



“[...] I sow, plant and manure my borders; I dig flower beds, plant stakes and raise walls; I bring in soil from half a league away. Working in clogs all day, I only go back inside to eat dinner [...]”.

George Sand (1804-1876), whose real name was Amantine Aurore Lucile Dupin, grew up in Nohant, where she was raised by her grandmother. She married the baron Casimir Dudevant and bore

TIMELINE

- 1803:** ornamental grounds created by Marie Aurore Dupin de Francueil, George Sand’s grandmother.
- 1813:** French formal garden turned into an English landscape garden by Madame Béranger, a friend of Marie Aurore Dupin de Francueil.
- 1836:** property taken over by George Sand upon separation from husband Casimir Dudevant.
- 1843:** fruit trees changed in October.
- 1844:** trees planted and flower beds introduced in the cour d’honneur; trench and wall enclosing grounds restored.
- 1845:** winter garden and manège built.
- 1853:** ornamental garden built in the little wood, named Trianon after George Sand’s granddaughter Jeanne Gabrielle, nicknamed ‘Nini’.
- 1855:** family cemetery built in an exchange of plots with the municipality.
- 1855:** exotic hens introduced and ornamental henhouse built.

him two children: Maurice (1823-1889) and Solange (1828-1899). In a spirit of female emancipation, she adopted the pen name George Sand in 1832 with the publication of her first novel: *Indiana*. Freed from marital tutelage several years later, the novelist spent most of her life in Nohant, where she produced the majority of her prolific works. In her writings, she expressed a passion for nature, which she observed attentively throughout her life, especially in her garden. George Sand spent time in her garden almost every day, alone or alongside her close friends or relatives. An extension of the house itself, this space was conducive to sharing, awe, contemplation of nature and bodily freedom that few 19<sup>th</sup>-century women could enjoy.

- 1896:** pond dug beneath the cedars.
- 1991 to 1993:** garden restored.
- 1991:** *Corambé* statue made by Françoise Vergier.
- 2004:** tulip tree planted to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of George Sand’s birth.
- 2006:** reception desk, bookshop and gift shop fitted out in the outbuilding that formerly housed horse-drawn carriages.
- 2007:** awarding of the “Jardin remarquable” (‘Remarkable Garden’) label.
- 2014:** awarding of the “Arbres remarquables” (‘Remarkable Trees’) label: Lebanese cedar, Ginkgo biloba, Yew, Japanese sophora.
- 2023:** approval of a management plan, restoration of the rose garden and planting of an elm tree to mark the bicentenary of the birth of Maurice Sand.
- 2024:** a pedunculate oak is awarded the “Arbres remarquables” (‘Remarkable Trees’) label.

GLOSSARY



Frankenia plant, herbarium made by George Sand

- Boischaut Sud:** natural region of France in the departments of Indre and Cher, in the Centre administrative region.
- Eastern black walnut (*Juglans nigra*):** tree originating from North America. Its drupaceous fruits – black walnuts – are kernels in very hard, coarse shells.
- Elm (*Ulmus Lutece*):** a tree drawn by Maurice Sand that’s become iconic of the Vallée Noire.
- Judas tree (*Cercis siliquastrum*):** tree originating from Southern Europe and Western Asia. Blossoms with bright pink-crimson blooms in April and May before the leaves appear.
- Southern catalpa (*Catalpa bignonioides*):** tree originating from North America and Eastern Asia. Very large leaves and white flowers in substantial clusters.
- Traditional orchard:** the simplest, most traditional way of planting fruit trees, where they are left to grow freely. This one includes local varieties of apple trees like *Belle fille de l’Indre*, *Sainte-Germaine* and *Feuilloux*.
- Tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*):** tree native to southern and eastern America. Blossoms with tulip-like blooms in May and June.

Trees listed for conservation as ‘Remarkable Trees’ by the charity A.R.B.R.E.S.

- Lebanese cedar (*Cedrus libani*):** conifer originating from Lebanon. Its fruits are cone-shaped and 10cm long.
- Ginkgo** (also known as *Ginkgo biloba* and Maidenhair Tree): tree originating from the Far East. Belongs to the Ginkgoaceae family, the oldest known family of trees, which appeared over 270 million years ago.
- Japanese sophora (*Styphnolobium japonicum*):** tree originating from the arid plains of China. Blossoms in cream-white panicles, generally in August, depending on the summer heat.
- Pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*):** estimated to live between 500 and 1,000 years.
- Yew (*Taxus baccata*):** tree originating from Europe, Northern Asia and the Middle East. Has become rare today in its natural state. Its flowers yield fleshy, bright red fruits called arils. Their seeds are toxic.

Practical information

Free, self-guided tours of the permanent exhibition, puppet shows and garden.  
Guided tours of the house are only available at the times and prices stated at the reception desk.  
The tea room is open from April to October.

Centre des monuments nationaux  
Domaine de George Sand  
2 place Sainte-Anne  
36400 Nohant  
tél. 02 54 31 06 04

www.maison-george-sand.fr  
www.facebook.com/MaisonDeGeorgeSandANohant

www.monuments-nationaux.fr



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George Sand’s garden

“The garden is delightful. One cannot bear to leave it”.

History of the site

In 1767, the governor of Vierzon, Philippe Péarron de Serennes, acquired the Nohant estate and undertook to build, upon a former medieval fortress, the house we can visit today. Aurore Dupin de Francueil, the illegitimate daughter of Marshal Maurice de Saxe and George Sand’s paternal grandmother, bought the estate in 1793. It was made up of 230 hectares of land, a private home and several outbuildings. In 1821, her granddaughter inherited the property.

A writer’s garden

The six-hectare garden has kept its original layout. It is made up of several distinct sections, including a small wood. This shaded, ornamental space for strolls was conceived as a wild spot left to develop naturally. George Sand wrote

how she imagined her ideal garden: “[...] rather than neatly arranged gardens, I prefer those where soil rich in local plants allows certain parts to be fully abandoned”. Another portion, exposed to sunlight, yielded vegetables, fruit and flowers. The garden pervaded George Sand’s daily life. It provided a source of inspiration, a backdrop for leisurely strolls, a place to revitalise and take refuge. “I indulge in gardening fervidly, whatever the weather, for five hours a day. It dazes me so much that while digging and raking I start composing poetry [...]”. In her garden, she experienced unforgettable moments that she would recount in *Histoire de ma vie* (Story of My Life) and in her letters and diaries. She cultivated and embellished her garden avidly throughout her life.



## VISIT

Today, you can enter George Sand's property straight from the village square, via the cour d'honneur. On the right is the farm yard, and on the left, the garden, which also provides access to the family cemetery and small wood.

### The cour d'honneur

**I** On your left as you enter the courtyard, the former outbuilding for housing horse-drawn carriages now houses the site's reception desk, bookshop and gift shop. On the first floor, a permanent exhibition displays Maurice Sand's puppets. In the attic, *Le Grenier Littéraire* ('The Literary Loft') is a special venue for cultural events. On your right as you enter the courtyard is the former stable, which still has some of its hayracks. Since 2004, it has housed a statue sculpted by Auguste Clésinger, depicting George Sand as an allegory of literature. In the middle of the courtyard, pride of place is given to a hundred-year-old yew\* **F** surrounded by a catalpa\* **A** with spectacular, bean-shaped fruits and two Judas trees\* **B** that blossom in spring.

### The rose garden

**2** At the entrance to the garden, the rose garden, restored in 2023, is evidence of George Sand's fondness of roses, which were very popular in the



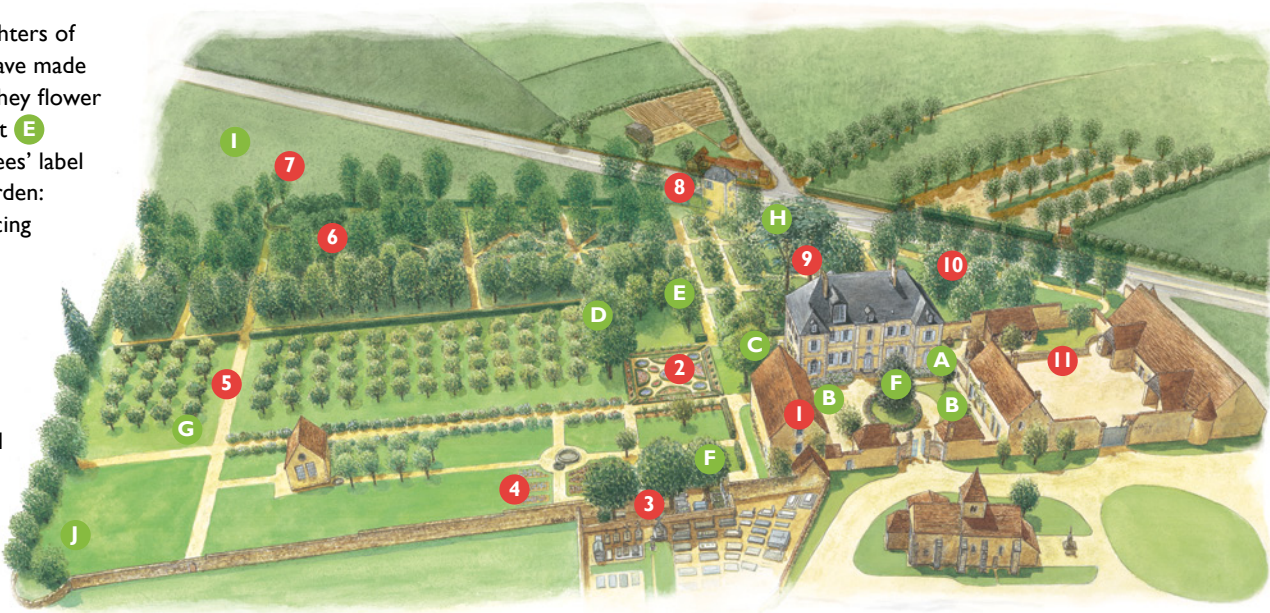
19<sup>th</sup> century: "I love roses. They are the daughters of God and man; delightful, rural beauties we have made into unrivalled princesses; and, to thank us, they flower resplendently [...]". The Eastern black walnut **E** and three trees awarded the 'Remarkable Trees' label for conservation purposes flank the rose garden: a Japanese sophora\* **C**, with honey-producing blooms, and two ginkgo biloba **D** trees\*, the golden leaves of which cover the ground in autumn.

### The cemetery

**3** The family cemetery, where George Sand is buried among relatives, was separated from the municipal cemetery in accordance with her wishes. In the words of Aurore, the writer's granddaughter, on the day of her funeral, on 10 June 1876: "It started raining, the garden was crying, too [...]". A long-standing yew\* **F** watches over the novelist as she rests beneath her Volvic-stone tomb.

### The food-yielding garden

**4** **The kitchen garden**, much smaller than it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, recalls the food-producing role of George Sand's garden. The cold frames, greenhouse and press were vital to a self-sufficient lifestyle. The novelist had specific demands in this respect: "No asparagus. No-one in our household likes them [...]. But plenty of lettuce, artichokes, peas, cucumbers, green beans, melons and flowers". Along the cemetery wall, herbs underline the writer's interest in their medicinal use. A small flower garden is still cultivated to decorate the house with blooms. A long path, now lined with perennial plants, separates the orchard from the kitchen garden. At the end of the path is a tulip tree\* **G** planted in 2004 to mark the bicentenary of the novelist's birth. On the left, a meadow full of blooms provides flowers to adorn the house and plays a major role in the estate's biodiversity.



At the end of the meadow stands an elm\* **J**, now iconic of the Vallée Noire, planted in 2023 to mark the bicentenary of Maurice Sand's birth. **5** **The orchard** is made up of around sixty apple trees, planted in the traditional-orchard\* manner, of different varieties, including some local species. The strips of natural meadows surrounding the



trees make up a haven of biodiversity. The apples are picked and turned into juice which is served to the public at cultural events.

### The small wood

**6** Turned into an English landscape garden by George Sand's grandmother, this shaded area is left to grow naturally, barely tamed by man. The shrub species are the same as in George Sand's time: "In our grounds lies a small wood planted with hornbeams, maples, ashes, lime trees and lilacs". Depending on the season, the ground is covered in moss, ivy, snowdrops, violets, periwinkles and ivy-leaved cyclamens. Small, winding paths invite visitors to wander around before stumbling upon *Corambé*, a statue made by Françoise Vergier in 1991 that depicts the deity imagined by George Sand when she was a child, and to which the writer devoted an altar she hid in the small wood. At one of the bends in the path, away from onlookers, a surprising decor can be found: the remains of Trianon, the ornamental garden George Sand created for Nini, her adored granddaughter: "I made a garden to my liking

in my small wood. A garden made up of rocks, moss, ivy, tombs, shells and caves, it does not make much sense [...] It began with a rockery for my granddaughter and I ended up taking over a plot that has not stopped expanding [...]". **7** **The island** gives the garden a picturesque dimension that offers a chance for isolation, refuge and daydreaming. The meadow that stretches beyond it, complete with a magnificent pedunculate oak **I** tree, is accessible via a mown path but now out of bounds for safety reasons and used as pasture for horses. It was once home to a manège that George Sand had built in the 1840s for her and her daughter, both horse-riding enthusiasts. "My daughter rides horses [...] in a beautiful open-air manège that I recently had made for her. I also ride there sometimes, out of love of this art form [...]". **8** At the end of the grounds, **the 'Flaubert' lodge** by the roadside marked the estate's entrance at the time of George Sand. It was used to accommodate guests for long stays. One of these guests was Edmond Plauchut, a Republican journalist and regular visitor to Nohant. He is the only friend of the family to have been buried in the estate's cemetery.

### The cedar garden

**9** Facing south, just behind the house, this leisure space is directly accessed from the dining room. It was used for eating and playing in the summer: "[...] same Nohant lifestyle, unchanging, peaceful and mellow [...] We have open-air dinners, friends come along [...] we smoke and gossip, and in the evening, when they have left, Chopin players the piano at twilight [...]". Two large cedars of Lebanon\* **H** were planted by George Sand to celebrate the births of her children, Maurice and Solange. Adjoining the house, the foundations of a structure reveal the place where a heated

greenhouse once stood. Accessible from the living room, this winter garden dedicated to exotic plants even yielded pineapples: "We ate the pineapple yesterday evening. It was delicious and Flaubert said he had never eaten one that tasted so good. The truth is that, in Nohant, they are of a superior quality [...]".

### The oak garden

**10** In 1855, George Sand quickly developed a passion for exotic poultry. Through contact with other poultry enthusiasts, she acquired eggs and hens that were rare in the Berry region and for which she built a 'Chinese coop', no trace of which remains today.

### The farmyard

**11** An inner courtyard housed the novelist's horse-drawn carriages and equestrian accessories. The well supplied the nearby kitchen with water. The sheep pen is a good example of rural Boischaud Sud\* architecture. Restored in 2010 and converted into an auditorium, the building hosts the Nohant Festival Chopin each year in June and July, an event dedicated to the music of composer and pianist Frédéric Chopin. In George Sand's time, the farmyard was used for agricultural purposes, housing goats, cows, sheep and poultry.

#### Rendez-vous aux jardins

During the first weekend of June each year, the French Ministry of Culture organises this event involving over 2,300 parks and gardens – old and modern, private and public – that welcome more than two million visitors.