



## **University Botanic Garden of Poitiers**

### **General presentation**

The University of Poitiers was founded in 1431. The current site of the university botanic garden is known as the Domain of « Deffend » since the Middle Ages. It covers 33 hectares. Many owners succeeded since 1385 to 1962, when the site is left to the state. It is now owned by the University of Poitiers.

The botanic garden has 6 hectares of woods, 9 ha for academic research related to the environment and 18 ha for the collections. It consists of five main buildings (more than 1700 m<sup>2</sup>) with a 17th century home, "The Mansion" and three building that make up "The Farm". This last part of the garden houses the administration, but also the regional branch of the National Botanic Conservatory South Atlantic and collections of plant and animal biodiversity of the University. The garden also has a herbarium collection of national value (70 ml). Finally, the site has a dovecote, two ponds and a small greenhouse. The garden also publishes an index seminum.

Located in the town of Mignaloux-Beauvoir, near the campus of Poitiers, the botanic garden is built into the heritage of the University, within the Parks Department which has a leader, 19 gardeners so 8 dedicated to the development of the garden. The development of the site depends on their investment. They provide maintenance and beautification of the garden, collection development or harvesting of seeds. The site is open to the public all year and more than 500 schools are welcomed for tours. The site may also host exhibitions, including at the Science Festival and Heritage Days.

The botanic garden is fully part of the sustainable development policy of the University for a more environmentally friendly. Gardeners differentiated practice management, mulching and maintenance of natural areas: water resources are preserved, the biological balance is enhanced as the development of biodiversity (wild orchids - *Ophrys apifera* - and protected tawny owl - *Strix aluco* - for example).

The current university botanic garden is truly born in 1996 and developed around strong points: the reintroduction of fruit species as endangered, the creation of an arboretum, introducing collections of ancient food plants or the reorganization of the collection of medicinal plants used to support teaching of Medicine and Pharmacy.

### **The arboretum**

In addition, the antiquity of the property allowed highlighting some existing collections. Currently, about 75 species and / or varieties of oak (*Quercus*) are presented. They come mainly from North America, Asia and the Mediterranean Area. Species are collected by geographical area of origin. To these, add some twenty species of maples (*Acer*), including the famous *Acer saccharum* Marsh which is extracted a sweet sap, maple syrup base and thirty viburnum (*Viburnum*) coming for some from Far East and Central China. 16 species of lilacs (*Syringa*) complete the collection, and various other species: cypress, pagoda tree, *Philodendron*, barberry, ..

Note: Two remarkable trees were classified as regional heritage, a giant sequoia (*Sequoiadendron giganteum* Buchholz) and oak (*Quercus robur* L. subsp. *Fastigiata* A. Camus).

### **The orchard**

In 1996, Poitou-Charentes region organized the year of regional flavours with an exhibition of old fruits and vegetables. From this project was born a real dynamic of old local species conservation and the desire to create a sustainable project around this theme. The Domain of « Deffend » has been chosen to host an orchard. Today, a diverse collection of fruit trees species with regional characteristics of 53 varieties of apple trees using various techniques presented in size: cup, high-stem, palmetto. They work alongside 16 varieties of pear and plum, peach, cherry, apricot.

Note: The collaboration with local associations allows apple juice making, but also the development of a social role by giving a part of the harvest to the food bank. In addition, the botanic garden is involved in the dissemination of antique fruit species to share many scions and rootstocks.

### **The vegetable garden**

The vegetable garden is dedicated largely to plants of the Middle Ages. The main feature of this garden is to grow vegetables varieties and landraces. It is composed of multiple squares where vegetables are arranged according to their category: leafy vegetable, root vegetable, vegetable-fruit. The annual nature of some vegetables can renew the collection every year and change the presentation by changing the theme.

Note: The weeds in the garden are presented with their local name in the local dialect in order to associate the fun in learning. This project is in collaboration with a laboratory of the Faculty of Arts and languages.

### **The Medicinal**

The space reserved for medicinal plants provides an overview of plants that are used in our regions in both official and popular medicine. The classification of plants in attributed space is primarily educational in that they are classified according to their primary function. Nine sets were therefore determined: urinary tract, digestive, respiratory, circulatory, cardiovascular, nervous system, plant tonic, anti-rheumatic and external use. Almost 200 plants are then listed in twenty flower beds.

Note: Legend of the herbs of Saint John. It is ready for these medicinal plants that are traditionally gathered on the occasion of this festival exceptional efficiency, or 27 plants, including seven sacred plants: Artemesia, Sempervivum, Glechoma hederacea L., Leucanthemum, Hypericum, Salvia, Achillea.

### **Herbaria and collections of biodiversity**

Herbaria are among the treasures of the University, including those of the nineteenth century with the botanic garden provides preservation for scientific use. The Botanic Garden has begun an inventory of herbaria through a partnership with the National Botanic Conservatory. For collections of animal and plant biodiversity, a new place of conservation with decontamination chamber was opened recently and will be managed by the collections valorisation centre of university witch can also mount exhibitions on the site.

Note: Six major herbaria are listed (Denesle, Delastre, Barbier, Guitteau, Poireault, Hubert), but it's herbarium Denesle Nicolas, former director of the Jardin des Plantes, Poitiers, which is the oldest (late 18th) and the largest with more than 50 volumes of the local flora as well as other French and Belgian regions.

Today, the collections of the Botanic Garden have approximately 1400 taxa. In an effort to sustain the local species and distribute the seeds, gardeners harvest the seeds and then make an index seminum and distribute it in different structures. In the near future, the site will complete its conversion and development of its collections and expand the spaces and supports of educational animation to enhance its attractiveness.

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Old rose : Rosa 'Baron JB Gonella'	Blue Cedars <i>Cedrus atlantica</i> 'Glauca'
Wild orchid <i>Ophrys apifera</i>	





The mansion (garden view)	The mansion and the Giant Sequoia
Detail view of the pond	The mansion (main entrance)
The Farm in winter	The administration building





The Farm (half view)	One of the secondary entrances
The Dovecote (overview)	The Dovecote (detail)
The Mansion (general view)	





The medieval garden	The regional plants
The systematics	Collection of medicinal plants
The orchard (apples and pears)	The main pond