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Agricultural practices in olive groves modify weeds

2 floral traits and resources throughout the year

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26 Authors' contributions

LG, AM, EK and KB conceived the idea and designed the experiment. LG, AM and EK
collected the data. LG analysed the data and led the writing of the manuscript. All authors
contributed critically to the drafts and gave their final approval for publication.

30 Data availability statement

- 31 Data available on UMR ABSYS Dataverse: <u>https://doi.org/10.18167/DVN1/B9HXLE</u>
- 32 (temporary link:
- 33 <u>https://dataverse.cirad.fr/dataset.xhtml;jsessionid=d1fe6f791a3566c0ca444ff52930?persistentId=doi%</u>
- 34 <u>3A10.18167%2FDVN1%2FB9HXLE&version=DRAFT</u>)

Declaration of competing interest

- 36 The authors declare no conflict of interest.
- 37

38 Abstract

39 Lack of floral resources is suspected to be one of the factors involved in flower-visiting insect declines. Because agricultural landscapes are often poor in flowers, it seems crucial to assess 40 weeds as floral resources to feed flower-visiting insects and to identify the factors that drive 41 42 floral productivity, defined as floral biomass produced by the weed community. We monitored floral presence, productivity and traits in 16 olive groves from September 2021 to June 2022. 43 The objectives were to understand to which extinct abiotic factors, among agricultural practices, 44 45 pedoclimate and weather, determine floral productivity and to analyse the relationships between 46 floral traits, floral presence and productivity. We found mowing frequency (2 to 3 per year on average) increased mean floral area and height, advanced flowering onset, and increased floral 47 functional diversity and flowering species richness, which in turn increased floral presence and 48 49 productivity.

50 Keywords

Floral productivity; floral resources; floral traits; woody agroecosystem; mowing

53 **1. Introduction**

Since nectar and pollen are the main food resources for pollinating insects (Roulston and 54 Goodell, 2011), the lack of floral resources is one of the major causes of decreasing pollinating 55 insect populations (Goulson et al., 2015; Potts et al., 2010; Scheper et al., 2014). In 56 agroecosystems, species-rich weed communities support populations of insect natural enemies 57 and pollinators (Aviron et al., 2023), thereby contributing to biodiversity conservation, 58 biological control and entomophilous pollination. Insect visitation depends on traits linked to 59 floral resources (nectar, pollen) or morphology (flower area height, number of flowers etc.), 60 driving the quality of plants as floral resources (Fornoff et al., 2017; Hatt et al., 2019; Hegland 61 & Totland, 2005; Rowe et al., 2020). Besides, weed communities with high taxonomic and 62 functional diversity enhance diversity across trophic levels (Lefcheck et al. 2015). High 63 functional diversity in weed communities should support more populous and diverse insect 64 65 communities by multiplying ecological niches for the first trophic level of consumers with various ecological requirements (Potts et al., 2010). However, intensive agricultural practices 66 in Europe since 1945 curtailed weed diversity and abundance (Andreasen et al., 1996; Baessler 67 & Klotz, 2006; Meyer et al., 2013), and hence floral resources in landscapes (Bretagnolle & 68 Gaba, 2015; Richner et al., 2015). 69

In woody agroecosystems, weeds are a biodiversity component contributing to interrow ground cover and can be managed in a biodiversity-friendly way by cover cropping or mowing, which maintain higher plant and insect richness and abundance than tillage or herbicide spraying (Carpio et al., 2019 ; Kratschmer et al., 2019 ; Kazakou et al., 2016). Lowintensity management such as moderate mowing (once or twice a year) maintain soil cover and insect-pollinated weeds throughout the year (Tarifa et al., 2021), especially when fewer flowers are available in surrounding semi-natural environments and insects need food resources(Rundlöf et al., 2014).

Few studies have evaluated the potential of weeds for providing floral resources to 78 79 insects in woody agroecosystems, by assessing their floral traits or their floral productivity, that we defined as floral biomass produced by the weed community, and even fewer have monitored 80 weed floral resources diachronically over the year. Weeds are unstable communities mostly 81 82 composed of annual species, and change considerably within one year, both taxonomically and functionally. Because floral traits vary significantly among weed species, floral resources in 83 agroecosystems are very diverse. Common weed species can be very attractive to insects, such 84 85 as Picris hieracioides L., Taraxacum sp or Echium vulgare L. (Balfour & Ratnieks, 2022; Hernández-Villa et al., 2020; Kuppler et al., 2023), unlike others such as *Chenopodium album* 86 L., Amaranthus spp. or Rumex spp., (Kuppler et al. 2023). In addition, the timing of flowering 87 is crucial for many insects, whose requirements peak at specific periods of the year depending 88 on their life cycle. Previous studies have shown that anthesis occurs earlier and lasts longer in 89 90 weeds (Bourgeois et al., 2019). However, the impacts of agricultural practices on the floral 91 traits and productivity of weeds are poorly known because weed studies have mostly focused on resource-use ecological strategies and effects on crops. 92

Floral traits are mostly studied as determinants of insect presence as they drive insect 93 visitation and richness at the community scale (Fornoff et al., 2017; Rowe et al., 2020). 94 However, their community-scale responses to environmental factors are rarely investigated 95 (Vojtko et al., 2020), and only in grasslands or semi-natural environments., A previous study 96 showed that floral functional diversity responds to soil characteristics in French grasslands 97 98 (Goulnik et al. 2021). Another recent work investigates the effects of water deficit on floral traits, which reduces flower size and number, and nectar volume (Kuppler & Kotowska, 2021). 99 Dry Mediterranean conditions select for mostly small or short-lived flowers (Teixido and 100

Valladares, 2014) so as to maintain a positive water balance at the flower scale (Roddy et al., 101 102 2023). However, weed floral traits response to the environment, pedoclimatic conditions or agricultural practices, are almost unknown. At the species level, weed floral traits are linked to 103 104 Grime's CSR strategies (Genty et al., 2023), suggesting that they could be sensitive to management and disturbance. One recent study showed that organic farming increases 105 functional richness and the number of red and zygomorphic flowers in weed communities 106 107 (Rotchés-Ribalta et al., 2023), but how other floral traits linked to insects respond to agricultural practices is not known. 108

Flower abundance, usually measured as the flower cover, is another factor of insect 109 110 visitation (Hegland and Boeke, 2006; Wray et al., 2014). However, which practices determine floral resources abundance, composition, and above all, dynamics, in agroecosystems is 111 scarcely studied. We suppose that low-disturbance practices should allow greater weed flower 112 production than intensive practices (Kratschmer et al., 2019). In addition, species richness, 113 especially of flowering species, should increase flower abundance and productivity. The 114 115 relationships between plant traits (Pontes et al., 2007) and productivity of vegetative biomass, as well as those between diversity and -productivity (Lehman and Tillman, 2000) are well 116 studied. They indicate that more diverse plant communities with specific values for vegetative 117 118 traits are also more productive, however, these relationships this remains largely unexplored for floral productivity. 119

In this study, we explored how agricultural practices, weather and pedoclimatic conditions affected weed communities and flowers over one agricultural year in extensive olive groves in southern France, focusing on optimising weed floral resources for insects. Our hypotheses were that species richness and functional structure of weed communities (1) are affected both by agricultural and pedoclimatic variables, in particular that low-disturbance inter-row management practices (e.g. mowing), water availability and soil fertility would

enhance species richness and floral trait diversity, and (2) have a positive effect on floral 126 productivity *via* their effects on traits and richness that could drive temporal niche partitioning. 127 Weeds flowering earlier can be visited by different insects than those flowering later, thus 128 129 decreasing competition to attract pollinators and improving flower production. Greater diversity in morphological floral traits in the community could increase flower-visiting insect richness 130 because different floral morphologies attract different insects. More flowers per plant on 131 132 average and longer mean flowering duration should increase floral productivity over the entire year by extending the period during which flowers are present. 133

134 2. Material and methods

135 2.1. Sampled fields

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Figure 1. A. Locations of the sampled olive groves (Google©, 2022) in the Mediterranean
part of the Occitanie region, France. B. One example of surveyed grove in Spring 2022.

We surveyed 16 olive groves in the hinterland of Montpellier, southern France, in a
Mediterranean climatic area (Figure 1). Agricultural practices were assessed by interviewing
farmers in 2021 and 2022, focusing on inter-row management (Genty et al., 2023). Mowing

was the only management practice used to control weeds and was described using the mean
number of mowing interventions per year (1-5)(('mowing'). We also recorded the yearly
amount of water used for irrigation ('irrig')(0-190 mm) and inorganic and organic nitrogen (N)
applied for fertilisation and amendments (0-641 kg of N/ha) ('N fertilization"),.

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2.2. Pedoclimatic conditions

We used the data from six weather stations of the national meteorological network (Météo 148 149 France), located 0.5-19.7 km from the 16 surveyed olive groves, to describe the long-term climatic trends (1980-2021). We calculated six climatic variables describing seasonal trends 150 151 using the 'biovars' function from the R package dismo (Hijmans et al., 2017): mean annual temperature (15.3±0.33°C, mean±SD), annual rainfall (704±124mm), rainfall in the driest 152 month (6.06±1.84mm), maximum temperature of the warmest month (36.8±1.1°C), annual 153 154 temperature range (41.8±15.8°C) and rainfall coefficient of variation (89.6±2.25mm). In addition, we recorded rainfalls ('Rainfalls_{sampl}') and mean temperature ('Mean Temp_{sampl}') 155 between successive sampling dates to assess short-term weather effects at the monthly scale. 156 We also calculated the rainfall over the agricultural year ('Rainfallsvear') and the annual 157 minimum temperature ('Temp min_{year}') to describe weather effects at the yearly scale (Table 158 S5). Soil pH (NF ISO10390), nitrogen content, total organic matter content (NF ISO 14235), 159 cation-exchange capacity (CEC) and texture (NF X 31-107 method) were determined for each 160 olive grove on a 20-cm-deep composite soil sample. More informations on the soil analyses can 161 162 be found in Genty et al. (2022).

163 **2.3. Botanical survey of flower cover**

Five permanent quadrats of 0.25 m^2 were randomly placed in the inter-rows of each olive grove (n = 80 quadrats), keeping a minimum distance of two metres from the field edge. We sampled each quadrat seven times over the entire agricultural year 2021-2022 (n = 560 surveys: 17-09167 2021; 14-10-2021; 27-01-2022; 01-03-2022; 04-04-2022; 04-05-2022; 06-06-2022). On each 168 date and for each quadrat we recorded the latest mowing date ('last mowing') and visually 169 recorded the phenological stage and flower cover per species as the total percentage of the 170 ground covered by open flowers and flower buds in each quadrat. We also recorded the number 171 of species at the flowering stage ('floral richness') in each quadrat, and the total species richness 172 of each field based on sampling from Genty et al., 2023. Recorded data concerned insect-173 pollinated species exclusively.

174 **2.4. Indicators of floral productivity at the year scale**

175 We used a loess regression to model flower cover dynamics over the year (Cleveland & Devlin, 1988) for each quadrat based on the seven samplings. We extracted four indicators of floral 176 productivity (Figures 2 and 3): (1) annual flower cover, calculated as the normalised integral of 177 178 the regression curve ('annual flower cover'); (2) flower cover maximum value in % of surface ('max flower cover'); (3) date of the flower cover maximum ('max flower cover date'), 179 expressed as the number of days since the beginning of the sampling (17th of September 2021); 180 and (4) number of days during which the flower cover reached or exceeded 80% of its flower 181 cover maximum, representing the period of abundant flower presence in the field ('flower cover 182 peak duration'). For flower cover peak duration, we excluded nine quadrats in which 80% of 183 the max flower cover was under 1% (Table S1). The four indicators were measured at the year 184 scale (n = 80) by pooling the data of the seven surveys, considering each quadrat survey as one 185 186 community composed of all the sampled species proportionally. We recorded the species richness of flowering weeds in each community over the full season. 187



Figure 2. Dynamics of flower cover throughout the year, presenting the four floral
productivity indicators: A. Max flower cover (flower cover maximum value in %), B. Max
flower cover date (number of days since the start of the sampling, on 17-09-2021), C. Annual
flower cover (% calculated as the normalised integral of the regression curve), and D. Flower
cover peak duration (number of days with flower cover ≥ 80% of flower cover maximum).



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195

197 Figure 3. Distribution of floral richness, annual flower cover, max flower cover, max flower
198 cover date and flower cover peak duration among weed communities (n=80).

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200 2.5. Trait measurements and functional indices at the community level

Seven floral traits linked to insect attraction (Table S2) were measured for 17 common weed species in olive grove (Table S3) in a greenhouse experiment during the spring and summer of 202 (Genty et al., 2023b): pollen volume ('pollen'), nectar sugar content ('nectar'), number of floral units per plant ('floral unit number'), reproductive height ('height'), flower area ('area'),



205 flowering duration ('duration') and flowering onset ('onset').



Figure 4. Distribution of community weighted means and variances of floral traits: pollen
 volume, nectar sugar content, total number of floral units, reproductive height, flower area,
 flowering duration and onset among weed communities (n=40).

We calculated the floral community-weighted mean and variance of each floral trait in 211 all the communities (n = 40) composed of at least 60% of these species, at the year scale (Table 212 S4), using the 'dbFD' function of the FD package. Community weighted mean is the average 213 214 floral trait value of each species at the flowering stage weighted by its relative flower cover (Garnier et al., 2004). Community weighted variance quantifies the variability of each floral 215 trait value around the average value within the floral community (Sonnier et al., 2010) (Figure 216 217 4). Because floral traits are phylogenetically conserved (Vojtko et al., 2022), we pooled trait values at the genus level for three unstudied abundant species: Geranium molle L., Medicago 218 polymorpha L. and Medicago rigidula (L.) All. G. molle belongs to the same subgenus as 219 220 Geranium rotundifolium L. and Geranium dissectum L. (Aedo et al., 1998), and M. polymorpha and M. rigidula to that of Medicago minima (L.) L. and Medicago arabica (L.) Hudson (Steele 221 et al., 2010). 222

223 **2.6. Data analysis**

All statistical analyses were run using R version 4.3.1 (R Core Team, 2022), and in particular
the packages *lme4* (Bates et al., 2015), *vegan* (Oksanen et al., 2007), *FD* (Villéger et al., 2008), *FactoMineR* (Lê et al., 2008), *MuMIn* (Barton, 2009), *car* (Fox et al., 2012) and *piecewiseSEM*(Lefcheck, 2016).

We ran Kruskal-Wallis' tests and pairwise Wilcoxon's tests as post-hoc analyses to test whether flowering species richness and flower cover differed between months and determine the periods of flower presence.

To summarise soil and climatic characteristics of the study sites we ran a PCA with all the pedoclimatic variables. The coordinates of each individual on the first two components were extracted and used as explanatory variables (pedoclim1 and pedoclim2).

To test whether agricultural practices and weather affected monthly flowering species 234 235 richness and flower cover, we ran linear mixed models with 'last mowing', 'Rainfalls_{sampl}' and 'Mean Temp_{sampl}' as fixed effects and 'month' and 'field' as random effects. To test whether 236 237 they influenced annual flowering species richness, floral productivity indicators, floral community weighted means and variances, we ran linear mixed models with 'pedoclim1', 238 'pedoclim2', 'mowing', 'irrig', 'N fertilization', 'Rainfallsyear' and 'Temp minyear' as fixed 239 effects, and 'field' as random effect. Before model selection and evaluation, correlation of fixed 240 effects was tested using variance inflation (VIF). VIF values of 5 or higher are interpreted as 241 revealing multicollinearity issues (Hair, 2009). We performed model stepwise comparisons 242 comparing full, reduced and 'null' models built by combining all fixed effects, several fixed 243 effects or only random effects. We selected the model with the lowest second-order Akaike 244 Information Criterion value (AICc) corrected for small sample sizes (Burnham & Anderson, 245 246 2004). Two models were considered different if Δ AICc > 2 (Burnham & Anderson, 2004). When more than one model had the lowest AICc we selected the most parsimonious, with the 247 248 lowest number of fixed effects. We used likelihood ratio tests to evaluate the selected models, and calculated the marginal and conditional R² (Nakagawa & Schielzeth, 2013). 249

The relation between floral traits and indicators of floral productivity was tested with a PCA ('community structure' PCA) with the community weighted means of the seven floral traits and flowering species richness, followed by a hierarchical ascendant classification to create three clusters based on the first two components. To test whether the four indicators of floral productivity differed among clusters, we ran Kruskal-Wallis' and pairwise Wilcoxon's tests as *post hoc* analyses.

256 **3. Results**

3.1. Effects of pedoclimate, weather and agricultural practices on flowering species richness, floral productivity and floral traits

'Pedoclimatic' PCA explained 62% of the total variance of pedoclimatic variables (Table S5). 259 260 The coordinates of each field on the first two components were used as composite explanatory variables. The first component ('pedoclim1') explained 38% of the total variance and was 261 positively linked to soil clay content (0.79), cation-exchange capacity (0.79), mean annual 262 263 temperature (0.78) and soil nitrogen content (0.66), and negatively to annual temperature range (-0.85), soil sand content (-0.73) and maximum temperature of the warmest month (-0.68). The 264 second component ('pedoclim2') explained 24% of the total variance and was positively linked 265 to rainfall in the driest month (0.88) and annual rainfall (0.85), and negatively to rainfall 266 coefficient of variation (-0.76). 267

Flower cover (Figure 5A) and species richness of flowering weeds ('floral richness') (Figure 5B) were significantly higher in April and May than in the other months. The five most abundant species in terms of flower cover at the year scale were *Medicago minima* L., *Crepis sancta* L., *Arenaria serpyllifolia* L., *Sherardia arvensis* L. and *Medicago arabica* L. (Table S6).

At the month scale, flower cover was positively correlated with time since the last mowing and floral richness with rainfall (Table 1). At the year scale, floral richness was positively affected by pedoclim2 and by the mean number of mowing interventions per year, while max flower cover date was the only indicator of floral productivity impacted by abiotic variables: it was postponed by N fertliziation and advanced by pedoclim2. At the year scale mowing, N fertilization, irrigation, Pedoclim1 and 2, and Temp Min_{year} affected community weighted means and variances of all floral traits (see detailed results in Table 2).



280 *Figure 5. Flower cover (A), and number of flowering species (B) in each quadrat on each*

visit (%). Letters represent the results of pairwise Wilcoxon's tests.

282

283 Table 1. Individual effect of pedoclimatic characteristics and agricultural practices on floral

richness, indicators of flower productivity and flower cover at a monthly and yearly scale.

Field and month are random effects for the models at the month scale. Field is a random

effect for models at the year scale. Marginal R2 (R2m) represents the proportion of variance

Significance stars are from the type II ANOVA's Chi².

- explained by fixed effects in the model. Conditional R2 (R2c) includes random effects.
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Temporal scale	Response variable	Explanatory variable	Estimate	R2m	R2c
Month	Flower cover	last mowing	0.005*	0.01	0.37
	Floral richness	Rainfalls _{sampl}	-0.005*	0.04	0.49
Year	Floral richness	pedoclim2 mowing	0.730* 1.021*	0.23	0.56
	Annual flower cover	ns	-	-	-
	Max flower cover	ns	-	-	-
	Max flower cover date	pedoclim2 N fertilization	-3.754* 0.009-	0.13	0.20
	Flower cover peak duration	ns	-	-	-

*Notes: ns, not significant; - p <0.1, * p <0.05; ** p <0.01; *** p <0.001.*

Last mowing : number of days since the last mowing event, Rainfalls_{sampl} : quantity of rainfalls between two samplings, pedoclim2 : second axis of 'pedoclimatic' PCA, mowing : mean number of mowing events per year, N fertilization : mean N dose applied per year, irrig : mean quantity of irrigation per year, Temp min_{year} : mean minimal temperature during the sampling period, Rainfalls year : total quantity of rainfalls during the sampling period

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291 *Table 2. Individual effect of pedoclimatic characteristics and agricultural practices on*

community weighted means (CWM) and variances (CWV) of floral traits at the year scale

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with field as random effect.

Functional indicator	Trait (response variable)	Explanatory variable	Estimate	R2m	R2c
	Area	mowing	0.306***	0.27	0.27
	Pollen	pedoclim2	0.106*	0.12	0.14
	Nectar	irrig	0.014**	0.32	0.64
	Height	mowing	3.117*	0.12	0.17
	Floral units number	N fertilization	0.884***	0.6	
CWM		Temp min _{year}	2.064** 91.063**	0.6	0.6
	Duration	N fertilization irrig	-0.284** 0.794*	0.27	0.27
	Onset	N fertilization irrig Temp	-0.648*** 1.483*** -49.732**	0.66	0.68

		mowing			
	Area	mowing N fertilization	72.360*** -0.280*	0.39	0.39
	Pollen	Rainfalls _{year}	1.628***	0.26	0.26
	Nectar	mowing	75.102*	0.14	0.30
CWV	Height	-	ns	ns	ns
	Floral units number	pedoclim2	3 490 184**	0.28	0.43
	Duration	-	ns	ns	ns
	Onset	pedoclim1 irrig mowing Temp min _{year}	-736 813*** -29 414** 1 374 079*** 2 894 065***	0.44	0.44

min_{year} -44.292** mowing

*Notes: ns, not significant; - p <0.1, * p <0.05; ** p <0.01; *** p <0.001.*

Last mowing : number of days since the last mowing event, Rainfalls_{sampl} : quantity of rainfalls between two samplings, pedoclim2 : second axis of 'pedoclimatic' PCA, mowing : mean number of mowing events per year, N fertilization : mean N dose applied per year, irrig : mean quantity of irrigation per year, Temp min_{year} : mean minimal temperature during the sampling period, Rainfalls_{year}: total quantity of rainfalls during the sampling period

3.2. Relationships between floral productivity, richness and traits

Annual flower cover, max flower cover and flower cover peak duration positively correlated with floral richness, but not with total species richness. Only max flower cover date was uncorrelated with floral richness (Table 3).

299 Table 3. Individual effects of floral richness on indicators of flower productivity with field as

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random effect.
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Indicator (response variable)	Explanatory variable	Estimate	R2m	R2c
Annual flower cover	Floral richness	22.56***	0.26	0.53
Max flower cover	Floral richness	0.751***	0.15	0.53
Max flower cover date	ns	-	-	-
Flower cover peak duration	Floral richness	1.158**	0.10	0.27

*Notes: ns, not significant; - p <0.1, * p <0.05; ** p <0.01; *** p <0.001.*

302

Mean and variances of floral traits were related to max flower cover, max flower cover date and flower cover peak duration: the composition of communities, affected both functional structure and flower productivity indicators, demonstrating that quality, quantity and temporality of floral resources are strongly linked (see details in Table 4).

The 'community structure' PCA explained 64.2% of the variability (Figure 6A). The 307 first component (35.1% of explained variability) was positively correlated with the community 308 weighted means of floral height (0.91), area (0.73), duration (0.71), pollen (0.67) and floral 309 richness (0.62); high values on this component indicate that the species invest in more costly 310 flowers while lower values indicate cheaper flowers (Roddy et al., 2021). The second 311 component (29.1% of explained variability) was positively correlated with the community 312 weighted mean of floral units number (0.84) and floral specific richness (0.56), and negatively 313 with the community weighted means of flowering onset (-0.70) and duration (-0.57). The 314 ascending hierarchical classification (Figure 6B) identified three clusters: cluster 1 'cheap, few 315 316 and late-flowering flowers', composed of 23 communities and linked to low scores on both components, cluster 2 'cheap, numerous and early-flowering flowers' (13 communities) linked 317 to low scores on the first component and high scores on the second, and cluster 3 'costly 318 319 flowers' (4 communities) linked to high scores on the first component. 'Few and late-flowering 320 flowers' communities were more often mown (1,5 vs 2,5) and irrigated than 'numerous and 321 early-flowering flowers' communities (Figure 7A), and their flower cover peak duration was 6 days longer (Figure 7B). 322

Table 4. Individual effects of community weighted means (CWM) and variances (CWV) of

floral traits on indicators of flower productivity with field as random effect.

325 326

> Indicator Functional (response Trait Estimate R2m R2c indicator variable) Annual Nectar 0.29 0.68 CWM 50.992** flower cover Max flower CWM Nectar 2.599*** 0.27 0.76 cover Max flower 5* Area 0.26 0.34 CWM cover date Nectar -3.481** -0.022** Onset Flower cover CWM 0.32 0.67 peak duration Nectar 2.784** Annual CWV ns ns ns flower cover Max flower 1.025* Nectar CWV 0.16 0.52 cover Duration -0.535** Max flower CWV ns ns ns cover date 1.657** Height Flower cover CWV 0.20 0.63 peak duration Area -6.283*

> > *Notes: ns, not significant; - p <0.1, * p <0.05; ** p <0.01; *** p <0.001.*



Figure 6. A. First two components of the 'community structure' PCA. The individuals are the 329 40 quadrats at the year scale in which at least 60% of the community was composed of 330 species with documented floral traits. B. The three clusters created with the hierarchical 331 ascending classification. 332 333 334 335 Flower cover peak duration (days) b ab а b ab Α. а *** ** 5 Mean number of mowing interventions per year 40 4 30 20 10 1-Cluster 1 Cluster 2 Cluster 3 Cluster 1 Cluster 2 Cluster 3 Floral traits clusters Floral traits clusters



337 according to the floral traits clusters. Letters reflect the results of pairwise Wilcoxon's tests.

4. Discussion

4.1. Weed floral traits and richness are affected by pedoclimate and agricultural practices

342 Our results indicate that agricultural practices affect the floral functional structure of weed 343 communities in Mediterranean olive groves. More mowing interventions (min: 0, max: 5 in 344 the network) increased floral richness (Table 1), functional heterogeneity (i.e. wider community weighted variances) of floral area, nectar sugar content and flowering onset, postponed mean 345 flowering onset, and resulted in communities with larger and taller flowers (Table 2), 346 supposedly more attractive to insects (Lundin et al., 2019; Rowe et al., 2020). The diversifying 347 effect can be explained by the positive effect of low-to-intermediate disturbance of mowing on 348 species diversity and trait variance in the community, as predicted by the intermediate 349 disturbance hypothesis (Wilkinson et al., 1999). The number of mowing interventions ranged 350 351 from 1 to 5 per year, with a mean of 2.19, which is considered fairly low but disturbing enough to curb the dominance of the most competitive species. However, this relationship may not hold 352 when mowing is more frequent. 353

In contrast, irrigation and fertilisation had a homogenising effect, reducing community 354 weighted variances of floral area and flowering onset (Table 2), perhaps because high levels of 355 resources benefited the most competitive species. For example, flowering onset was earlier in 356 more frequently mown, fertilised but unirrigated olive groves, which is logical because more 357 disturbed communities are traditionally composed of species flowering earlier (Fried et al., 358 359 2012). Higher levels of resources (N fertilization, irrigation) also selected for species producing more floral units that flower for a longer period, which is allowed by the available resources, 360 as showed in vinetards by Guerra et al. (2021). Managing the regularity of mowing seems 361

efficient to regulate phenology so as to provide more diversified and abundant floral resourcesfor flower-visiting insects (Yvoz et al., 2021).

Even though agricultural practices are considered the main driver of trait variability in 364 365 weed communities at the regional scale (Bourgeois et al., 2021), pedoclimatic and weather variables also matter, especially for trait variance (Poinas et al., 2023). In our study, the 366 homogenising effect of greater soil fertility, e.g. higher levels of organic matter and clay 367 368 contents (pedoclim1), may be due to selection of the most competitive species (Fried et al., 2022) that develop earlier and exclude later species by pre-empting light resources (Grime, 369 1974). Higher temperatures allowed some cold-tolerant and sensitive species to survive, thus 370 371 diversifying functional structure, but also decreased community weighted mean of flowering onset, advantaging competitive species that flower early. Rainfall also had a diversifying effect 372 leading to greater FCWVs of total floral unit number and pollen: water deficit may force weeds 373 to allocate less resources to flowers or pollen production (Kuppler & Kotowska, 2021). As 374 found by Bourgeois et al. (2021) for weeds in annual agroecosystems, pedoclimate affected the 375 376 variance more than the mean of floral traits.

4.2. Floral productivity is linked to community floral richness and traits

Not all floral traits were linked to floral productivity, indicating that communities with any floral strategy could potentially provide floral resources. However four floral traits were found to be positively correlated with floral productivity: mean nectar sugar content (Table 4), number of flowers, onset of flowering (Figures 5 and 6) and floral richness (Table 3), the last increasing all the indicators of floral productivity.

Weed richness enhanced floral productivity and thereby provided a diversity of food resources for insects (Balfour & Ratnieks, 2022). The most abundant species, e.g. *M. minima* and *S. arvensis*, had ruderal floral strategies and produced many small flowers (Genty et al.,

2023b) excluded by wild bees (Kuppler et al., 2023) but preferentially visited by other important 386 387 pollinators such as Diptera and Coleoptera (Lanuza et al., 2023). However, the great floral richness found in the olive groves (99 flowering species) enhanced their potential for hosting 388 plants visited by all types of pollinator, among which E. vulgare and P. hieracioides, favoured 389 by wild bees (Kuppler et al., 2023). Regarding year-round flower presence, which is important 390 for flower-visiting insects, we found that floral resources in olive groves peaked in mid-April 391 392 overall, with local variations from March to June. This means that flowers were present early in the season, supplying food at a critical time for insects (Pelletier and MacNeil, 2003), 393 however very few resources were available late in the season, which is another critical period 394 395 for foraging.

4.3. Mowing is a promising practice for enhancing floral productivity

397 Since floral richness, mean traits and trait variances were directly affected by agricultural practices (Tables 1 and 2), and were linked to floral resources productivity, we conclude that 398 agricultural practices affect floral productivity in olive groves. Indeed, the most regularly mown 399 400 communities were composed of species flowering earlier and with more flowers per individual produced flowers for a longer period (Fig. 6, 7). The intermediate level of disturbance caused 401 by two or three mowing interventions per year increased weed floral richness and trait diversity, 402 as in grasslands (Piseddu et al., 2021). This finding suggests that the impact of agricultural 403 practices on floral richness can rival that of environmental drivers (Pittarello et al., 2020). This 404 405 may be due to the greater instability of weed communities compared with grasslands: because weeds are mostly annual species, they are more responsive to intra-annual events like 406 management practices than communities of perennial species. 407

Mowing two to three times a year appears to be a beneficial practice for weed species richness and related ecosystem services in woody agroecosystems (Winter et al., 2020). In our work, we found that regular mowing frequency favors higher floral productivity over the year in olive groves. We conclude as other studies for different services (Bopp et al., 2022b;
Kavvadias and Koubouris, 2019), that mowing is a biodiversity-friendly weed management
practice able to both deliverecosystem services and ensure satisfactory yield in Mediterranean
woody agroecosystems (Guerra et al., 2022).

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