

A CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY OF LOWCOUNTRY GARDENS

Woodbridge offers a word of warning concerning the nomenclature used in the study of gardens, pointing out that the terminology is often vague and subject to considerable lumping or splitting. Definitions may also vary depending on one's background – architecture, art, history, or gardening. Thus, terms such as “mannerist,” “baroque,” and “rococo” may have different meanings to different audiences. In addition, garden styles were constantly evolving and rarely do they fit into the neat terms that are typically applied. Concerned that the use of self-limiting terms may stymie the study of gardens, or at least mislead those exploring their history, he suggests that it might be best to avoid terms and, instead, “look at each garden in a period as an effort in its own right, created in a given situation” (Woodbridge 1984:24). In spite of the wisdom of this approach, terminology such as design periods is often used as a “short-hand,” allowing researchers to communicate – hopefully more, not less, effectively. Consequently, we shall use many of the terms that Woodbridge might criticize, although we hope that they will be taken by the

reader only as general temporal and stylistic indicators.

Another problem in the study of garden history involves the evolutionary nature of garden design – as new styles emerge, old gardens tend to be changed, making it difficult or impossible to examine a style as it was actually implemented (as opposed to drawn). The study of early, formal gardens is particularly difficult since Capability Brown and his successors often destroyed (in England) the earlier style gardens in their zeal to create landscape gardens (Brownell 1984:15).

Brownell (1984:7) also notes that, at least until recently, the history of gardening has been largely confined to England, with even Scotland and Ireland receiving scant attention. Certainly there are far more sources for English gardens than for American.

History of English Gardens

Early Gardens – Medieval and Tudor

Hadfield (1985) argues that a high standard of gardening did not exist until the late medieval period and that prior to that time gardening was focused on fruits, food, and herbs. In spite of this, it seems likely that some pleasure gardens did exist (see Taylor 1991:18).

Early gardening drew on publications such as Thomas Hill's *Briefe and Pleasant Treatyse, Teaching How to Dress, Sow and Set a Garden* in 1563 and in 1577 *The Gardener's Labyrinth*. Not only was the husband's orchard addressed, but also the wife's kitchen garden. In fact, he begins with

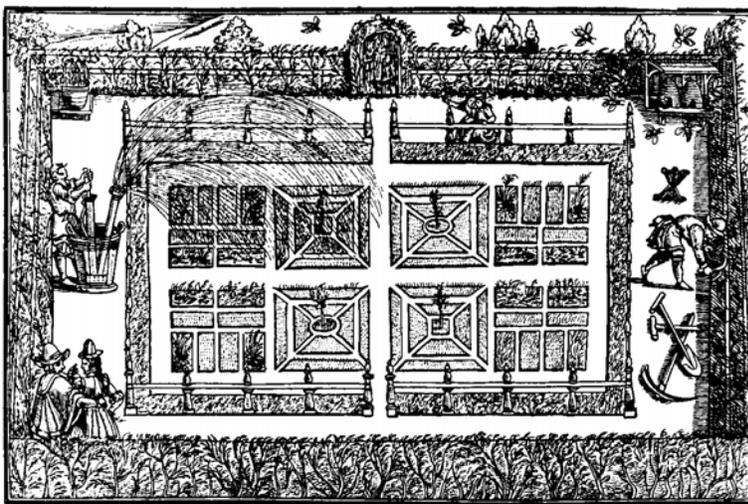


Figure 8. Layout of a typical garden from Hill's 1586 *Labyrinth*.

selecting the perfect location – with a gentle slope and facing southeast to catch the full morning sun. He recommended dividing the garden into quarters, each with a number of raised beds, separated by channels through which water would run. He urged the spreading of dung, as well as instructed on how to make straight beds using twine and sticks (Uglow 2004:94-95).

These Tudor gardens were generally small with a formal pattern of square beds, sometimes raised. Often enclosed by stone walls or hedges, there were arbors or alleys. The most characteristic feature, however, was the knot – a formal bed in which low hedges were worked into a regular pattern. These could be open with a background of sand or gravel, or closed with the spaces filled with other, contrasting plants. The knot was designed to be viewed from above for full advantage (Hadfield 1964:143; Taylor 1991:20; cf. Woodbridge 1984:19).

The Seventeenth Century

The rise of English gardening, however, has often been associated with the Renaissance. Francis I of France and Charles VIII of Britain brought news of the Renaissance world, although it was Henry VII who built his palace at Richmond with gardens far more complex and fine than anything seen previously. Beauty of design began to replace utility and art became as important as craft. Toward the end of Elizabeth’s reign, it was commented that earlier gardens, in comparison, were “but dunghills and laystows” (Hadfield 1964:18-19). What remains of these early Elizabethan and Jacobean gardens is limited

to a few buildings, some walls, and a large number of writings – for example, the 1597 *Herball* by John Gerard and even the 1624 Francis Bacon essay, *Of Gardens*.

Gardens developed generally as a series of walled enclosures. Fruit was grown against the walls and greenhouses were erected to overwinter the evergreens. John Rea, for example, in

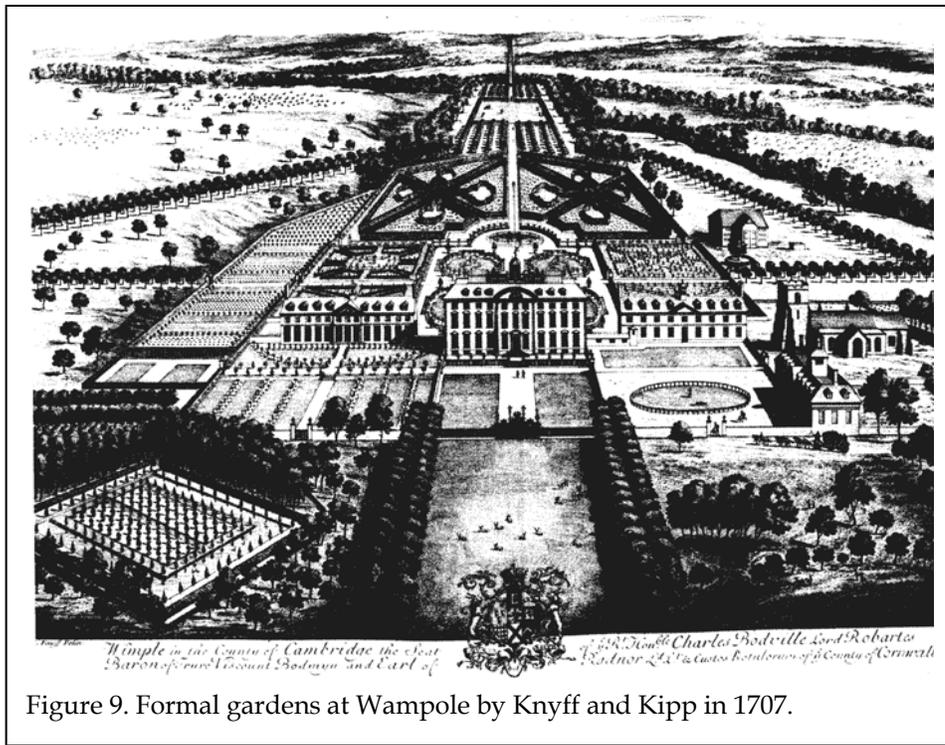


Figure 9. Formal gardens at Wampole by Knyff and Kipp in 1707.

1665 published *Flora* which included detailed plans for flower gardens, walled enclosures with geometric beds, pole hedges of trained trees, and lattices of roses (Uglow 2004:110). Although the division of England into Cavaliers and Roundheads initially impeded any advancements, with the Restoration gardening was again a favorite art.

In France the formal garden under André Le Nôtre was at its height and set the example for England. Elaborate parterres, ornamental canals, fantastic topiary, and sculpture all made their appearance. Le Nôtre’s signature, however, was the avenue – one main axis speeding from the house to the horizon, cutting across the broad

parterre with its patterned beds and gravel paths, and extending into the surrounding park and woods (Uglow 2004:115). Even the small estates could profit from these advances, as evidenced by the eleven editions of Leonard Meager's *The English Gardener* printed between 1670 and 1710.

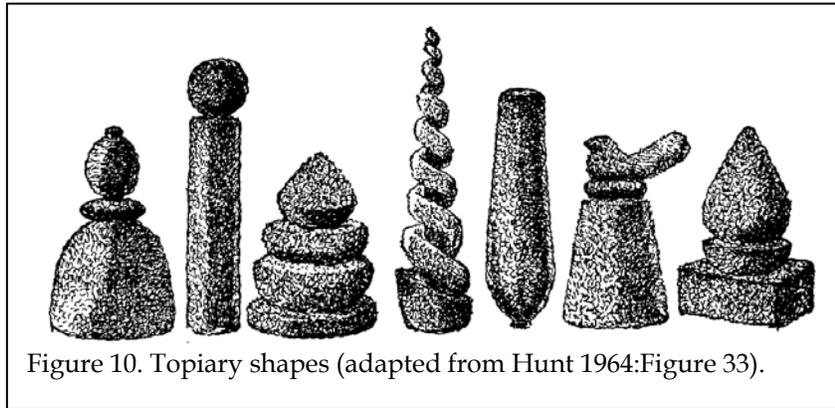


Figure 10. Topiary shapes (adapted from Hunt 1964:Figure 33).

The dominant figure in British gardening was George London. Out of obscurity, by 1681 he had joined with other famous gardeners to form a nursery at Brompton Park covering hundreds of acres. While many of the partners retired, London continued with his partner, Henry Wise. Wise would, by the time Queen Anne ascended to the throne in 1702, be recognized as the British master of the grand Le Nôtre style. Others prominent during her reign included Leonard Knuff and Joannes Kip, both of whom produced numerous illustrations of country seats. Of equal importance was Blenheim which, with Hampton Court, came nearest to the grandeur of Versailles (Bisgrove 1990:70).

Taylor argues that Kip's designs show the triumph of the formal design, as well as the overpowering influence of Le Nôtre:

the garden typically has a walled forecourt to the main façade of the house with an axial path leading to the entrance. The axis may be continued on the other side of the house penetrating deep into the countryside with rides through woodland on either

side. Avenues, sometimes in the shape of *pattes d'oie*, radiate out from the house linking it firmly to the landscape. Nearer the house there are parterres, frequently extremely elaborate in the style of Daniel Marot, the French Huguenot designer introduced by King William. There is often some water feature – ornate fountains, canals, or formal *basins* with an island and a pavilion. The “wilderness”, a kind of giant maze of hedges . . . is often seen. Formal orchards, with trees in neat rows or espaliered against walls, are common (Taylor 1991:24).

Hadfield observes that it was during this period that “the ruler and the compass were supreme; avenues radiated with mathematical precision to form *pattes d'oie* (‘goose feet’), these most typical features of the grand manner, and in the more intimate part of the garden *Parterres* and topiary ornamented the grounds” (Hadfield 1964:21). Hadfield goes on to note that when the history of the period is reviewed it appears almost as though the style and laws of gardening had become fixed and immutable.

Nevertheless, the pure French style did not translate well to England. The English light was too soft to provide the crisp perspectives, the landscape was too undulating to allow avenues to stretch into infinite distance (as Bisgrove [1990:63] notes, avenues simply disappeared over the next hill), and the British actually liked the natural look of clumps of trees (Uglow 2004:118).

Into this mix was added the “Dutch” style – with courtyards and ornamental canals, intricate topiary, and exotics such as oranges, myrtle and oleander in tubs (see Oldenburger-Ebbers 1991). An example was William and

Mary's plantings at Kensington Palace in London and the fountain garden at Hampton Court (Hunt 1964:37; Uglow 2004:121). These Dutch gardens broke up large expanses into "happily crowded" enclosures, introducing trellises and hedges, as well as curling parterres that mirrored ironwork. Also introduced were topiaries or "curious greens" - hews and hollies clipped into fantastic shapes with balls or pyramids giving way to birds, beasts, crowns, and even sailing ships. Bisgrove, however, explains that while both French and Dutch influences are present and visible, there developed an essentially English style - "accretions of garden compartments each grand and symmetrical in itself but stubbornly refusing to conform to an overall scheme" (Bisgrove 1990:63).

As early as 1681 John Worlidge (or Woolridge), author of *The Art of Gardening*, complained that the desire for formality in parterres had led to the exclusion of many beautiful plantings. He rejected the pedantic symmetry of London and Wise as stiff and autocratic (Bisgrove 1990:75).

The Picturesque and the Landscape in the Eighteenth Century

Nevertheless, the next evolutionary step was not to be taken by a gardener, but rather by a small band of philosophers, poets, and writers who looked to Nature in her various guises as the inspiration for garden design. Alexander Pope, for example, satirized the fanciful topiary work and attacked regularity and formality in the layout. His garden at Twickenham, begun in 1719, became something of a "mecca," crammed with classical allusions and full of variety (Bisgrove 1990:83).

The word "picturesque" came into use, having the meaning of designing gardens in the "manner of the seventeenth-century landscape pictures by such painters as Salvator Rosa, Claude Lorraine and the Poussins" (Hadfield 1964:22). Found in common were a woody foreground, at mid-distance an anecdote such as

an ancient building, and in the remote distance immense space.

Uglow (2004:125-127) attributes the shift to a more fundamental issue - the cost of the grand formality of Le Nôtre was horrific. Wars drained the English economy. Small estates were swallowed by larger manors. Landowners could no longer afford the costs of avenues, parterres, fruit trees, and topiary. Uglow also suggests that England may have been in the mood for a style of its own, tired of "borrowing" styles from the French and Danes. There is yet another reason for the shift, "now that topiary was in every shopkeeper's backyard, the only thing for a man of taste to do was to turn his back [on this style]" (Uglow 2004:127).

The movement toward the picturesque, however, took place slowly. For example, there was first the introduction of irregularity into the formal garden design. For example, Stephen Switzer, a practical gardener, suggested that paths should have as many windings as the land would allow. Pope, himself a keen amateur gardener, is perhaps best remembered for his observation that "In all, let nature never be forgot. Consult the genius of the place . . ." (quoted in Hadfield 1964:23). In other words, rather than the gardener forcing the design on the landscape, the landscape should direct the design and form. Nevertheless, Hadfield notes that Pope's own garden - as daring as it might have been at the time - allowed very little freedom of design.

This same view is shared by Uglow, who notes that not only did the definition of "natural" vary, but the shift came in three phases. First there was the "straightforward softening of formality and opening of the garden to the country." This view clung to the idea that the garden and nature were separate and focused on a "belt" or "ribbon walk" that progressed through different scenes. This was followed by the pictorial, classical, allusive style for which the period may best be known. And finally, there was the radical parkland of Capability Brown and his followers (Uglow 2004:128, see also Hyams 1971).

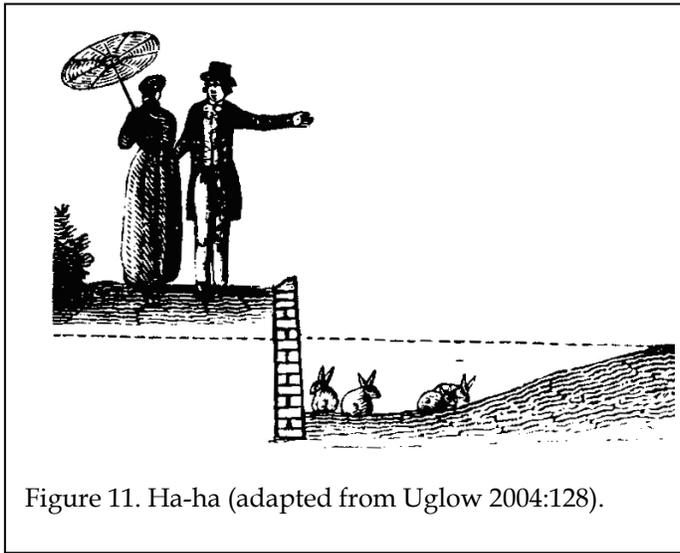


Figure 11. Ha-ha (adapted from Uglow 2004:128).

It seems that the picturesque or landscape garden came into its own with the introduction of the Palladian manor – often attributed to William Kent in 1719. Now all of nature became a garden. Cultivated fields stretched out in broad expanses. Flocks of sheep were confined by the introduction of the ha-ha (a sunken ditch, invisible until one was on it, but impossible for animals to cross). The distant landscape would typically be dotted by cottages, but these were not adequately ornamental, so they were replaced by temples, sham ruins, or statuary – all serving as focal points or “eye-catchers.” Linear arrangements – whether of trees, paths, or canals – were banned in favor of serpentine routes. Incorporated into the design was not only England’s particular climate, but also an attitude of mind – a taste for the irregular and asymmetrical (Mosser and Teyssot 1991:14). Kent softened the outlines, opened distant prospects, and worked to create an idealized landscape – at least some of these influences, according to Bisgrove (1990:89) can be traced to various Chinese antecedents.

Le jardin anglais, as it became known, had two principal proponents – Lancelot Brown and Humphry Repton. Brown might be best remembered for his calm and gracious manner. Known as “Capability” Brown for his power to bring out the aesthetic “capabilities” of the

setting; he designed landscapes that were broad and open with an “infinite delicacy of planting.” This may be derived from the comments of François de la Rochefoucauld, who indicated that within a half a day Brown created a plan that transformed the landscape, evidencing an inspired eye for the “capabilities” of the place (Bisgrove 1990:96).

Brown worked with the natural ingredients of the landscape – trees and turf, light and shade, water and topography – relating each part to the whole, creating an idealized “total” landscape (Lasdun 1992:95). Brown’s English landscape became more typically English than the real thing and was immortalized by paintings, prints, and even as views on pottery and porcelain. His landscapes also reflected the supposed perfection of a classical order – “a pervading sense of good taste measured against infallible rules of right and wrong” (Bisgrove 1990:123).

Regardless of his talent, Brown was creating an artificial landscape – trees were moved and clumped to hide offending features of rural life, such as the home farm or kitchen garden. Bridges were removed, dams were built, and even entire villages were removed out of sight in order to create the perfect landscape (Uglow 2004:160-161). Brown’s parks were as contrived as the most formal gardens of his predecessors. Moreover, the improvements had disastrous costs. Uglow tallies over 21 million acres of open fields and common lands that were enclosed between 1760 and 1800. While this made perfect economic sense to the owners since the woodland and copses provided cover for game, the grass could be leased for grazing, and the trees provided timber, to the poor it meant the loss of their livelihood and often eviction.

Repton, Brown’s successor, is thought by some to have been more imaginative, bringing more drama and formality to the area surrounding the house. Repton also saw his skill as combining beauty and convenience. If the two could not coexist, then the necessary or

convenient feature must be included, but carefully concealed or masked from view.

Consequently, the flower and vegetable gardens were kept convenient, but were hidden by secluded walled enclosures. This, however, did not mean that horticulture lagged behind design. Indeed, this was a period of particular importance as plants were introduced from abroad. The culmination of this interest is seen in the formation of the Horticultural Society of London (later the Royal Horticultural Society) in 1804.

While greenhouses were known from at least 1664, the early structures – to at least the mid-to late seventeenth century – were more architectural features than garden devices. Often slate roofed with small windows, they were designed to provide warmth, not light (Hunt 1964:130-131) and it wasn't until the end of the seventeenth century that the roofs became glazed. In fact, it was the repeal of the glass tax in 1845 that allowed more glass and brought light, air, and sunshine into the greenhouse (Bisgrove 1990:113; Hunt 1964:131). Regardless, by 1731 Philip Miller in his *Gardner's Dictionary* provided detailed instructions for the greenhouse, noting that he had been able to preserve “the most tender exotic trees and herbaceous plants” (Bisgrove 1990:114).

The increasing familiarity with greenhouses (or glasshouses as they were often called) led to much specialization: pineries for pineapples, vineries, melon pits, orangeries, and conservatories all became necessary adjuncts of the manor and might be found in close proximity to the kitchen garden. Gradually boilers and hot water heating replaced charcoal and stoves of various sorts for heating.

By mid-century many of the defining features of the picturesque movement, such as serpentine walks, classical inscriptions, and rococo gazebos were reaching the middle classes. Moreover, these artificially arranged rural landscapes with their ruins and other follies

began to seem absurd, especially when crammed into the small spaces available. As a result, Uglow notes “the intelligentsia and the quality turned against the Arcadian ideal. It had become debased, they felt, a language of the suburbs, as topiary had been a generation before” (Uglow 2004:136).

By the end of the eighteenth century Repton was able to justifiably claim that England had not only originated the art of landscape or picturesque gardening, but that she led the world in horticultural activities. With the death of Repton in 1818, however, things began to change. Hadfield suggests that these changes may also be related to the quickly declining days of Georgian taste and the rise of industrialism and the middle-class (Hadfield 1964:25). Certainly industrialism did drive away nature and the country-side. But there were other factors as well. Industrialism gave rise to cast stone and inexpensive ironwork. Physical and mechanical aids to horticulture were being introduced (for example, the lawn mower replaced the scythe in 1831). Science was joining horticulture. The traditions of the formal Georgian garden were almost entirely removed from the English landscape.

Uglow, however, notes that the Picturesque was attacked by such writers as Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight. They argued that the Picturesque lacked any painterly appreciation for the landscape and impoverished the nation by demolishing its old, irregular beauties.

The Nineteenth Century

J.C. Loudon wrote on the tremendous effects of this period. In particular he wrote for the newly established gentleman who sought to return to the countryside – and in 1838 penned, *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion*. Hadfield notes that Loudon helped the *nouveau riche* find the type and size of garden that was appropriate for his standing and means. Loudon earlier wrote the one volume, *An Encyclopaedia of Gardening* – a volume that was reprinted

numerous times and was recognized as the authority in the field for years. Uglow (2004:179) comments that Loudon wrote not for the wealthy elite, but for the masses, establishing what was to become the Victorian “gardenesque” style. His goal was to not only produce guidelines and model solutions, but also to help the smaller property owner – a subject that had been

were distinct, even opposites and that art might well emphasize the “unnaturalness” of a landscape.

The second concept was that a garden might be made more artistic by growing plants that were inherently “unnatural” – at least in the British climate. Thus Loudon sought to use a wide variety of unusual plants, things that were the freaks of the later nineteenth century gardens.

The third concept of the gardenesque was that the garden was both a work of art and a scene of cultivation – a place meant to be worked in. He sought to space plants out, allowing their individual forms to be appreciated. Earth was intended to be hoed and mounded – it was no longer an

allegory to classical Rome.

When Loudon died in 1843, the last link with the traditions of Kent, Brown, and Repton was severed. The aristocratic taste was no longer dominant and, in its place, rose a plutocracy. Of course, there were still numerous private gardens in the urban setting that maintained very formal lines. The scene was also changed by the overwhelming additions of new plants. Many failed to thrive in the English climate – giving rise to a new generation of greenhouse growers. Also introduced was carpet bedding – half-hardy plants in multitudinous variety (Hadfield 1964:29). Even rock gardens were developed during this period.

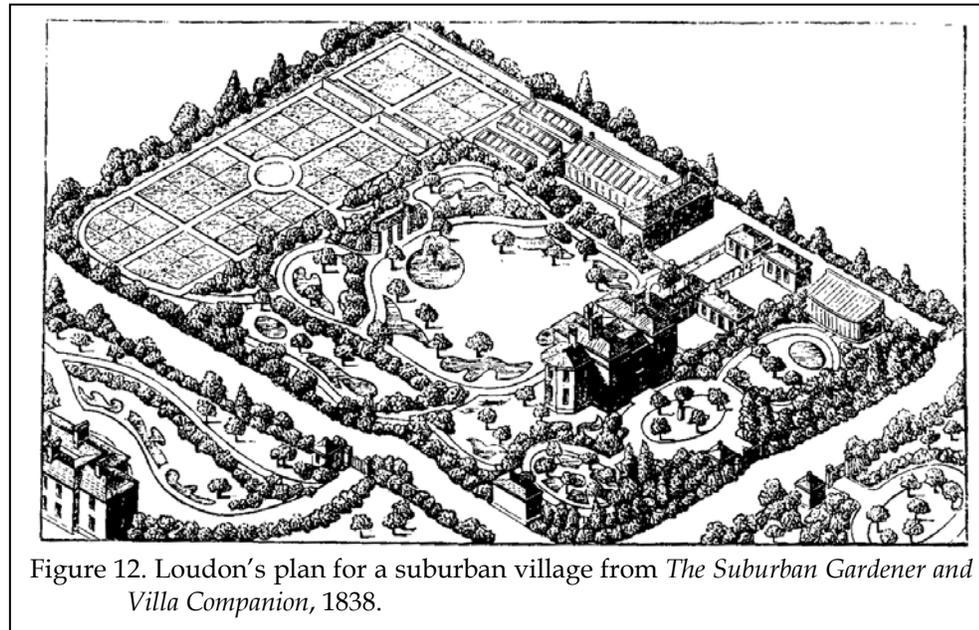


Figure 12. Loudon’s plan for a suburban village from *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion*, 1838.

neglected for the past century (Bisgrove 1990:149).

Loudon’s style was still romantic – the house would be covered in “climbers” (climbing vines) and would have a conservatory. There would be a terrace with shrubs, urns, and statues. Winding paths would lead across a lawn encircled with trees and scattered with flower beds, toward some particular feature – perhaps a rockery, summer house, or pool. Behind the house would be the kitchen gardens and greenhouse. An important feature was that each plant would have its own space, allowing it to be seen separately and ensuring that it would flourish under the best conditions.

Bisgrove synthesizes the “gardenesque,” noting that it involved three distinct concepts. The first was that a garden was a work of art – not of nature. Loudon emphasized that nature and art

Gardens in the South Carolina Low Country

Previous Research

Although gardening history in the Mid-Atlantic has received admirable attention by Sarudy (1998), the more Southern colonies are far less carefully explored. Much of what does exist takes for granted that the gardens of the South Carolina low country followed the evolutionary route of those in England.

Rogers, for example, notes that “in the first half of the eighteenth century the colony’s gardens conformed to the prevailing pattern of formality and practicality that characterized both town and plantation gardens in other colonies” and elsewhere notes that “by mid-century [there was] an awareness of the more naturalized mode of gardening that Pope through his Twickenham example and his writings was promoting” (Rogers 1984:148, 151). Although we have no reason at present to doubt this interpretation it is only fair to note that it is based on relatively scant evidence.

The approach, nevertheless, is repeated by Cothran, who states that the early gardens were not only influenced by European landscape design, but “were very French and formal in character in the style of André Le Nôtre with central and cross axes, decorative parterres, straight walks, statuary, elaborate fountains, and canals” (Cothran 1995:22).

Neither source tackles some of the tougher questions, such as whether there was a time-lag between the activities in England and those in Charleston. For example, while Pope’s garden at Twickenham was begun in 1719, Alicia Hopton was *only hoping* to transform her parents’ more formal garden into this natural style in 1771 – suggesting a 50-year lag.

The transfer from one style to another, if it did take place in any wholesale fashion, is not clearly demonstrated. While Rogers (1984:151-152; and it seems every other historian) describes

with gusto the pictorial and natural style of Crowfield, was this the rule, or the exception? Middleton, as he was attempting to sell his plantation and return to England described his landscaping only as “a neat regular garden,” seemingly emphasizing the formal portion over the remainder.

Nor do these sources deal with any evidence of early gardening styles that might hearken back to the Tudor period or perhaps even earlier. Cothran does provide a brief quote that may begin to suggest the presence of earlier styles, although he doesn’t discuss the idea. Thomas Ashe, in 1682, commented in *Carolina, or a Description of the Present State of That Country*:

their gardens begin to be supplied with such European Plants and Herbs as are necessary for the Kitchen, viz: Potatoes, Lettuce, Colewarts, Parsnip, Turnip, Carrot and Radish; Their gardens also began to be beautified and adorned with such Herbs and Flowers which to the Smell or Eye are pleasing and agreeable, viz: the Rose, Tulip, Carnation and Lilly, Etc. (quoted in Cothran 1995:22).

Although not definitive, this suggests that the early gardens may have been small, formal affairs largely focused on fruits, food, and herbs.

It is difficult to resolve many of these issues since there seem to be no garden plans remaining. Rogers seeks to use sources such as Charles Fraser’s sketches, but these seem unconvincing – at least to us. They certainly show Fraser’s talent and understanding of landscape design (for example, his alteration of the Sheldon Church ruins to conform to a more Gothic impression), but this is not the same as providing careful landscape recordation. If anything, knowledge of Fraser’s willingness to “bend” reality at Sheldon should make us more cautious of accepting his pictorials.

Rogers is also rather cavalier in his assessment that “Shenstone’s and Whately’s ideas for the landscape garden must surely have been in the minds of the Izards as they set about improving the gardens at The Elms” (Rogers 1984:155). We have no idea what might have been in their minds – we have no proof that the Izards had acquired either publication. Nor is there enough of The Elms remaining to allow any good evaluation of either its original or modified form (see, for example, Shaffer 1939: 38-40). It is, in fact, Rogers that recounts to us in his first paragraph David Ramsay’s 1808 admonishment that South Carolina planters “have always too much neglected the culture of gardens” (quoted in

gardens of the state,” listing Michaux’s, Skieveling, Cedar Grove, Oak Forest, Tranquil Hill (the subject of this study), Newington, Bloomfield, The Oaks, The Elms, Crowfield, Fair Lawn, Drayton Hall, Magnolia, Middleton Place, Archdale, Feteressa, Batavia, and Williamson’s. Each of these deserves at least some brief comment.

André Michaux was sent to South Carolina in 1785 to collect specimens for Le Nôtre’s work at Versailles. His garden was actually a nursery for these and the other plants that he was collecting from around the region. Established about 10 miles north of St. Michael’s, in the Goose Creek area, it had been long abandoned by 1860 when visited by Mrs. Poyas. Afterwards it was used for the burning of charcoal and then as the Charleston Air Port (Shaffer 1939:29). This site was briefly examined by Joyce in 1988, although the archaeological study did not explore the garden areas. An 1816 plat of the property (McCrary Plat 2178) reveals the “small house” reported by Michaux’s son in 1805, along with a series of squared garden plots to the west side of the house. The layout is vaguely formal, certainly what would be expected from a botanist working with Le Nôtre.

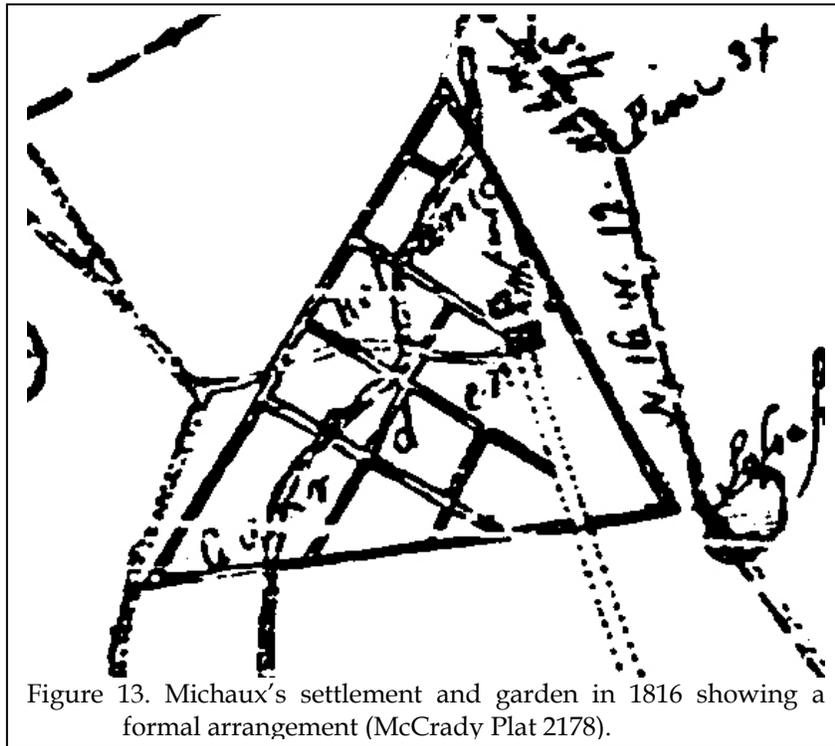


Figure 13. Michaux’s settlement and garden in 1816 showing a formal arrangement (McCrary Plat 2178).

Rogers 1984:148).

Shaffer and Grand Examples of Colonial Gardens

Of course some sources, such as Shaffer (1939) focus on grand gardens (which have often been massively altered), ignoring the larger issues of garden development. Shaffer notes that H.A.M. Smith identified the 18 “outstanding colonial

The Skieveling plantation was on the south (or right) bank of the Ashley between Drayton Hall and the present rail line. It was acquired by Ralph Izard, Jr. in 1785 and Shaffer (1939:30) associates the garden with Izard’s development of the tract. He reports that no trace of the gardens could be found and they were probably destroyed in the process of truck farming.

Cedar Grove was opposite and about 1200 yards up-stream from the Middleton house

on the Ashley River. Shaffer attributes this garden, too, the Izard family. Shaffer reports on various plantings, as well as remains of various drainage devices, but provides no overall account or vision of the garden (Shaffer 1939:32-33).

Oak Forest, also on the Ashley, was another Izard plantation. While Shaffer provides various historical details, his recounting of the garden is limited to "there are still considerable traces of terraces and lakes indicating a garden of

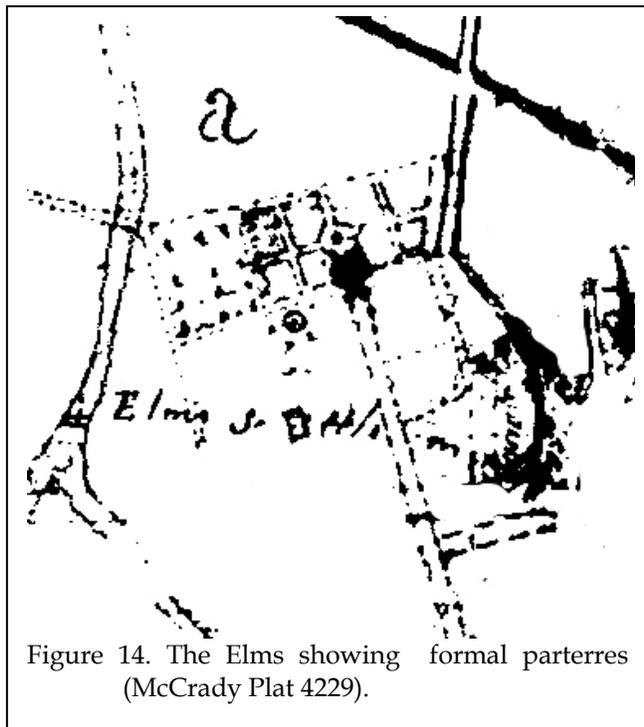


Figure 14. The Elms showing formal parterres (McCrary Plat 4229).

considerable extent" (Shaffer 1939:34).

The next plantation examined by Shaffer is Tranquil Hill, the subject of this report. He briefly reports on the history of the property and the house itself. For the garden, he draws upon Mrs. Poyas, briefly mentioning the "beautiful southern courtyard, with its graveled walks, enclosed with living box, and containing flowers of every hue and tropical fragrance . . . beds of flowers, embowered walks, cool retreats and alcove seats" (quoted in Shaffer 1939:35). By the time of his visit, the site had been plowed and was later covered with a second growth forest.

Although vague, this account certainly suggests some elements of a picturesque landscape, although we may still detect some formal elements, such as the courtyard, graveled walks, and boxwoods.

Newington Plantation's gardens were likely associated with the tenure of the Blake family from about 1710 to 1837 (Shaffer 1939:35). Shaffer reports that the garden, likely designed by Col. Joseph Blake, was "carefully laid out in the English manner of the early Eighteenth century" - suggesting a picturesque garden. There is additional evidence of some formality - including terracing and hedges. The archaeological site was briefly explored by the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology during the 1970s, but no report was ever published and nothing remains of the plantation house or gardens today.

The Bloomfield or Broom Hall plantation (Shaffer 1939:37) is reported to have had an "extensive flower garden" and Shaffer also mentions the fine spring associated with the garden. Extensive salvage archaeology was conducted on the Broom Hall site and while this work focused on the various brick ruins, some effort was also made to document the garden (Trinkley et al. 1995:243-247). Here we have a variety of garden features, clearly documenting both formal (for example, parterre-like arrangements with annuals and shrubs surrounded by box) and informal (*ferme ornée*) elements.

Next Shaffer (1939:38-40) considers The Elms, just north of Otranto and the seat of the Izard family. Although described by Shaffer as the "most forgotten garden in all Carolina," he provides no detail to help evaluate its design.

The Oaks was described in 1875 as still having its original avenue of oaks and "white oyster shell roadway." Also present was a "formal sunken garden directly behind the house" (Shaffer 1939:41). By 1939 the gardens were apparently "restored" and had likely lost any original features.

Shaffer (1939:42-46) next describes at length the Crowfield gardens, at least partially because this is another of the well documented sites in the low country. This is also one of the few plantations in the region that is still relatively well preserved and which has received rather

reflecting pools, parterres, a bosquet or small compartment of trees and shrubs, bowling green, garden structures, several mounts, and various water works. The investigations concluded that “the garden appears to represent a blending of both formal and very early picturesque techniques, yielding a design that is unique in the Carolinas” (Trinkley et al. 1992:58).

Fairlawn, situated in the Moncks Corner area had, by the time discovered by Shaffer, been completely destroyed by brick salvage and the construction of a tram. He reports that he “could find no trace of the gardens” (Shaffer 1939:91).

Drayton, Magnolia, and Middleton hardly need much discussion, being still very active. Yet it is this activity that makes them of questionable authority - we must search through the extant landscape to find evidence of what was there originally. We know that when visited by Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, he commented that Middleton Place was “altogether undeserving the celebrity it enjoys,” while Drayton Hall’s garden “is better laid out, better cultivated and stocked with good trees, than any I hither to seen” (quoted in Rogers 1984:154). Drayton is also the subject of several archaeological studies. One (Lewis 1978) focuses almost exclusively on the structures, while the other (Wheaton 1989) provides a rare glimpse of greenhouse/orangerie construction and use. Regrettably the orangerie work was not able to document plants grown or stored in the structure, although the information provided on its construction is exceptionally useful for comparison with similar structures in the future.

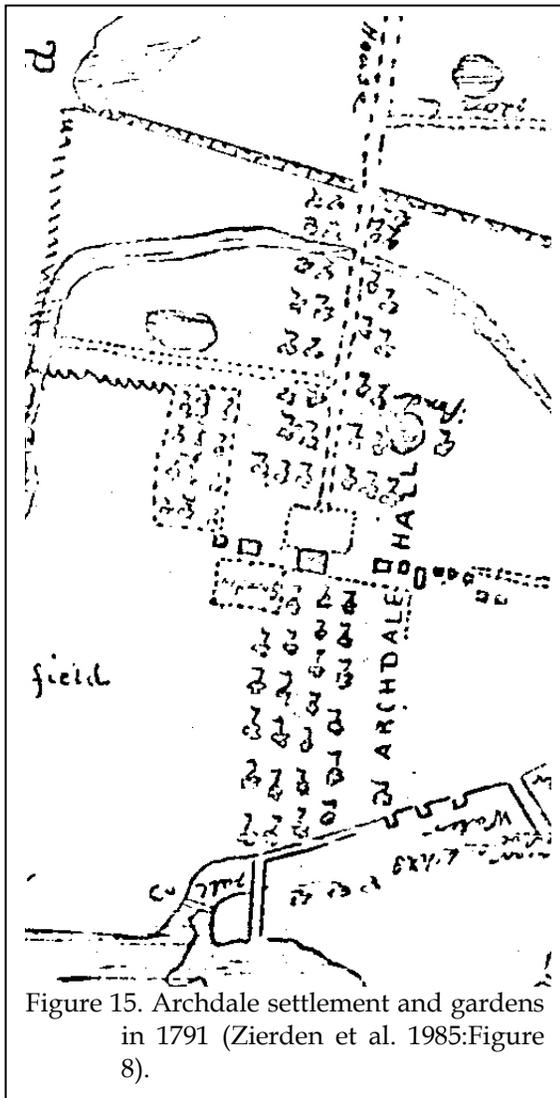


Figure 15. Archdale settlement and gardens in 1791 (Zierden et al. 1985:Figure 8).

detailed archaeological investigations, including study of the gardens (Trinkley et al. 1992, 2003). Crowfield’s gardens were likely created by William Middleton, probably between 1729 and 1742. By 1774 the gardens were “decaying” and this provides us with fairly clear evidence that the gardens were largely constructed when formal designs were dominant. Garden elements include

Archdale is another plantation about which Shaffer has little to say (“little of the original garden plan can be traced”). Nevertheless, it has received at least some archaeological study, although most was directed toward the standing structures (Zierden et al. 1985).

Shaffer himself notes that Feteressa, Dr. Alexander Barron’s garden at Ashley Ferry, was

already destroyed by phosphate works. Nothing could be found of Williamson's gardens near Rantowls, and Batavia had been incorporated into Middleton Place.

We have then a series of colonial plantations with gardens ranging from the largely formal (such as found at Crowfield) to the picturesque or natural (such as seen in the account of Rochefoucauld-Liancourt for Drayton Hall). In-between we have a variety of gardens that seem to include elements of both formality and informality.

Of course, we are hampered since the gardens selected by Shaffer are the most famous. They were owned by the wealthiest of the Carolina planters, individuals who had the capital to not only invest in garden design, but to periodically modify and "improve" their garden, reflecting changing styles and tastes. Not only that, but many of these gardens were "preserved" and, in the process, suffered various periods of "restoration" that may have significantly changed what was present historically. Otherwise, the gardens quickly dissolved into the semi-tropical Charleston climate or have been destroyed by more recent development.

It is therefore difficult to look at these surviving plantations for evidence of garden styles in the low country. It is also difficult to rely on historic accounts since they typically fail to provide the detail we would like or rely on vague statements concerning the "taste" of the owner.

Plats and Newspaper Ads

We are perhaps on firmer ground when we turn to plats and newspaper advertisements. Plats from the Chicora files (collected for various compliance projects and other, albeit non-garden, research) were examined and of the 30 Charleston examples, six were found that were both eighteenth century and also exhibited some degree of garden detail. One was The Elms

(already illustrated) and the other five are illustrated here.

Although this is far from an adequate sample, these drawings consistently show the gardens as four (or in one case, more) parterres. This design feature is a characteristic of the formal seventeenth century gardens of Le Nôtre and his English imitators (see, for example, Hunt 1964:160-161). This suggests that while there may have been interest, at least among the elite, in the new style pictorial gardens, there continued to be, throughout the eighteenth century, a fundamental conservatism in garden design.

Although Richardson's (1943) discussions are primarily descriptive and she does not categorize her gardens as formal or picturesque, many of these same features are reported, based on other plats. For example, William Bolough's garden on Sewee Bay, dating to 1786, shows square beds or parterres in the front of the house, with a semi-circular bed to the rear on the bay (Richardson 1943:22). Other similar plats include Bethune's 1786 plantation on the Stono River, Champney's 1789 plantation on the Wando, and Postell's 1793 St. Bartholomew plantation.

Briggs identifies a February 23, 1786 *South Carolina Gazette* advertisement for the Champney plantation which described the "seven or eight acre" garden in greater detail:

the late proprietor spared neither expense nor pains to store the gardens with trees, plants, shrubs, and flowers of every kind which can minister to use or ornament . . . nature and art are happily unveiled: nature is improved, but no where violated in this delightful spot; and when the whole shall be completed in the same taste and elegance with which it is begun, it will become

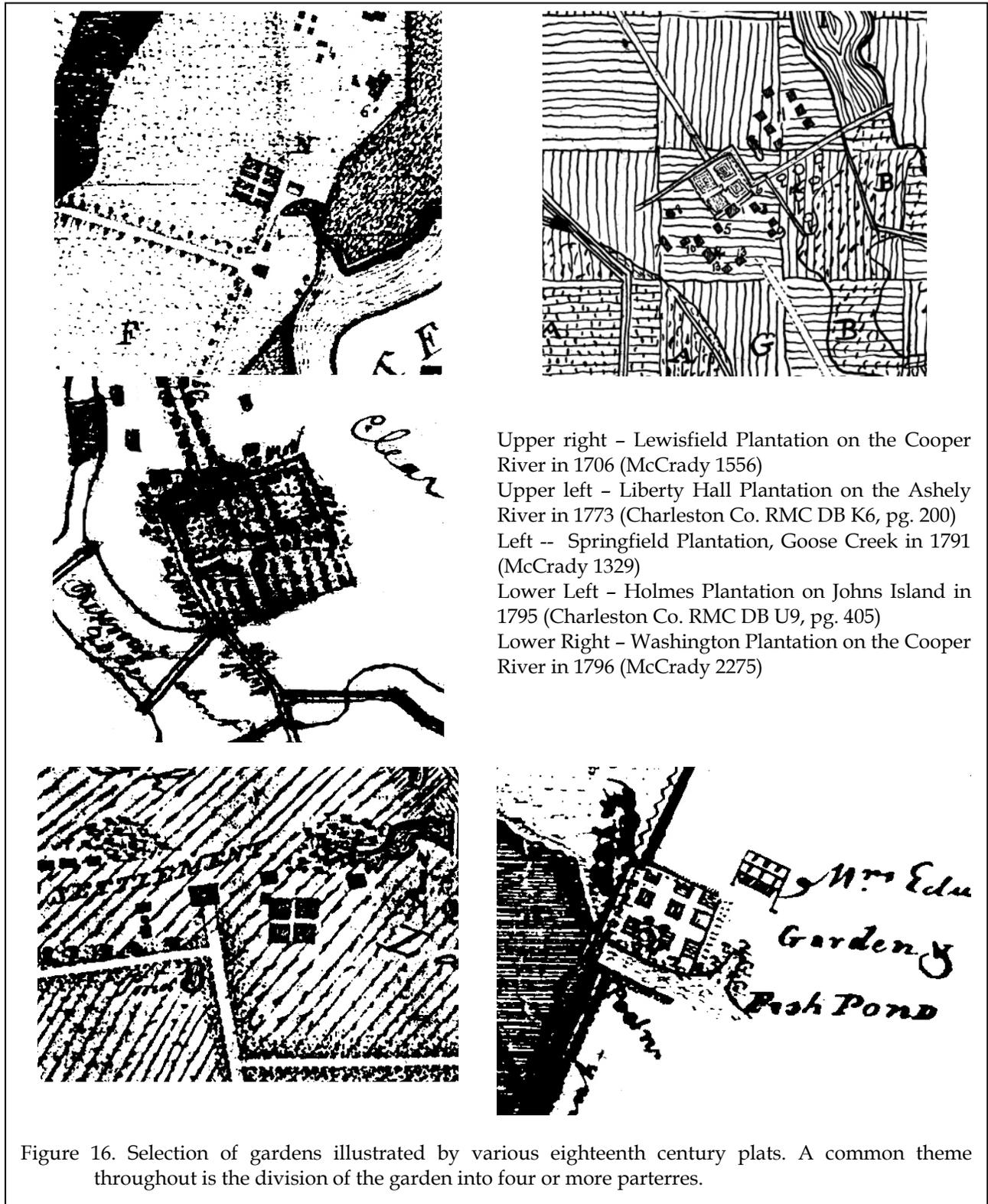


Figure 16. Selection of gardens illustrated by various eighteenth century plats. A common theme throughout is the division of the garden into four or more parterres.

a seat not exceeded in the United States (quoted in Briggs 1951:103).

in a grand and rural manner - *South Carolina Gazette*, January 4, 1734

This account suggests that while the plat shows traditional parterres, the garden also contained picturesque elements. It seems unlikely that newspaper ads, however, will do much to reveal the popularity of different styles. We suspect that what was advertised were styles that were new, in vogue, different, or particularly worthy of comment. It seems likely that a traditional, formal garden might well have been dismissed with one or two words, or perhaps not even have been mentioned at all.

In order to examine the frequency of advertisements for both gardeners and seeds, we undertook a review of Charleston's *South Carolina Gazette* and the *South Carolina and American General Gazette* using the indices prepared by ESCN Database Reports, searching under occupations for "gardener" and under subjects for "gardens" and "seeds." The years examined include 1732-1735, 1740-1745, 1750-1755, 1760-1765, and 1770-1775.

During the 1730s through 1750s advertisements were very unusual, with only three identified for the occupation of gardener and none identified offering seeds for sale. The reasons for this are difficult to determine. It may be that early in Charleston's history gardeners were uncommon and gardens were set out by the proprietor using manuals and published designs. Given the importance of gardening and England the social status that was ascribed to the garden, a less likely explanation is that there were few gardens and little need for gardeners. It is, however, possible that gardeners were simply not acquired through newspaper advertising and so we find little record of their presence. Another problem we discovered late in our research is that at least some were indexed under surveyors. An example is Peter Chassereau,

newly came from London . . . sets out ground for Gardens or Parks,

The reason that no ads were found for seeds is equally difficult to understand. It may be that seeds and similar garden needs were handled by factors and were rarely advertised. Or it may be that they were buried among other merchandise and were not caught by the indexing.

Regardless, by the 1760s the number of advertisements, especially for seeds, increased dramatically. We see not only gardeners, such as John Watson and John Edwards, offering seeds and tools for sale, but also see merchants such as Gibbes and Milner or Thomas Stone offering a wide variety of seeds. There are also at least a few planters advertising for gardeners, such as Stephen Drayton. It may be that the perceived importance of gardening had increased by mid-century.

These ads are typical of those being published by gardeners offering their services:

This is to give Notice to Such Gentlemen and others as have a taste in pleasure and kitchen gardens, that they may depend on having them laid out, leveled and drained, in the most complete manner, and the politest taste, by the subscriber [John Barnes, Garden-Architect]; who perfectly understands the contriving of all kinds of new works, and erecting water works, such as fountains, cascades, grottos (*South Carolina Gazette*, February 25, 1764)

The Subscriber [William Bennett] takes this method to acquaint the Publisher, that he will undertake to MAKE, or put in COMPLETE ORDER, the GARDEN of any Gentleman or LADY in or within

two or three miles of Charleston, at an Easy Expense . . . and can be well recommended by the Gentlemen he came out of England with (*South Carolina and American General Gazette*, May 13, 1771)

The Subscriber [J. Bryant], well acquainted with the European method of gardening, being a native of England, and likewise well acquainted with it in this state . . . proposes superintending ladies and gentlemen's gardens in or near the city whether intended for pleasure or profit – he also plans and lays out gardens in the European taste on moderate terms (*The Charleston City Gazette*, June 6, 1795)

There are also occasional ads for run-away slaves where the individual is described as a gardeners. Cohen (1953:69-70) provides two:

RUN away, an old Negro Man . . . is a Gardener (*South Carolina Gazette*, May 26, 1746)

Run away . . . a servant man . . . a Gardener by trade (*South Carolina Gazette*, January 8, 1750).

Other Accounts

The letterbooks of Robert Pringle (Edgar 1972), covering the period from 1737 through 1745, provide little information concerning gardening during the early period. There are but two mentions of seeds coming from Boston and London, but in both cases were for Pringle's own use. There is no mention of his handling seeds for other planters. Likewise, the occasional mentions of gardens are all concerned with his own person city garden – there is no discussion of planters' gardens.

Turning to the Henry Laurens papers, the early accounts (from 1746 through 1758) fail to mention seeds and the only gardening mention concerns Laurens' own production of oranges at his city garden (Hamer et al. 1968:117).

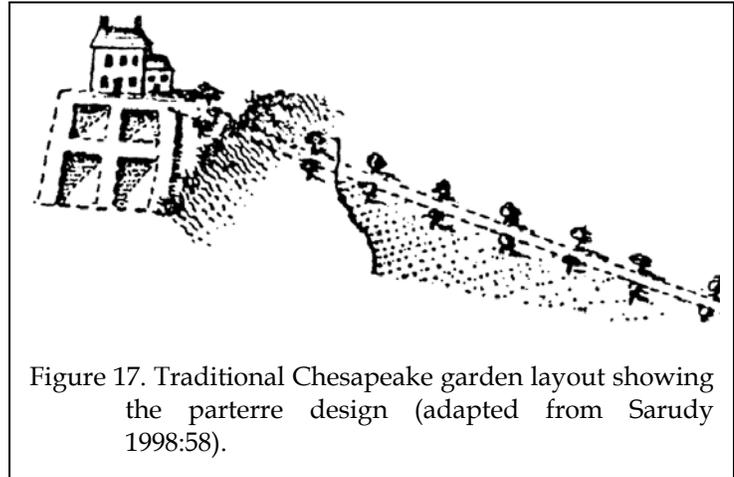


Figure 17. Traditional Chesapeake garden layout showing the parterre design (adapted from Sarudy 1998:58).

Synthesis of Stylistic Changes

While clearly warranting additional research and attention, we are inclined to suggest a perspective different from that of Rogers (1984). We are far less certain than he that the changes seen in England were translated to the Carolinas. There are clearly descriptions and even some plats that show a mix of traditional and picturesque elements or even evidence of designs dominated by the eighteenth century styles of Brown and Repton. Nevertheless, there remain a vast number of plantation gardens that were consistently portrayed as a formal parterre layout.

This is identical to the situation described by Sarudy (1998) for the Mid-Atlantic. She notes that, "generally, Maryland country seat gardeners shared John Adams' negative attitude toward the excesses of the natural grounds movement of the English" (Sarudy 1998:50). She demonstrates that while these Chesapeake gardeners were well aware of the "new English style" and even integrated some aspects such as serpentine entry roads, "they overwhelmingly designed their gardens as traditional squares" (Sarudy 1998:51). She illustrates this with plat after plat showing

order, symmetry, and what is referred to as a quincunx. This later device, classical in origin, is a square with a tree at each corner and one in the center. Moreover, throughout the eighteenth century garden planners in the Mid-Atlantic continued to define garden spaces by outlining beds and squares with borders of fruit trees, box, or other shrub – a clearly traditional and formal approach (Sarudy 1998:58).

She also notes that while Chesapeake planters began to integrate fish ponds into designs in the early nineteenth century, they were as functional – put in to yield fish for the planter’s table – as they were ornamental (Sarudy 1998:60-61).

Cothran argues that the formal style continued well into the nineteenth century:

ornamental gardens of the antebellum period were traditionally formal in design, consisting of a parterre enclosed by a decorative fence or formal hedge, which defined the space and provided protection against the intrusion of livestock and domestic animals. Parterres were composed of a combination of geometric shapes, including squares, triangles, rectangles, and circles, arranged to create a variety of patterns. The designs of parterre gardens at the beginning of the antebellum period were based almost exclusively on standard geometric shapes (Cothran 2003:123)

All of these features, of course, were continued from the earlier seventeenth and eighteenth century formal garden movement.

Cothran also tackles the issue of “high-style” or picturesque gardens head-on, commenting that they were uncommon and there

were “far fewer high-style ornamental gardens than historians have led us to believe” (Cothran 2003:124).

Our research serves to support this notion. Most of the plats show, at best, a mix of styles. Many more show very traditional gardens exhibiting no unique or outstanding features of design, planting, or details. There is little in the way of advertisements to suggest that new styles were being heavily demanded by Carolina planters – and in fact there is little evidence that gardeners were in much demand at all during the first half of the eighteenth century. When high-style gardens are discussed by historians, they are almost always owned by the wealthiest of the Carolina planters – suggesting that while the elite may have been striving to maintain status, the average planter was perfectly content with a traditional garden.

These views are echoed by Bushman (1992:129-130) who notes that most eighteenth century American gardens were both classic and formal. While new styles made inroads, moderating the more severe lines of formal gardens, the “informal and picturesque gardens remained subservient to the dominant influence of formal garden principles” (Bushman 1992:130).

There may be many reasons for this. Certainly the cost of attaining the new style would have been significant. We have previously discussed how English landowners sought to reduce costs by moving away from formal gardens; this commentary, however, does not address the actual costs of tearing out and replacing a garden.

South Carolina also saw a large influx of French Huguenots – individuals who may well have been very familiar with Le Nôtre and even the Dutch designs. This may have encouraged the native conservatism.

Sarudy (1998:141) offers a different perspective, suggesting that gardeners in the Colonies saw the world around them as raw and

untamed. That, coupled with their interest in “ancient precedents” made them inclined to actively desire “orderly gardens” – gardens that sought to tame, not promote, nature – gardens that made sense out of the wilderness. She notes that “just as the English were rebelling against their ‘ancient’ geometric garden designs,” in America they “were clinging to the formality of the classical past.” She suggests that perhaps the Americans were looking to the security of precedents to “reinforce their present unsteady situation.” An important concept in botanical gardens was that by understanding and ordering plants, man was able to understand and order the world around him and the universe at large. Colonial planters may have been searching for similar paths to order and understanding – and the traditional garden was the best avenue for this understanding.

Moreover, it does make sense that the ordered, traditional, and hierarchical aspects of classical terraced gardens with neat parterres appealed to gentry, who were beginning to lose their sense of privilege and rank. Whatever the reason, she maintains – and we see evidence in Low Country gardens – that Americans were clinging to European gardening traditions rather than adopting the natural pleasure gardens of the new styles.

Put simply, South Carolina planters were on a daily basis battling nature around them – to clear fields, to drain swamps, to control their African American slaves, to maintain their health – they may have had no desire to “promote” or “encourage” nature – their world was all about control. And the formal garden helped them see fulfillment of this effort. Bushman extends this concept, noting that the manor garden was an extension of the parlor – “a place where polite people walked and conversed” (Bushman 1992:130). The garden was an extension of the house and the master wished for the garden to be as refined, genteel, and polished as the remainder of the house – and this was best accomplished

by the formal garden design.

A Brief Word About Urban Gardens

Although we are focusing on the rural gardens, it is important to recognize that the elite also had gardens on their town lots in places like Charleston. Cothran (1995:30) notes that “fine gardens were by no means limited to the grand estates outside of Charleston but were equally prominent within the city as well.” He notes two of the more famous – Mrs. Thomas Lamboll’s ca. 1750 kitchen and flower garden on the west side of King about at the present location of Lamboll Street and Martha Logan’s garden on Meeting Street. There is also Henry Lauren’s 4-acre town house garden on East Bay where he planted a wide variety of materials, both local and imported.

These Charleston gardens frequently appear in the McCrady plats and even briefly scanning the plats reveals the commonalities mentioned by Cothran (1995:34-35). The gardens were generally surrounded by a brick wall and were laid out in simple geometric patterns using square and rectangular beds. Depending on the size there might be included an orchard,

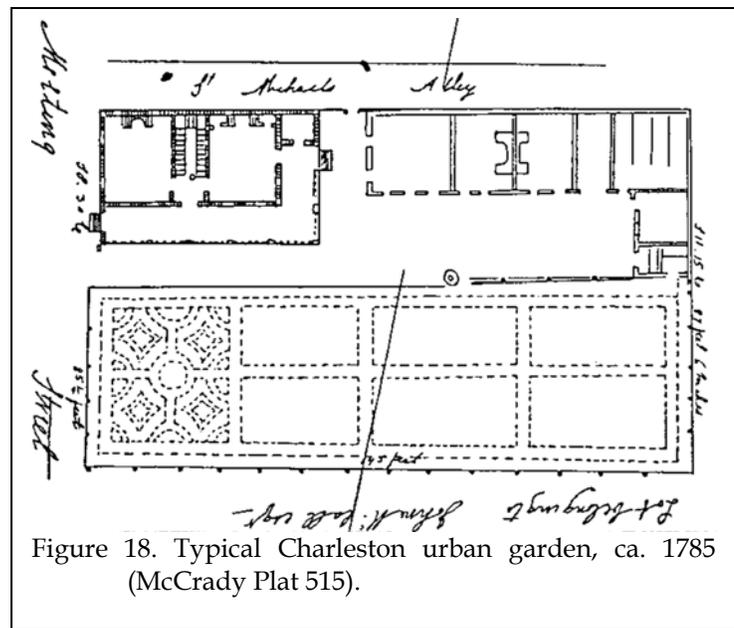


Figure 18. Typical Charleston urban garden, ca. 1785 (McCrady Plat 515).

vegetable, or flower garden – all in a formal design.

These designs clearly hearken back to the knot gardens. Designed to be looked down upon, this feature was perfect for the urban setting where the adjacent house would be multistoried and include piazzas overlooking the garden. Plantings and gravels combined to create patterns and walkways (Hunt 1964:144-145).

These urban gardens also adopted the traditional styles of the miniature formal Dutch gardens. Characteristics included an enclosing wall, arbors and bowers, low box hedges with

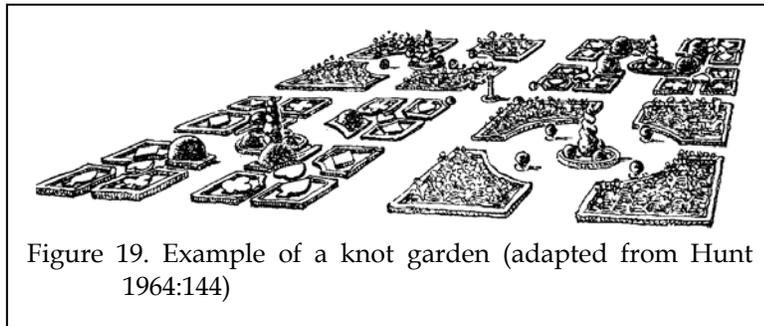


Figure 19. Example of a knot garden (adapted from Hunt 1964:144)

decorative borders, flower beds, and potted plants placed on tiles. Lavish decoration increased, achieved by formal diversity in all the structural elements and a variety of smells and colors (Oldenburger-Ebbers 1992:164).

The study of these gardens is in some respects easier than plantation gardens since there are a variety of sources that typically are present, including family papers and plats. Nevertheless, these gardens have often been dramatically altered by years of mindless “restoration” lacking in any vague notion of garden conservation (see, for example, Gouly 1993, Reynolds 2001).

The Role of Archaeology

Given the British interest in gardens, their design, and history, it isn’t unexpected that some of the earliest published garden archaeology is English. Taylor (1983) provides a brief overview that focused largely on the ability to recognize gardens through the evidence left behind on the

landscape. A variety of aerial photographs reveal the impact of garden design coupled with the relative absence of other disturbing factors at that time. The text does not, however, offer any specific examples of archaeological study (for example, there is not a single plate of an archaeological excavation), and the reader is left to wonder if perhaps the archaeologist is just a keener observer of the obvious than most other people.

By 1990 Kelso and Most had published *Earth Patterns: Essays in Landscape Archaeology* and this publication is much of what Taylor’s is not. The authors in this edited work recount a variety of archaeological approaches used to study various landscape and garden issues. Kelso (1990:9) notes that gardens are large and require massive amounts of archaeology, although this labor may be reduced through judicious use of aerial photography and historic documents – issues of considerable importance in Taylor’s earlier work. Kelso goes on to emphasize the importance of both hand-excavated and machine cut trenches – the movement of large amounts of soil maximizing the opportunities for encountering features identified through historical research at the garden. Some of these features, such as tree roots, were examined through the production of casts; other features were examined using more conventional archaeological approaches. Finally, he notes – at least from his own example at Monticello – that garden artifacts are often uncommon but significant indicators of activity.

While intending to take nothing away from this seminal work, all but two of the authors in this volume focus on the use of conventional archaeological techniques coupled with fortuitously massive amounts of historical documentation. Those two are worth note since they urge archaeologists to begin integrating pollen and phytolith studies into garden archaeology (Schoenwetter 1990 and Rovner 1990, respectively).

These early efforts were a guiding light for the Crowfield archaeological study (Trinkley et al. 1992). Although the investigations were limited to a single week by a small crew, the study not only documented the physical landscape, but also explored below-ground evidence of garden construction. The landscape and its arrangement were mapped, helping to recognize individual features alluded to in the historic accounts. This work also began to allow the totality of the landscape to be viewed and better understood. Although the time allotted to excavation did not allow trenching in order to identify walkways, the investigations did document the addition of spoil to raise the terrace garden and create the birms. Linear plantings were also discovered along the interior edge of the birm where there was a planting bed several feet in depth. Investigations also explored the garden structures, documenting the plaster and its paint. Although these buildings have traditionally been viewed as “planting sheds,” this research also suggested their similarity to exedras or “niches” such as those found at sites such as Bacon’s Castle. Unfortunately, this work missed the opportunity to examine pollen and phytolith samples.

By 1994 Naomi F. Miller and Kathryn L. Gleason offered *The Archaeology of Garden and Field*. This work provides additional advancements, including the work by Miller and Gleason (1994b) on the use of macronutrients to document garden activities, with a brief mention of pollen and phytoliths (a topic further examined by Fish [1994]).

Perhaps the most useful article, however, is that by Yentsch and Kratzer (1994). They focus on the “reading” of the soil in order to identify and explore landscape features. They acknowledge that the process is time consuming - and hence expensive - and note that “previewing techniques” are indispensable. While there are no doubt others, they specifically list remote sensing, mechanical stripping, trenching, the excavation of intermediate units, topographic analysis, and various probes (Yentsch and Kratzer 1994:173).

They also focus on the analysis, emphasizing that to be successful it is critical to establish the boundaries of the garden, identify its major axis, and locate the various passageways through it (Yentsch and Kratzer 1994:181). Finally, they encourage archaeologists to examine the design of the garden, recognizing that “eighteenth century garden design often used a proportional grid based on a simple geometric form, the 3:4:5 rectangle, ideal proportions in Renaissance design” (Yentsch and Kratzer 1994:195).

It would seem with this background combining science, gardening, design, and art, the exploration of gardens would be a central theme in the Carolina Low Country. Yet it is not. As one more recent example, Byra (1996) attempted to examine the Middleburg Plantation landscape, but failed to get past issues of dominance and power.

A far more impressive effort is the research conducted by Zierden (2001) at 14 Legare Street in downtown Charleston. Her work explores the architecture of the garden, identifying (among other features) the serpentine walks laid out in shell. Her research masterfully integrates pollen and phytolith studies with soil chemistry to present a unified interpretative approach. She also documents at least some of the nineteenth century changes to the eighteenth century garden, ensuring recognition that the landscape was not frozen in time.

Although the work at 14 Legare Street benefited from sponsors that were interested in the landscape for its own sake, as well as from the massive historical documentation available and the circumscribed nature of the urban garden, the research deserves to be imitated by others.

Research Needs

Certainly it seems that with the vast amount of compliance archaeology being done on Low Country plantations, coupled with the constant admonishment for historical archaeology not to simply repeat what has been learned in the

past, that garden archaeology would be far further advanced than it is. Several factors, however, appear to be holding research back.

The first is that when we leave the urban setting, historical documents (including plans, diaries, account books, and letters) decline precipitously. Recognizing that archaeology should not be the handmaiden of history, this should not necessarily pose a significant impediment. Nevertheless, lacking historical accounts to suggest significance, or even clear evidence that a garden existed, archaeologists seem more inclined to focus on structures.

reduction in funding for the main house or slave row.

There is a desperate need to expand research since failing to do so will allow a finite resource to be lost with virtually no investigation. For example we return to the 10 “best” colonial gardens identified by Shaffer (1939) (recognizing that his identification of “best” does not necessarily mean that the gardens are “representative”).

These 10 gardens – Michaux, Skieveling, Cedar Grove, Oak Forest, Tranquil Hill, Newington, Bloomfield, The Elms, The Oaks, and

Crowfield – were all extant at the time of his writing over 60 years ago. Their status today is shown in Table 1. Of these 10 sites at least half have been destroyed or are significantly affected. One’s preservation is uncertain. And only three of the 10 are sufficiently preserved to be suitable for future study – a rather dismal “success” rate for cultural resource protection or study.

Plantation	Current Status	Archaeological Study
Michaux	Owned by SCE&G	Limited
Skieveling	Probably destroyed	None
Cedar Grove	At least 50% destroyed	None
Oak Forest	Destroyed	None
Tranquil Hill	Destroyed	This study
Newington	Destroyed	None
Broom Hall	Destroyed	Limited
The Elms	Uncertain	None
The Oaks	Owned by Charleston Post	None
Crowfield	Owned by Westvaco	Limited

The second factor affecting garden research is that the very cultural resource protection legislation that allows so much research to be done through the Section 106 process also hinders new and innovative work. Cultural resource archaeology is a business and, as such, most contracts for data recovery are awarded on the basis on low bid – a process that does not encourage innovative or speculative research. Put another way, with no regulatory agency suggesting that garden archaeology might be an important factor to consider, there is little motivation to expand research into an area that is both costly and uncertain. This is especially true if the archaeologist fears that expending time and monies in the garden will result in a commiserate

Of course, if we were to consider the gardens of smaller plantations then the numbers increase and we retain the potential for much productive study. Unfortunately, these gardens are typically poorly documented and often overlooked by archaeologists. As a consequence the most critical research need is a improved awareness of and interest in landscape research.