***Une petite histoire…***

***The muguet tradition in France***

Le premier mai (1er mai) est un jour **férié1** en France. Il y en a 11 chaque année. Il n’y a pas d’ école et beaucoup d’ adultes ne travaillent pas. Le 1er mai, c’est la fête du muguet. Comment est-ce qu’on prononce « muguet »? C’est MEW-GEH. Qu’est-ce que ça veut dire « muguet »? **Ben2**, regardez les fleurs sur la table. Elles s’appellent “lily of the valley.” Le 1er mai, les français donnent ces fleurs avec leurs formes de **cloche3**, de **porte bonheurs4**. Mais, c’est aussi la fête du Travail. Aux États-Unis, notre fête du Travail **tombe5** le 1er lundi en septembre. **Alors6**, qu’est-ce qu’on fait le 1er mai en France?

1public holiday

2of course

3bell

4lucky charm

5falls/occurs

6so

**Question:**

So what are the French doing today, the first of May, besides *la grasse matinée?*  
  
**Answer**:

Waving snow-white *porte-bonheurs* through the air and wishing each other good luck!

**[](http://french-word-a-day.typepad.com/.a/6a00d834515cae69e20147e16e922c970b-popup)**

Along little cobblestone paths in the French hinterland, and at noisy intersections across the city, French *vendeurs de muguet* are taking over street curbs with buckets of lilies of the valley and shouting *Le muguet du premier mai!*--cashing in on today's national holiday, Labor Day (or *La Fête du Travail*).

On May 1st it is the custom to offer loved ones little bouquets of those sweet-scented, *clochette*-shaped flowers--in a gesture of friendship and in celebration of spring. It's *la Fête du Muguet*!

Today,*commercants* are handing out the friendship flowers: the butcher (who should be off work, *non*?) is offering *un brin de muguet* to his faithful clients and some fancy boxed cakes have been seen leaving the chocolate shop with the little white flowers tucked beneath the shiny ribbons that fasten the boxes.  
  
"*Ah, bon?*" My mother-in-law replies over the phone, *étonnée*. "Shopkeepers here in Marseilles don't offer *muguet*!"   
  
After a moment of silence, she quietly admits that no one has ever offered her a bouquet of *muguet des bois*.... But that doesn't stop my *belle-maman* from taking *un petit brin* to her 'little neighbor' downstairs, a *coutume* she took up several years ago, to add cheer to the lonely foyer of another forgotten heart.  
  
*Bonne Fête du Muguet*! Good luck to you in the challenges you face--*bon courage* wherever on this globe you may call home  
  
The following lyrics are part of a song by the beloved French folk singer George Brassens.  
  
*Le premier mai c'est pas gai / The first of May is not cheerful  
Je trime a dit le muguet / I slave away, said the lily of the valley  
Dix fois plus que d'habitude / Ten times more than usual  
Regrettable servitude / A regrettable encumbrance  
  
Muguet, sois pas chicaneur / Muguet, don't be a quibbler  
Car tu donnes du bonheur / Because you make people happy...  
Brin d' muguet, tu es quelqu'un... / Little bouquet of lily, you are somebody...  
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**FRENCH VOCABULARY**

**faire la grasse matinée** = "to do the fat morning" (to sleep in)

**un porte-bonheur** (m) = lucky charm

**vendeur, vendeuse de muguet** = lily of the valley seller

**Le muguet du premier mai!** = The First of May's Lily of the Valley

**la clochette** (f) = bell

**commerçant(e)** (adj) = businesslike

**commerçant(e)** (mf) = shopkeepers

**Ah, bon?** = oh, really?

**étonné(e)** = puzzled

**le muguet des bois**(m) = "lily of the woods" (woodruff)

**la belle-maman** (f) = mother-in-law

**un petit brin** (m) = "a little blade" (a little bouquet)

**coo-toom** (pronunciation for 'coutume' (f) = custom