



HORTUS IN THE CURRENT MIDDLE AGES

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WHAT IS A MEDIEVAL GARDEN?

Most of the medieval gardens were designed for use (food, medicine, household needs) & meaning (spiritual & symbolic ideas)

HORTUS – Latin for garden; also known as Kitchen Gardens

➤ synonyms pomerium, viretum, viridarium

COMMON MEDIEVAL GARDEN TYPES



The Little Garden of Paradise, by the Master of the Upper Rhine c1410-20

Cloister garth: sheltered courtyard space for reflection within monastic complexes

- *Center lawn w/ a fountain or well, enclosed by arcades in monastic centers*
- *Used for contemplation*
- *Hortus Conclusus* – enclosed garden
 - Not always for productivity
 - in many manuscript imagery



Virgin and Child by the Master of the Tiburtine Sybil

Netherlands 1468

COMMON MEDIEVAL GARDEN TYPES

- **Kitchen Garden:** vegetables, 'potherbs', etc.
Rectangular raised beds, narrow paths, herbs and vegetables, often fenced with wattle to keep out animals.
- **Physic (Medicinal) Garden:** plants used for remedies & household preparations
Organized by plant use: remedies, ointments, teas
 - *Hortus Medicus*
 - *Hortus siccus*
- **Orchards & Vineyard Plots**
Fruit (apple, pear, quince, medlar) + shade/workspace + grazing edges
 - Sometimes medicinal trees
 - Commonly linked to monastic self sufficiency

Medieval garden at Bazoges en Pareds



Medieval garden in France



Medieval garden at Cahors Cathedral, France

DESIGN FEATURES OF MEDIEVAL GARDENS

- Many (especially monastic) gardens were enclosed
 - Walls, hedges, fences
 - For protection (keep out animals as well)
 - Has a symbolic meaning
 - *Hortus conclusus*
- Tend toward symmetry, measured and geometric
- Raised rectangular beds
 - Made of wood, stone, wattle, etc.
- Paths cross at right angles
 - Tend to have paths meet in the middle and used gravel or wood chips
 - Paths consisted of gravel or chipped wood
- Used natural materials like wood, stone, etc.
- Most included some kind of fountain, well or water feature
 - Usually centered in the garden



MODERN CONSIDERATIONS FOR A MEDIEVAL GARDEN

Enclosures

- Fences vary across the US so consider what will work in your area
- Hedges
 - Do you want evergreen or deciduous?
 - Look for what will grow in your area
 - Consider the amount of care you want to deal with
 - Water, soil amendments, trimming, disease potential



MODERN CONSIDERATIONS FOR A MEDIEVAL GARDEN

Raised beds – recommended as easier to amend soil as needed

- Wooden beds will eventually rot even with treated lumber
- Could use stones/cinder blocks for a stone raised bed
- Metal beds can be painted to look like wood or build a surround

Soil

- Medieval beds used compost, manure, and kitchen waste
- modern equivalent is organic matter



MODERN CONSIDERATIONS FOR A MEDIEVAL GARDEN

Pathways

- Spacing between raised beds need to be enough for your purposes
- Mine are 2' to 3' for ability to crouch and pull a cart through them for mulch/soil
- Gravel is more expensive but more permanent option
 - Make sure to remove grass, cover with cardboard, heavy duty landscape material before placing gravel
 - Consider adding sand down first and then cover with gravel
- Chipped wood or mulch is less expensive but needs to be replaced every year or so
 - Make sure to remove grass, cover with cardboard, heavy duty landscape material before placing gravel
 - Chipdrop.com is a great place to get larger chipped wood for free

WHAT GREW IN MEDIEVAL GARDENS



Capitulare de villis (c. Charlemagne, ~800) lists around 100 plants to be grown on his royal estates/gardens.

"Capitulare de villis" "It is our wish that they shall have in their gardens all kinds of plants: lily, roses, fenugreek, costmary, sage, rue, southernwood, cucumbers, melons*, gourds, kidney-bean*, cumin, rosemary, caraway, chick-pea, squill, gladiolus, tarragon, anise, colocynth, chicory, Ammi, sesili, lettuces, spider's foot, rocket salad, garden cress, burdock, penny-royal, hemlock, parsley, celery, lovage, juniper, dill, sweet fennel, endive, dittany, white mustard, summer savory, water mint, garden mint, wild mint, tansy, catnip, centaury, garden poppy, beets, hazelwort, marshmallows, mallows, carrots, parsnip, orach, spinach, kohlrabi, cabbages, onions, chives, leeks, radishes, shallots, cibols, garlic, madder, teasles, broad beans, peas, coriander, chervil, capers, clary. And the gardener shall have house-leeks growing on his house. As for trees, it is our wish that they shall have various kinds of apple, pear, plum, sorb, medlar, chestnut and peach; quince, hazel, almond, mulberry, laurel, pine, fig, nut and cherry trees of various kinds. The names of apples are: gozmaringa, geroldinga, crevedella, spirauca; there are sweet ones, bitter ones, those that keep well, those that are to be eaten straightaway, and early ones. Of pears they are to have three or four kinds, those that keep well, sweet ones, cooking pears and the late-ripening ones

A BOKE OF GODE COOKERY – TACUINUM SANITATIS

Lavishly illustrated manuscript with scenes showing real-time harvesting of vegetables, herbs & fruits

The Physician Speaks:

"The *Tacuinum Sanitatis* is about the six things that are necessary for every man in the daily preservation of his health, about their correct uses and their effects. The first is the treatment of air, which concerns the heart. The second is the right use of food and drinks. The third is the correct use of movement and rest. The fourth is the prohibition of the body from sleep, or excessive wakefulness. The fifth is the correct use of elimination and retention of humors. The sixth is the regulating of the person by moderating joy, anger, fear, and distress. The secret of the preservation of health, in fact, will be in the proper balance of all these elements, since it is the disturbance of this balance that causes the illnesses which the glorius and most exalted God permits. Listed under these six classifications are many very useful varities whose nature, God willing, we shall explain. We shall speak, furthermore, about the choices suitable to each person owing to his constitution and age, and shall include all these elements in the form of simple tables because the discussions of the sages and the discordances in many different books may bore the reader. Men, in fact, desire from science nothing else but the benefits, not the arguments but the definitions. Accordingly, our intention in this book is to shorten long-winded discourses and synthesize the various ideas. Our intention also, however, is not to neglect the advice of the ancients.



A BOKE OF GODE COOKERY – TACUINUM SANITATIS

X. Watermelons and Cucumbers (*Cucumeres et Cetruli*)

- *Nature:* Cold and humid in the second degree.
- *Optimum:* Those that are large and full.
- *Usefulness:* They cool hot fevers and purify the urine.
- *Dangers:* They cause pain in the loins and in the stomach.
- *Neutralization of the Dangers:* With honey and oil.
- *From the Tacuinum of Paris*



A BOKE OF GODE COOKERY – TACUINUM SANITATIS

VI. Cabbage (*Caules Onati*)

- *Nature:* Warm in the first degree, dry in the second.
- *Optimum:* The fresh and fleshy ones.
- *Usefulness:* They remove obstructions.
- *Dangers:* They are bad for the intestines.
- *Neutralization of the Dangers:* With much oil.
- *From the Tacuinum of Paris*



A BOKE OF GODE COOKERY – TACUINUM SANITATIS

XXI. Indus or Palestinian Melons (*Melones Indi Idest Palestini*)

- *Nature:* Cold and humid in the second degree.
- *Optimum:* Those that are sweet and watery.
- *Usefulness:* Good in illnesses.
- *Dangers:* Bad for the digestion.
- *Neutralization of the Dangers:* With barley-sugar.

From the Tacuinum of Rouen



MODERN MEDIEVAL GARDENS

Bonnefont Cloister Garden – Met Museum

➤ Plants in medicinal beds

- *Hollyhock, tooth-pick weed, burdock, birthwort, asparagus, foxglove, love-in-a-mist, self-heal, castor bean, rue, common sage, clary, rhubarb, peony, comfrey*

➤ Plants in Vegetable beds

- *Leek, garlic, chives, horseradish, wild sea beet, good king henry, lovage, sea holly, elecampane, kale, rampion, chicory, sea kale rocket, sorrel*

➤ Plants in the Magic bed

- *Yarrow, sneezewort, monkshood, Lady's Mantle, Mugwort, Italian Arum, Belladonne, Betony, Bistort, Carline thistle, Cupid's dart*

➤ Plants in the Arts & Crafts bed

- *Argrimony, Alkanet, Golden Marguerite, Safflower, Saffron Crocus, Teasel, Horsetail, Weld, Madder, Stinging Nettle*

➤ Potted Plants (medieval spices)

- *Lesser galangal, True Cinnamon, Turmeric, Cardamom, Common Pepper, Common Ginger*

WHAT WILL GROW IN THE U.S. – THINGS TO KNOW

Plant Zone Hardiness (USDA Hardiness Map)

- Backbone of any garden, especially regarding perennial suitability
- Based on the average annual extreme winter temperatures with a 10-degree variant
- This is to help determine if a plant can survive the winters in an area

Why Zones Matter?

- Perennials, shrubs & Trees can come back year after year so need to be able to survive and thrive in winter climates
- Annuals & vegetables – frost dates matter here and are specific to zones
- Microclimates in your yard are also a factor
 - Sun exposure, wind, urban heat islands, etc.

WHAT WILL GROW IN THE U.S. – THINGS TO KNOW

- Keep in mind plants can live in different regions during different times of the year.
- 8b (D/FW Texas) can seed/plant cold tolerant flowers in the fall for spring blooms. Plants will be done around May or so when the weather starts to get hot.

ZONE	Ave Minimum Winter Temp	Sample Hardy Plants
3	-40 to -30 F	Extremely cold-tolerant perennials & early crops that can handle harsh winters (Peonies, Delphiniums, Columbines)
4	-30 to -20 F	Cold-hardy flowers & shrubs thrive w/ reliable snow cover for insulation (Lilacs, Coneflowers, Hellebores)
5	-20 to -10 F	Protect tender shoots from late frost (Bleeding Heart, Astilbe, Coral Beels)
6	-10 to 0 F	Mixed gardens of perennials, shrubs & hardy ornamentals (Hydrangeas, Sedum, Black-eyes Susan)
7	0 to 10 F	Mild winters allow for some tropicals & flowering shrubs (Lavender, Camellia, Crepe Myrtles)
8	10 to 20 F	Warmer climate supports evergreen shrubs, citrus, & long-blooming ornamentals (Gardenia, Fig tree, Agapanthus)
9	20 to 30 F	Tropicals, succulents and heat-loving plants w/ some annuals growing year-round (Citrus, oleander, Bougainville)
10+	30 F+	True tropical climate w/ lush foliage & exotic flowers year-round (Banana, Bird of Paradise, Hibiscus)

WHAT WILL GROW IN THE U.S. – THINGS TO KNOW

Northeast & Upper Midwest (Zones 3–5)

- Hardy herbs do well here (Sage, thyme, mint, chives)
- Medieval vegetables thrive (brassicas, onions, peas)
- Tender Mediterranean herbs (rosemary, lavender, bay) need to be overwintered so use pots

Mid-Atlantic & Upper South (Zones 6–7)

- Balanced zone for most medieval plants
- Many Mediterranean herbs will naturalize
- Cool-season fall gardens match medieval seasonal schedules

Deep South & Gulf (Zones 8–9)

- Medieval leafy greens & brassicas are fall-winter crops due to heat
- Cottage garden flowers are better seeded/planted fall for spring appreciation; will be done by heat of summer

WHAT WILL GROW IN THE U.S. – THINGS TO KNOW

Southwest & Interior West (Zones 5–9) altitude dependent

- Challenges: heat & drought
- Medieval drought tolerant plants: rosemary, sage, savory, fennel
- Need irrigation strategies

West Coast (Zones 7–10)

- Excellent for Mediterranean herbs & medieval orchard species
- Avoid high summer heat stress for cool-season brassicas (fall planting)

- Sun needs: _____
- Water needs: _____
- Planting season (cool/warm): _____
- USDA zone notes (if perennial): _____

WHAT WILL GROW IN THE U.S.

FRUITS

- blackberries, blueberries, strawberries, grapes, elderberries
 - Apples, Cherries, Pears, Plums, Pomegranates, Quince, Mulberries, Figs
 - Bitter Seville, Oranges, Lemons
-
1. Check your Planting Zone and the best varieties that fit that zone
 2. For Fruiting trees, make sure your area gets enough chill hours or the trees will not fruit
 3. Also see if your plant choices are self-pollinating or need a companion to produce fruit
 4. For Citrus, some do not tolerate any cold so consider a potted tree that you can overwinter inside

WHAT WILL GROW IN THE U.S.

NUT TREES

Walnuts, Chestnuts*, Hazelnuts, Oak, Beech

- *Chestnuts have diminished in the last 100 years due to a virus that killed many in the US

VEGETABLES

Cabbage, Kale, Fennel, Garlic, Leeks, Onions, Good King Henry, Orach, Turnips, Radishes, Cucumbers, Beans, Melons, Rocket, Lettuce, Endive, Chicory, Kohlrabi, Shallots, Mustard, Carrots (not orange), Scorzonera, Skirret, Sorrel/Dock

HERBS

Anise, Basil, Borage, Chamomile, Cleavers, Coriander, Dill, Horehound, Horseradish, Hyssop, Lavendar, Lemon Balm, Lovage, Marjoram, Mint, Parsley, Purslane, Rampion, Sage, Tansy, Tarragon, Thyme, Vetch

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