



A short history of gardens and parks

1. How it began....

The history of gardens began as early as 12,000 years ago with the nomads, who began no longer to move from place to place, but to establish permanent places of settlement and to cultivate places (gardens) for nourishment. The beginning of the first gardens was about 600 BC in the Persian area of ancient Mesopotamia. People learned to direct water from springs into canals to irrigate dry land. Thus, dry land became the first green oases where plants could be grown. Later, papyrus, wall paintings, and sculptures record the first gardens. To protect the landscape from wild animals, thieves, sandstorms and hot winds, people built walls and fences around the green places. In the course of time more and more gardens were created according to the wishes of the people. Gardens stand for a green paradise until today. People began to live according to the quote from the Bible. "So the Lord God took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it,". In Islam, according to the Koran, the garden is a paradise of unimaginable size. Gardens were eventually used for tombs and places of mourning. So gardens have proven useful to everyone in different ways. Parks are basically huge gardens that are open to the public.

2. Medieval times

The social, economic, political and spiritual influences of the Middle Ages are also reflected in garden design. At the beginning of the Middle Ages it can be assumed that the garden mainly had its function as cropland. Along with the monastery gardens, castle gardens are among the oldest man-made gardens with cultivation purpose. The castles were densely surrounded and left little room for horticulture. They acted as a source of food in the event of an enemy siege. Celery, lettuce, fennel and garlic were grown. Where it was allowed, herbs were also grown and trees planted outside the walls. The owners soon recognized the recreational value of a garden and made the green areas the focus of courtly life. Wellknown landscape gardeners created true masterpieces of horticulture. The garden is located within the complex, protected from prying eyes. In the summer months, it becomes the place where all social and private life takes place. Play, relaxation and secret love.



Figure 1 Garden of Castle Alsbach at Bergstraße in Hesse, Pixabay License, Free for commercial use

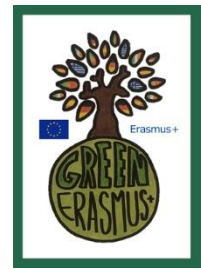


Figure 2 Garden of the castle of Aschaffenburg

Apothecary gardens were built and used in monasteries, but they are still in use, to supply their monasteries with different kinds of medical herbs. Medical and venomous plants like lavender, sage, Giant Hog Weed, that were used to produce medicine, as well as plants to season dishes like garlic, dill and basil were planted and bred there. In the 16th century pharmacies also used them to help sick people to get better and to study the different types and kinds of plants. A very famous gardener in a monastery garden was Gregor Mendel, the founder of genetic science.



Figure 3 The monastery garden in Seligenstadt hosts lots of ancient types of fruit trees. Source: <https://pxhere.com/de/photo/1384153>, CCO



3. Baroque style gardens

In the seventeenth century, the Gardens become larger and larger. In the Baroque era, gardens and parks of castles were huge. The splendor and symmetry of the buildings are also reflected in the gardens. They are symmetrical and look as if they were constructed with a compass and ruler. This is a sign that the man-made order is above nature.

In the center of the garden there is usually a castle, in front of which there is a courtyard of honor, where the king used to receive guests. On the front side of the garden is the parterre. This is an area with low planting, further back is the Boskett area, there are high hedges and sculptures. The Boskett area is usually represented like different rooms, because of the high hedges.

The gardens date back to the Italian parks. They always changed from time to time. Events of that time and relevant historical figures are depicted in magnificent fountains and groups of figures.

- Baroque gardens were constructed with a ruler and compasses, which suggests that gardens in the Baroque style are very symmetrical.
- The castle of a garden is usually located in the center and not on the edge.
- The Baroque garden is a further development and increase of the previous Renaissance garden (goes back to Italian gardens).
- The aim was to create the perfection of the garden.
- The Baroque garden reflects the royal absolutism.
- The most important garden architect of the Baroque period was André Le Nôtre. The famous palace garden of Versailles was planned by him.



Figure 4 André Le Nôtre (Wikipedia, public domain)



Figure 5 Castle Het Loo (Netherlands)

Figure 6 Castle Hot Loo (Netherlands)



Figure 7 A Rokoko style garden – the Palacio Nacional de Queluz close to Lisbon

Figure 8 The park of Castle Sanssoucci in Potsdam



4. English landscape parks

The so-called "English Gardens" got their name because they were grown in the natural style of an English landscape. They developed in England during the 18th century and were originally intended as a revolt against the abstract Baroque gardens. These geometrically designed Baroque gardens included unnaturally shaped trees, shrubs and bushes, as well as sculptures. Its successor, the English garden, was intended to produce the opposite. A landscape created by man, which should appear as if it had been created by nature.

A fitting example would be the English Garden in Munich, which is one of the largest gardens in the world (3.75 square kilometres). It was one of the first parks to be open to the public and was created at the request of the Elector Karl Theodor (1724-1799). The gardens he had cultivated in Munich were intended as a useful occupation for soldiers in a time of peace and were also to be open to the general public.

The man most associated with the then new type of gardening is known as William Kent (1686-1748). He began his life with art and architecture, but later devoted himself to his career.



Figure 9 A monopteros (a small temple like building on a hill) is a common monument inside an English landscape garden - English garden in Munich (picture: Michael Siebert auf Pixabay)



Figure 10 A world heritage site - the Gardens of Dessau-Wörlitz



Figure 11 William Kent (Wikipedia, public domain)

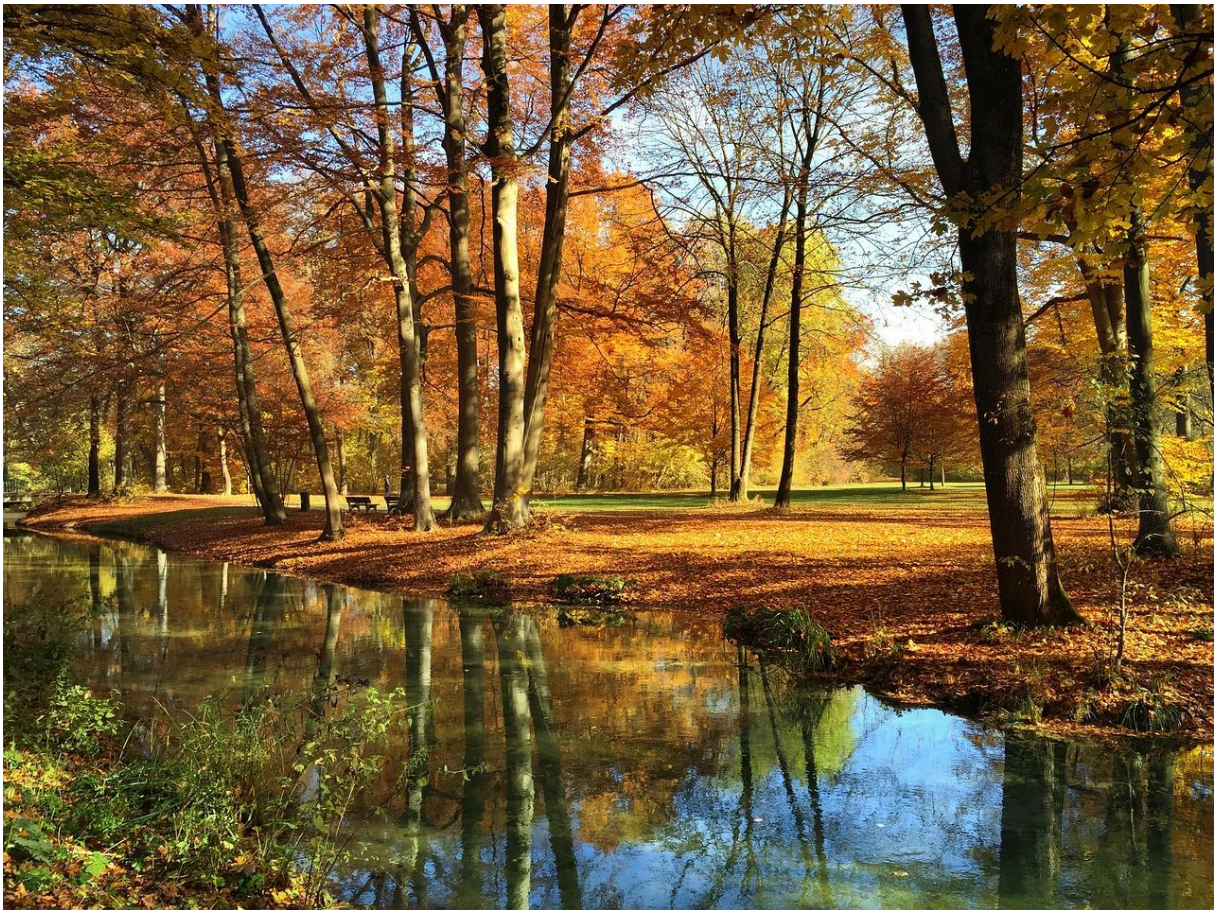


Figure 12 English garden in Munich - fake natural landscapes (picture:Michael Siebert auf Pixabay)



5. Modern times

Since the late 18th century, more and more public green spaces have been created. Until then, parks and gardens were only privately accessible and served the recreation and representation of the nobility and upper classes. Palace gardens were opened up and royal hunting grounds close to the city, such as the Tiergarten in Berlin or Hyde Park in London, were transformed into landscape gardens.

Some gardens were also created directly for the population in this context. Designations such as Volkspark (People's park) or Bürgerpark (Citizen's park) make this clear. The goal was to educate people and promote positive character traits by walking in an artfully composed natural setting. In this way, access to nature was made possible for the population in the growing cities. Typical of such parks are extensive grassy areas, wooded sections, monuments, pavilions and cafes. In some cases, entertainment facilities are also present - the Prater in Vienna or the Tivoli in Copenhagen are examples. Often such parks are created on land of little value or in floodplains along rivers, and today often on former industrial sites. Likewise, parades grounds near cities or in inner cities are rededicated - examples here are the Tivoli in Copenhagen or the English Garden in Munich.

In peacetime after the Congress of Vienna and as a result of new military technology, the historic city fortifications become obsolete. The fortifications are removed and replaced by spacious ring roads, magnificent boulevards and parks close to the city. Often, as in Frankfurt, the course of the bulwarks can still be clearly seen. To this day in Frankfurt, this area may only be built on to a very limited extent. These ring-shaped green spaces are easily recognizable from the air. The old town centers located within are generally without public green spaces. The dense development allows at most small private backyard gardens.



Figure 13 Tivoli gardens in Copenhgaen (Picture: Charlie, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tivoli_Gardens_pagoda.jpg, CC BY 2.0)



With the end of the nineteenth century, romantic historicism becomes dominant. Park design and architecture of buildings in parks make use of the fashions of foreign countries and past times. Typical of this period are artificial castle ruins, which are built as a design element already in ruins.

Particularly exotic were the facilities in zoological and botanical gardens that often took up architecture from the origin of the plants and animals shown. With middle of the nineteenth century many larger cities see the foundations of zoos. In addition to an educational idea, the recreational value is always of great importance in these parks. Zoo and Palmengarten (a botanical garden) in Frankfurt have very large representative buildings (society houses) for balls and concert events. The zoo and Palmengarten also each house a theater. Ponds with rowing boats (as in Schönbusch Park in Aschaffenburg or the Palmengarten in Frankfurt), cafés and restaurants, playgrounds and concert shells complete the leisure facilities. Even sports facilities can be found in such parks. The botanical garden in Frankfurt (Palmengarten) at times had its own tennis courts and even a race cycling track on its grounds.

In addition to the recreational function, another aspect of green spaces is coming to the fore in times of global warming. Today, the shading, evaporation, filtering effect and cold air corridors provided by parks are of great importance for the quality of life in cities.