
History of Gardening

Lecture 5

Renaissance Gardens 1350–1650

The political landscape of Italy in the fourteenth century was very different from that of today. The Medici created country retreats on the wooded hills around Florence, for their own use and so that fashionable society might call to admire the family art collection and garden sculpture (Figure 1) . The association of Renaissance gardens with art, scholarship, health and nature was a key factor in their development. Medieval gardens had been ladies' work and monks' work, with individual plants cherished for their medicinal and symbolic values. Renaissance gardens became works of art, scholarship and male pride, integrating architecture, landscape and society.

A typical Renaissance garden in the closing years of the fifteenth century had:

- clipped hedges
- a rectangular shape
- a geometrical relationship with the house to which it belonged.



Figure 1: The Medici villa at Fiesole looks outward with the Renaissance

Italian Renaissance Garden

The characteristics of Bramante's design were (Figure 2):

- a dominant central axis
- full integration of garden and architecture
- terraces linked by great flights of steps
- a garden theatre
- the use of classical (pagan) statuary
- niches for fountains (they had been central elements on medieval lawns).

Figure 2: Plan of the Vatican, showing Bramante's design for the Belvedere Garden Regular gardens of France.



Examples of integrated architecture and landscape can be seen at Villa Castello and Villa Lante (Figure 3). At the Villa Lante, instead of one large palace, two small palaces were built, which had the character of garden pavilions (Figure 4).



Figure 3: The Medici villa at Castello is aligned with the garden, though the axis does not point to a significant feature of the building.



Figure 4: The Villa Lante demonstrates a perfect integration of architecture and landscape on a central axis.

Most Renaissance garden designers followed Bramante in their dramatic use of geometrically integrated terraces, steps, water, and sculpture. The study of perspective and optics nurtured the taste for vistas. Plant collections for scientific and medical purposes were geometrically planned, as in the Orto Botanico (Botanical Garden) in Padua (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Padua's Botanical Garden had scientific objectives and an intricate geometrical plan based on circles within squares within circles.

French Renaissance Gardens

The Renaissance and the Baroque in France cover the period from the second half of the 15th century to beginning of the 18th century. The gardens of this time are very similar to the ones of Italy. In the development of landscape design, the major value belonged to the period which is known in history as classicism.

Basic lines of a classicism park:

- 1) Presence of large spaces and disclosing of distant views;
- 2) Disposition on a flat relief;
- 3) Symmetry of a composition in relation to the main axis;
- 4) Individuality of a separate tree is lost in an array;
- 5) Use of topiary.;
- 6) Application of heavy constructions;
- 7) Use of ponds which are created by analogy with «water tables»;
- 8) Use of parterre embroideries or a «carved» lawn including rare natural flower gardens;
- 9) Moderation in application of sculpture;
- 10) A park alley consisting of 2 or 4 rows of trees served as the main decoration. It disposed distant views of surroundings (Figure 6,7).



Figure 6: Gardens of Versailles



Figure 7: Vaux-le-Vicomte castle garden

Landscape Gardening Art of England

Landscape gardening art in England was formed under the influence of European styles. First architectural gardens were arranged in the 16th century in Italian style, later the English gardens began to be created similar to Versailles. Thus, formation of English landscape art was very strongly affected by French masters.

For landscape gardening art of England of the first half of the 18th century the following features and methods are characteristic (Figure 8).:

1. Following old traditions like trees and bushes pruning; walls, arches made of greenery.
2. The method of green square(yard) was widely used.
3. Ponds were placed below the surrounding plane and quite often were surrounded by clipped front gardens. Occasionally these ponds reached large sizes and were decorated with fountains.
4. Creation of comfortable resting-places, enclosed by the clipped arbours or walls.



Figure 8: Hampton Court Palace

American Garden

Regarding American gardens, it come in parallel with settlement of various races of people with heterogeneous natural landscapes ideas, it was applied since 1600-1700. Then after many changes over the past centuries took place. Since the middle of 1800 onwards, in addition to planting edible plants and trees, one confined ornamental plants and trees also to display in such gardens. Using tools for pest control were applied for the first time during this period also improved the plantation.

The gardens design progressed to form kitchen gardens, then after the focus of garden designers changed from the utilitarian to their ornamental side, the gardening in USA passed to inspiration of the Italian gardens, with great beauty were established (Fig. 9). Then after the establishment of public gardens began and gardens such as the Missouri Garden, Ellerton and McBride Gardens, Fort Worth Gardens, Canafa Gardens and San Francisco Gardens were forwarded to public also botanical surveys in various parts were performed.

In addition to fruit trees and edible plants, native American plants were also planted, such as elm trees, hemlocks, pines, beech, sycamores and oaks, and even plants such as chrysanthemum and hosta were also used.



Fig. 9. Early American garden design