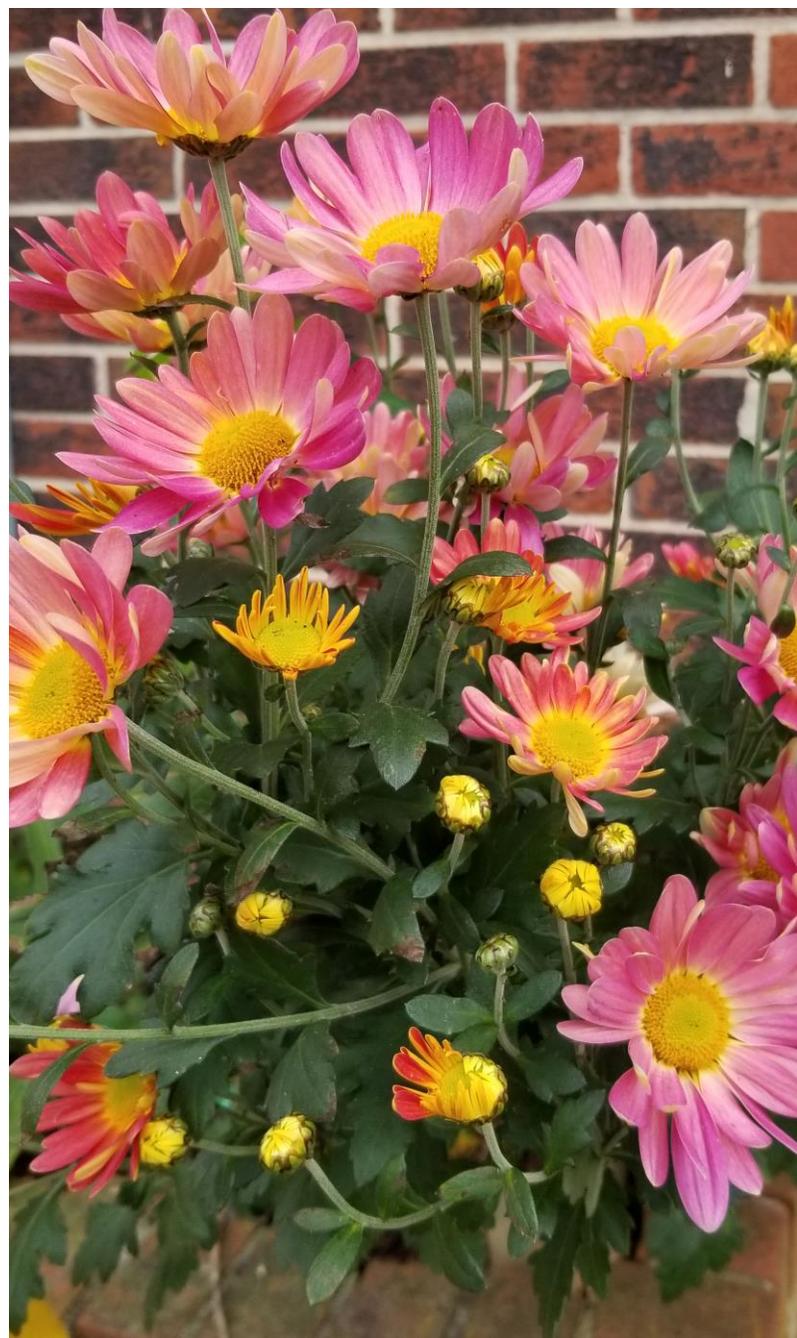
Greg Freeman

***Gerbera jamesonii* ‘Royal Prince™ Neon Violet’**

***Chrysanthemum x morifolium* (Easter Mum)**

While this flower might lack the sexiness, growers' trademarks or plant patents of the aforementioned hibiscus and Gerber daisy, it was an attractive addition to the flower beds this year. As any nurseryman will readily admit, there are countless cultivars, selections or color combinations, whichever way you wish to put it, of *Chrysanthemum x morifolium* (syn. *x grandiflorum*), and they tend to be a dime a dozen. Commonly called "Florist's Daisy," one need only pay a visit to one's local flower purveyor to get a sense of just how many variations can be found. That said, the version of *C. x morifolium* offered in the spring as "Easter Mum" is basically a greenhouse-grown version produced to cater to a particular season.

The plant I added to the garden this spring was in full bloom at the time of purchase, having been conditioned to flower at Easter. After keeping the plant indoors for the Easter season, I introduced it to a flower bed outside that gets plenty of light but does not bake directly in the sun. At this point, the danger of frost had passed, and the plant continued to bloom beautifully for many more days to come. Spent blooms were regularly deadheaded, encouraging the plant to maintain an appealing shape.



Greg Freeman

***Chrysanthemum x morifolium* is sold in spring as "Easter Mum."**

By later summer/early autumn, it was in full bloom once again, at the time one expects to see mums showing off.

If at First You Don't Succeed...

Microclimates and overall growing conditions vary from spot to spot, even from year to year, in some cases. Gardeners often try something new, only to achieve poor results. Sometimes even the tried and true do not work out well. Occasionally, it is the impatience of the gardener that leads to disaster. Such is life, if you garden long enough, I suppose.

I recall my late father planting corn or okra on several occasions, only to be disappointed because his sown rows wound up with “skips,” or various lengths of furrow where no tender, young seedlings had emerged. Sometimes this would prompt him to get out the plow and sow seeds again, which, more often than not, resulted in overplanting and the need for thinning. In other words, had he waited a bit longer, those seeds that had been slow to germinate might have actually resulted in seedlings, but he reasoned that everything should come up at the same time and found skips unacceptable.

As opposed to planting corn and okra, some plants are simply difficult, especially when they are



Greg Freeman

Cyclamen hederifolium*, the common species (with green leaves), blooming in *Mediterranea

One might call growing this plant in a terrarium a great experiment, as conditions must replicate its habitat, which might not be entirely impossible, considering that it grows widely throughout Europe, especially from France to Turkey. Will it go dormant later this year and re-emerge and repeat the process or diminish and miserably fail? Only time will tell.

being put to the test outside of their most ideal habitats. I have found this to be the case with various plants I have introduced to my terrarium, *Mediterranea*, but it is also applicable to many plants that are grown outside in my garden. Some thrive, while others need more in-depth care or, at the very least, a little encouraging nudge once in a while.

In 2020, a year that brought record rainfall to my South Carolina garden, I was sorely disappointed over the loss of my prized silver leafed *Cyclamen hederifolium*, the subject of an article in my inaugural issue (April 2016) of *Greg Freeman's Garden Chronicle*. The plant was a gorgeous culmination of what can result when two of the best specimens from two renowned hybridists, from two different continents, are crossed together. Realizing that I had lost a rare jewel, indeed, I pondered how I might ever acquire another coveted silver leaf cyclamen of such beauty and distinguished pedigree. Then, one day I revisited the spot where it had grown and found a tiny seedling peeking out beneath the fallen leaves of the shrub under which its shade-loving mother had thrived for years. Since discovering the exciting seedling, I have had it growing indoors in a small terra cotta pot where it has increased in size and gone through its normal cycle of dormancy twice, leading me to believe that it can eventually be returned outside and thrive in my garden where natural selection had probably eliminated its siblings. If there's such thing as luck – and I'm not a believer,



Greg Freeman

An exciting silver leafed *Cyclamen hederifolium* emerged from a fallen seed near the location of the mother plant, which was lost in 2020. Check out the lovely heart shape and the green edging!

by the way – one could say that I got lucky with the cyclamen, but I haven't been so fortunate with other plants.

Every year or so, I cannot resist the urge to order seeds from Rafael Díez Domínguez in El Espinar, a town located in the province of Segovia, Spain. From Mr. Domínguez, I often buy species daffodil seeds, particularly the rare *Narcissus viridiflorus*, that all-green, fall-blooming daffodil species I seem to go on and on about in my writing. Year after year, I fail to get these to do well, but I keep trying. (Incidentally, a new acquaintance in Germany has offered to sell me some bulbs in 2021, and my friend and fellow daffodil hybridist Larry Force, who lives

near Memphis, says he can part with one or two. At last!) Typically, my seed order from Spain comes with some gratis seeds, and this year I received *N. serotinus* and another species whose identity is debated. Mr. Domínguez refers to the species as *N. deficiens*, a shorter version of the longer botanical name, *N. serotinus* var. *deficiens*. The term “deficiens” derives from the flower’s lack, or deficiency, of a corona (cup). Dr. Harold Koopowitz, a South African-born authority on daffodils, clivia and orchids, would contradict the flower’s name altogether, insisting that the species is, in fact, *N. miniatus*, which he describes as “a species of hybrid origin with *N. obsoletus* and *N. serotinus* as possible parents” (2017, p. 166). While Dr. Koopowitz’s reasoning about the fall bloomer’s name has been published elsewhere for those who wish to better understand the conflicting use of names, his writing on growing the species from seed is what I have turned to of late.

From my own daffodil hybridizing experiences, I know that newly harvested seeds can often take five or more years to develop into blooming size bulbs. However, Dr. Koopowitz offers some



Greg Freeman

Seedlings of *Narcissus serotinus* and *Narcissus miniatus*

My 2020 seed order from Rafael Díez Domínguez contained seeds of *Narcissus serotinus* and *Narcissus miniatus*, a species often called *N. deficiens*. The seeds were sown in this planter. Many seedlings of each species emerged after the initial planting. The seedlings grew vigorously and were eventually allowed to go dormant. The seedlings, pictured above, with one lonely *N. serotinus* (left) and multiple *N. miniatus* (right), emerged after the first dormancy.

hope regarding *N. serotinus* and its presumed offspring *N. miniatus*, which Domínguez considers *N. deficiens*. In a March 1980 article for *The Daffodil Journal*, Dr. Koopowitz states, in part:

The species [*Narcissus serotinus*] is very easy from seed. It should be planted as soon as harvested. There is no dormancy period and seed will germinate almost immediately. By growing and drying at appropriate intervals, flowering-sized bulbs can be obtained in about 18 months. (p. 136)

I have followed this advice with interesting results. The seedlings labeled *N. serotinus* have gone dormant with only one seedling re-emerging a second time, thus far. As for the so-called *N. deficiens*, or *N. miniatus*, about a third of the seedlings have re-emerged from their first dormancy, giving me hope that I might attain blooming-sized bulbs from these imported seeds yet.

Like my father and his corn and okra, I am too stubborn to stop sowing seeds until I get the desired result. I will, no doubt, continue to order seeds every year from Domínguez and others and live by the adage, “If at first you don’t succeed, plant more seed!”

Koopowitz, Harold. “Fall Blooming Species and a New Hybrid Narcissus.” *The Daffodil Journal*. March 1980.

Koopowitz, Harold, Howe, Marilyn and Christenhusz, Maarten J. M. “Nomenclatural notes on some autumn flowering daffodils (*Narcissus*, Amaryllidaceae).” *Phytotaxa*. 24 March 2017. <https://dafflibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/Nomenclatural-Notes-on-some-autumn-flowering-daffodils-Narcissus-Amaryllidaceae-Koopowitz-et-al-Phytotaxa-February-2017.pdf> Accessed December 20, 2020.

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Photograph: *Crocus sativus* in The Climbers



Greg Freeman (b. 1974), *Crocus sativus* in The Climbers, 2020, Digital Photograph.

Earlier in 2020, multiple corms of *Crocus sativus* were planted outside in *The Climbers*, my handmade hypertufa container with the relief nude figures, and *Mediterranea*, my terrarium located indoors in my creative studio, The Nook. In both locations, the crocuses bloomed in late November around Thanksgiving. *Crocus sativus* is grown throughout the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions. While the plants are not found in the wild, they have been cultivated for well over 3,000 years, stretching across civilizations, cultures and countries. The claim to fame for this attractive little plant is saffron (produced from the bright red flower stigmas), a spice that figures prominently in Arab, European, Berber, Persian and Indian cuisines. Saffron is just right in a paella in Spain, a hearty khoresh (stew) in Iran, a spicy biryani in India, a creamy Milanese risotto in Italy and a simmering tagine in Morocco. Some 70,000 crocus flowers yield around 200,000 stigmas, which is roughly a pound of saffron. Production is very labor-intensive, hence the sticker shock one might receive when buying the genuine product. Triploid, *C. sativus* is sterile, and its continued existence is owed entirely to centuries of propagation for saffron production. *C. sativus* can only increase through vegetative offsets from each mother corm.

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In addition to being an avid gardener and daffodil hybridist, judge and exhibitor, Greg Freeman is an author, editor, recording artist, songwriter, amateur visual artist and life-long horse lover. His nonfiction writing on a number of subjects has appeared in magazines, encyclopedias and books of academic and scholarly interest, as well as [Southern Edition](#), Freeman's digital publication devoted to the American South. Published academic/encyclopedic contributions by Freeman include a chapter in Nadine Farghaly's edited volume, *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes: Essays on Film and Television Adaptations Since 2009* (2015), as well as multiple entries in: *Race in American Film: Voices and Visions That Shaped a Nation* (2017), edited by Dr. Daniel Bernardi and Michael Green; *The British Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia* (2018), edited by Dr. Mark Doyle; and *Music around the World: A Global Encyclopedia* (2020), edited by Drs. Andrew R. Martin and Matthew Mihalka. In 2015, Freeman released a country music radio single, "Sunlight and Shadows," garnering international airplay, and his gospel music has received national exposure through television, radio and commercial recordings. His gospel EP, *Blessing and Blessing*, featuring guest vocalists Babbie Mason, a Grammy-nominated artist, and Gospel Music Hall of Famer Calvin Newton, released in December 2018. An owner of Belgian draft horses since 1987, Freeman's horse interests expanded into the world of Thoroughbred racing and breeding with the purchase of shares in Authentic in 2020. Authentic soon after won the Haskell Stakes, the Kentucky Derby and Breeders' Cup Classic before retiring to stud at Spendthrift Farm, Lexington, Kentucky, USA.

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