



“[...] 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.

1823 and 1828: two cedars planted to mark the birth of George Sand’s children: Maurice and Solange.

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, for George Sand’s granddaughter: Jeanne Gabrielle, nicknamed ‘Nini’.

1855: family cemetery built in an exchange of plots with the municipality.

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 nineteenth-century women could enjoy.

1855: exotic hens introduced and construction of an ornamental henhouse.

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 two-hundredth 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: prestigious ‘Remarkable Garden’ title awarded by French Ministry of Culture.

2013: Berry black hens reintroduced.

2014: prestigious ‘Remarkable Trees’ label for conservation given to certain trees by the charity A.R.B.R.E.S.



Frankenia plant, herbarium made by George Sand

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.

Boischaux Sud: natural region of France in the departments of Indre and Cher, in the Centre administrative region.

Southern Catalpa (*Catalpa bignonioides*): tree originating from North America and Eastern Asia. Very large leaves and white flowers in substantial clusters.

Eastern Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*): tree originating from North America. Its drupaceous fruits – black walnuts – are kernels in very hard, coarse shells.

Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*): tree native to southern and eastern America. Blossoms with tulip-like blooms in May and June.

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*.

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

Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*): conifer originating from Lebanon. Its fruits are cone-shaped and 10 centimetres 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.

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.

Japanese Pagoda Tree (*Styphnolobium japonicum*): tree originating from the arid plains of China. Blossoms in cream-white panicles, generally in August, depending on the summer heat.

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.

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CENTRE DES MONUMENTS NATIONAUX



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), in her letters and diaries. She cultivated and embellished her garden avidly throughout her life.

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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

1 On your left as you enter the courtyard, the former outbuilding for housing horse-drawn carriages is now 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 is evidence of George Sand's fondness of roses, which were very popular in the



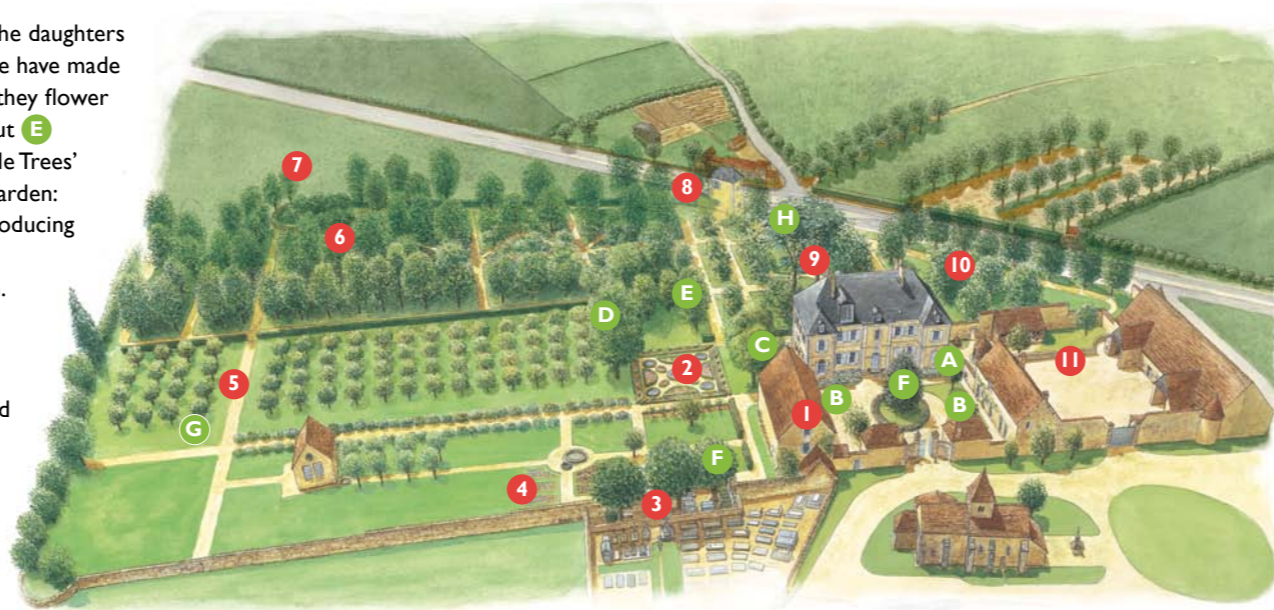
nineteenth century: "I love roses. They are the daughters of God and man; delightful, rural beauties we have made into unrivalled princesses; and, to thank us, they flower resplendently [...]". The Eastern black walnut **E** and three trees given the title of 'Remarkable Trees' for conservation purposes flank the rose garden: a Japanese pagoda tree* **C**, with honey-producing blooms, and two Ginkgos* **D**, 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: "The heavens wept with rain and the garden cried 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 nineteenth century, recalls the sustaining purpose of George Sand's garden. The cold frame, greenhouse and press were vital to a self-sufficient lifestyle. The novelist had specific demands regarding this plot: "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.



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. A meadow stretches beyond it. Today, it is closed for security reasons and is now pasture for horses. It hosted the manège, now gone, that George Sand fitted out in the 1840s for her and her daughter, both horse-riding enthusiasts. "My daughter rides a horse [...] 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 parted, Chopin plays me piano pieces at twilight [...]". Large cedars of Lebanon* **H**, planted by George Sand, symbolise the birth of her children, Maurice and Solange. Adjoining the house, a structure's foundations 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, their quality is superior [...]".

The hen garden

10 In 1855, George Sand quickly developed a passion for exotic poultry. In 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. In 2013, Berry black hens were reintroduced into the former dovecote.

The farm yard

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 farm yard 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 associating over 2,300 parks and gardens – historic and contemporary, private and public – that welcome more than two million visitors.