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Beauties of Nature: Flower and Landscape Gardening in Europe, 1700-1850

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**Beauties of Nature:
Flower and Landscape Gardening in Europe,
1700-1850**



July 6 - September 11, 2011

The Audubon Room
University of Michigan Library
Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library North, Gallery Room 100
Hosted by the Special Collections Library

This document contains the text of all of the labels in the exhibit.

Introduction

Welcome to this exhibit. What better thing to have on the mind than flower gardening and landscaping in mid-summer? This exhibit traces changes in taste from valuing grandiose formality to emulating nature, and changes in the study of botany from simple observation to a modern science. But it also traces changes in who the people were who practiced flower gardening and landscaping, from solely upper class men to a much wider array of both men and women.

This checklist contains all the text of the labels in this exhibit so that you can easily read along as you view the exhibit, or use it as a reference later. The books in this exhibit are all part of the collection of the University of Michigan Library and are housed in the Special Collections Library. Our collections and libraries are open to all.

Peggy Daub, Curator

Matthias Diesel, d. 1752.

Erlustierende Augenweide in Vorstellung: Herrlicher Garten und Lustgebäude.
[Joyful Feast for the Eyes in the Design of Noble Gardens and Pleasure Pavilions.]
Augsburg: Jeremias Wolff, ca. 1717-1722.

By 1700 royal gardens throughout Europe were designed in the French Classical Garden Style that reached its height in the gardens of Louis XIV at Versailles (as designed by head gardener André Le Nôtre). The conception was based on the ideas of French philosopher René Descartes, in which the gardens were intended to show monarch/man dominating and manipulating nature, with very large spaces organized along a grid of mathematical coordinates. The palace or manor house was placed in the middle of a central axis, with grand gardens in symmetrical designs on each side featuring both *parterres* (flower gardens planted in ornamental patterns) and *bosquets* (groves of trees in strict formation). Often these settings were backdrops for entertainments such as plays, concerts, and fireworks displays.

Matthias Diesel's treatise displays or proposes garden designs in the French Classical style for some of the estates in Germany's numerous independent states at the opening of the 18th century. This plate depicts a greenhouse that "could and should" be built in Salzburg. The gardens in front of the palatial greenhouse contain topiary trees, fences, and flower beds. The plate also illustrates the lifestyle of the people who would visit the gardens, including a grand lady at center bottom whose gown has a train so long it must be carried by a turbaned servant boy; another servant carries a tray of food and drink, while two gentlemen in the center aisle behind her begin their courtly bows.

Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville, 1680-1765.

La théorie et la pratique du jardinage. [The Theory and Practice of Gardening.]

New edition, considerably augmented.

The Hague: P. Husson, 1715.

The *parterres* of the French Baroque Garden contained shaped beds within which flowers were planted. The shapes became very intricate, ranging from geometric designs to knots, plumes, interlacings, and even the shapes of flowers or beasts. The author of this book considered the most elaborate of those shapes old-fashioned and heavy, and instead emphasized lighter designs reminiscent of embroidery and marked by symmetry and repetition. He suggested filling the ground between plantings with sand and the paths with powdered brick or tile dust, to maintain the delineation of the design.

Dezallier d'Argenville, a gentleman and connoisseur of gardening, was secretary to the French King when he anonymously published this popular book. It was written as a treatise intended for the architect and owner of the estate as much as for the practicing gardener (hence, both theory and practice). First published in 1709, the book went through nu-

merous editions in both French and English for some 50 years, becoming a basic tool for generations of gardeners. The plate shown here contains a design for elaborate flower beds surrounding an obelisk.

Stowe: A Description of the House and Gardens of the Most Noble and Puissant Prince, Richard Grenville Nugent Chandos Temple, Marquess of Buckingham.
Buckingham: Printed and Sold by J. Seeley, 1817.

Waves of change swept over European gardening in the mid-18th century, with the English leading the way in the newly formed art of landscape gardening.

The garden design of Stowe House, featured in the two guidebooks shown here, was one of the earliest and most radical departures from the formal French garden to the new “picturesque” style that emulated the idealized version of nature found in allegorical landscape paintings such as those by Claude Lorrain. William Kent (1685-1748), the architect and painter who introduced Palladian style architecture to England and created landscapes reminiscent of Italy to complement it, Charles Bridgeman (1690-1738), the horticulturalist and garden designer who brought Kent’s designs to realization, and Lancelot (“Capability”) Brown (1716-83), whose landscapes became emblematic of the new picturesque sensibility, all worked on the Stowe gardens. Kent and Bridgeman created a great park containing numerous picturesque landscapes through which visitors could wander, including settings with a Palladian bridge and several temples in classical style. Brown’s contribution was to eliminate geometric, formal gardens near the house and replace them with plain lawns and extensive views, as seen in the plate on the left, “North West or Park Front of Stowe House.”

Stowe: A Description of the Magnificent House and Gardens of the Right Honourable George Grenville Nugent Temple, Earl Temple, Viscount and Baron Cobham ... Embellished with a General Plan of the Gardens, and also a Separate Plan of the House.

A New Edition.

Buckingham: Printed and sold by B. Seeley, 1783.

On the right, “A Plan of the House and Gardens of the Right Honourable the Earl Temple at Stowe in Buckinghamshire,” shows the full extent of the grounds of Stowe House. Letter “b” marks the extensive house, with its grandest approach being the straight avenue (marked “a”) through the park from the northwest. Otherwise, the map shows the wide variety of statues, temples, and other points of interest a visitor might wish to see.

Richard Payne Knight, 1751-1824.

The Landscape, A Didactic Poem in Three Books, Addressed to Uvedale Price, Esq.

London: Bulmer and Co., 1794.

Capability Brown achieved enormous fame and success, designing over 170 gardens for some of the finest estates in Britain. But his work was not without detractors. One of the foremost was connoisseur and collector Richard Payne Knight, whose poem *The Landscape*, shown here, is devoted to decrying the aesthetic and style of Brown and his followers.

The double-page plate in the middle of the poem shows an estate on the left in its “natural state” with both residence and gardens “as improved” on the right. The “improved” state graphically portrays the aesthetic of Brown’s designs, which Knight laments in the following passage:

Hence, hence! Thou haggard fiend, however call’d,
Thin, meager genius of the bare and bald;
Thy spade and mattock here at length lay down,
And follow to the tomb thy fav’rite Brown:
Thy fav’rite Brown, whose innovating hand
First dealt thy curses o’er this fertile land;
First taught the walk in formal spires to move,
And from their haunts the secret Dryads drove;
With clumps bespotted o’er the mountain’s side,
And bade the stream ‘twixt banks close shaven glide...

Humphry Repton, 1752-1818.

Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening: Including some Remarks on Grecian and Gothic Architecture, Collected from Various Manuscripts, in the Possession of the Different Noblemen and Gentlemen, for whose Use they were Originally Written.

London: Printed by T. Bensley for J. Taylor, 1803.

Humphry Repton defended Brown against Knight and other detractors, but went on to suggest improvements in Brown’s style himself. Repton, a professional landscape gardener (a term he coined), created manuscript books (known as “red books”) to show his clients exactly how he would improve their properties. The published compilations of these books famously used paper overlays that could be opened to change a “before” view into an “after”.

By the time Repton published this second book in a series of three, he had made some 200 red books for clients. In this one he notes there had been recent improvements in the art of coloring printed plates to match the original drawings, and that a “number of children have been employed to enrich this volume.” This technique of hand coloring engraved plates was used extensively throughout the first half of the 19th century until it was replaced by color lithography.

Repton's "View from the House at Shardeloes" (from Chapter 5 on "Woods") demonstrates the subtleties of his technique. He uses this plate to illustrate how to manage light (lawn, water, or buildings) and shade (trees, bushes) to create a painterly landscape, with "before" shown in reproduction while the book is open to the "after" view. He notes how removing trees on the hill at upper right (letter "D") extends the apparent scope of the park, and that he thinned the trees at "F" and added a pavilion for interest, while also adding plantings to a depression in the ground at "C" mirroring the naturally occurring one at "B".

Humphry Repton, 1752-1818 &

J. Adey Repton, 1775-1860.

Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening: Including Some Remarks on Grecian and Gothic Architecture.

London: Printed by T. Bensley and Son, Bolt Court, Fleet Street; for J. Taylor, at the Architectural Library, High Holborn, 1816.

This third and last book by Repton was done with the assistance of his son, and drew on the more than 400 red books he had created by this time. Here he reintroduced terraces, trellis work, and formal gardens in settings near the main house, while keeping naturalistic landscapes just beyond them.

The "General View from the South and East Fronts of the Cottage at Endsleigh, Devonshire. – Dutchess of Bedford" is a hand colored aquatint etching in which the "before" picture (reproduced here) depicts Repton and his crew at work. As Repton sat at the top of the terrace, his assistants stood at various points on the hillside below him, which made him realize that plantings over six feet tall in that area would hide the view of the meadow and river below. As a result he kept the fence and plantings nearer the house and added interesting features to the farther landscape, such as cattle, a bridge, and cottages on the opposite side of the water. Since Endsleigh was more likely to be used in the winter and shooting season, the gardens on the left were intended to protect walkers from the cold and wind, and warm them with a south-facing brick wall which would absorb the heat of the sun. He also created play areas and plantings of interest to children along with raised flower beds and wide paths which could be enjoyed by the infirm in sedan chairs.

J. C. (John Claudius) Loudon, 1783-1843.

A Treatise on Forming, Improving, and Managing Country Residences ... so as to Combine Architectural Fitness with Picturesque Effect.

London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, by C. Whittingham, 1806.

John Loudon eventually became a renowned horticulturalist and author, but in this book, as a 23-year-old, he argued passionately against the followers of Capability Brown and their "obstinacy and dogmatical manner" which had led to trees in belts and clumps and water confined to serpentine canals as the model for every landscaping situation.

The illustrations on display contrast earlier forms of design with that championed by Loudon in this book, all four showing the same expanse of 400-500 acres upon which a country estate is to be built.

Fig. 1 “A portion of country part of which is to be formed into a residence.”

The “unimproved” site has farmhouses and cottages, with a stream running through it.

Fig. 2 “A residence formed of fig. 1 in the style prevalent about a century ago.”

Here is depicted the French Garden style, with flattened terrain, straight avenues, and formal gardens, with the stream channeled into pools and fountains.

Fig. 3 “A residence formed of fig. 1 in Mr. Brown’s style – generally prevalent at the present day, 1806.”

Loudon depicts the style of Brown’s followers by placing the residence on the highest piece of ground with grand views of expanses of lawn and the unobstructed banks of the rerouted stream, and scattering about similar clumps of trees with a belt of trees on the perimeter.

Fig. 4 “A residence formed of fig. 1 in the style of the author J. Loudon.”

Loudon’s own principles include a residence accompanied by outbuildings, stables, and a kitchen garden clustered together, in front of which the stream has been dammed to create a small lake. Trees are scattered across the estate and into the surrounding fields with the intent of lessening the boundaries and making interesting vistas in every direction.

The Society of Gardeners.

Catalogus Plantarum. A Catalogue of Trees, Shrubs, Plants, and Flowers, both Exotic and Domestic, which are propagated for sale in the gardens near London. London: For the Society of Gardeners, 1730.

By the early 1700s serious gardening was rising in popularity among the gentry of England, growing concurrently with the interest in landscape design. This book’s preface pays tribute to the many Englishmen (and a few women) who had studied horticulture, collected specimens from other places and introduced them to Britain, and worked on the classification of various plants. The Society was a group of about 20 men in London who met monthly to share specimens and record their observations. After five or six years they commissioned an artist to draw the specimens and published them here with the observations. This is the first part of what was intended to be a multi-part series, but no more were published.

The plate shown contains a variety of roses, and though names are given in both Latin and

English, it should be noted that the Latin forms predate the classification work of Carl Linnaeus, which was not published until 1735.

Clockwise from top left:

Moss Provence Rose, Double Velvet Rose. Double Yellow Rose,
Red Provence Rose, Austrian Rose

R. W. Dickson.

A Complete Dictionary of Practical Gardening: Comprehending all the Modern Improvements in the Art; whether in the Raising of the Various Esculent Vegetables, or in the Forcing and Managing of Different Sorts of Fruits and Plants, and that of Laying Out, Ornamenting, and Planting, Gardens and Pleasure Grounds.

London: Printed for George Kearsley, 1807.

Dickson's careful and pragmatic organization of gardening information, published just three years after the founding of what was to become the Royal Horticultural Society, reflects a growing interest in the scientific study of horticulture in England. His preface states: "While almost every other department of useful science has been arranged and brought into a more accessible and convenient form, in the shape of a Dictionary, that of Gardening has remained nearly without assistance in this respect." His definitions include precise descriptions of bloom, leaves, stalk, root, and culturing.

The plates for this volume were engraved after original paintings by Sydenham Edwards (1768-1819), one of the finest botanical illustrators of the period, and were used again five years later in Dickson's *New Botanic Garden* (1812). Depicted here are the *Delphinium elatum* (Larkspur) and *Dianthus barbatus* (Sweet William).

Sir James Edward Smith, 1759-1828.

Exotic Botany: Consisting of Coloured Figures, and Scientific Descriptions, of such New, Beautiful, or Rare Plants as are Worthy of Cultivation in the Gardens of Britain; with Remarks on their Qualities, History, and Requisite Modes of Treatment.

London: Printed by R. Taylor and Co., 1804-05.

This work was one of many collaborations between Sir James Edward Smith, who wrote the text, and James Sowerby (1752-1822), the artist. This title was published independently while their mammoth work, *English Botany*, was appearing in 36 volumes between 1790 and 1814. *Exotic Botany*, in contrast to the larger set, intended to "introduce to the curious cultivator plants worthy of his acquisition from all parts of the globe, and to teach those who have correspondents abroad what to inquire for." Smith, who had purchased the library and specimen collection of Carl Linnaeus, founded and became first President of the Lin-

nean Society of London.

On display is “Cyamus Nulumbo. Sacred Bean of India. *Polyandria Polygynia*” (English Lotus). Smith’s text describes various myths concerning this, the “true lotus of India,” along with its representation in ancient art.

Thomas Hale and Sir John Hill, 1716?-1775.

Eden: or, A Compleat Body of Gardening: Containing Plain and Familiar Directions for Raising the Several Useful Products of a Garden, from the Practice of the Most Successful Gardeners, and the Result of Long Experience ... Compiled and Digested from the Papers of the Late Celebrated Mr. Hale.

London: Printed for T. Osborne [etc.], 1757.

John Hill, in the manner of the Society of Gardeners before him, noted the many works on gardening that contained errors, and set out to make this a “more comprehensive and less erroneous work” that would “unite the Science of Botany and the Arts of Culture: to apply Philosophy to Gardening.” He presented the work pragmatically, with information for both garden planner and the “mechanic” who carried out the plans, and in weekly installments mirroring the growing year, so that “every week shall direct what is that week to be done.” Many plants recently introduced to Britain from Asia and America were included, and he was one of the first to use the Linnean system of identification.

The book is open to an illustration of plants blooming in the first week of September, which are described in the text under the heading “Curious Plants and Flowers Now in their Perfection.”

Number II, plate 2 “For the First Week in September”: 1. Common Capsicum, 2. Golden Capsicum, 3. Laurell leav’d Passion Flower, 4. Spotted Cistus, 5. Crimson Amaryllis, 6. Mutable Hibiscus call’d The China Rose, 7. The Pomegranate

Jane Webb Loudon, 1807-1858.

The Ladies’ Flower-Garden of Ornamental Annuals.

London: W. Smith, 1840.

Jane Webb was an author in her own right before she met and married horticulturalist John Loudon, having published the best-selling novel *The Mummy: A Tale of the Twenty-Second Century*, when she was just 17 years old. She used her writing skill to popularize horticulture, botany, and other natural sciences for a broad Victorian audience. In this volume, the first of a series of four, she urged women to garden (with the help of a “labourer”) and noted that planting, watering, transplanting, cutting off dead flowers, and gathering seeds are all “suitable for feminine occupations, and they have the additional advantage of inducing gen-

tle exercise in the open air.”

The plate on display introduces the chapter on *Papaveraceae* (Poppies), and includes six different varieties: 1. *Papaver horridum* (Bristly or New Holland Poppy), 2. *Papaver setigerum* (Bristle-Pointed or Grecian Poppy), 3. *Papaver nudicale* (Naked-Stemmed Poppy), 4. *Papaver somniferum* (Opium Poppy or Large White Garden Poppy), 5. *Papaver rhoeas* (The Corn Poppy), 6. *Papaver persicum* (The Persian Poppy). As with the other books on display, each plate is printed in black ink, and then colored by hand. The University of Michigan copy was once owned by Georgiana, Duchess of Bedford.

Thomas Moore, 1821-1887 &

William P. Ayres, 1815-1875, editors.

The Gardeners' Magazine of Botany, Horticulture, Floriculture, and Natural Science.

London: William S. Orr and Co., 1850-51.

This short-lived monthly tried to furnish both professional and amateur gardeners with trustworthy and scientific information on a variety of related subjects while including beautiful colored plates and lavish woodcut illustrations within the text. The last issue noted that unfortunately its high price was not always affordable by the professional, while there was a smaller than hoped for number of amateur gardeners who “seek Scientific Information and Technical Botany.” Moore was Curator of the Botanic Gardens in Chelsea and formerly Gardener of Regents Park, London, while Ayres was a nurseryman who held patents for hothouses.

Shown is a full-page plate of the orchid “*Sarcopodium lobbii*: var. *Henshallii*” (now known as *Bulbophyllum lobbii*), a native of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. For each featured plant there is an article on its history, including who imported it and from whose plant the illustration was drawn. There were columns and articles on hints for amateur gardeners, the chemistry of soil and manure, insects, “new and rare” plants, and topical subjects such as the one on the site of the Crystal Palace facing this illustration.



Currently in the Special Collections Library Exhibit Room:

William Faulkner's Artifacts of Authorship

July 8 - October 15, 2011

Curated by Aaron McCullough

Librarian for English and Comparative Literature

Seventh Floor, Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library