

TYPE AND ASSORTMENT OF ORNAMENTAL SPECIES FROM THE TRADITIONAL ROMANIAN GARDENS

TIPOLOGIE ȘI SORTIMENT DE SPECII ORNAMENTALE ÎN GRĂDINILE TRADIȚIONALE ROMÂNEȘTI

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Abstract. The assortment of ornamental plants specific for traditional gardens have registered, over time, a remarkable evolution. If in the past the traditional garden was occupied mainly with vegetables and aromatic herbs, ornamental character of the species being often complementary, over time, plants were introduced in culture for decorative purposes only. Brought from the spontaneous flora by villagers or introduced in various ways from other parts of the world, traditional plants have enriched the assortment of present days and reached an impressive number of species and cultivars. This paperwork presents the assortment of ornamental species specific to the traditional Romanian gardens, the arrangement of these plants in the garden area and the purpose for which they were used. At the same time, the ornamental plants commonly used and which have a defining role in shaping the character of these gardens are highlighted.

Key words: peasant homestead, traditional garden, ornamental plants

Rezumat. Sortimentul de plante ornamentale specifice grădinilor tradiționale a cunoscut, de-a lungul timpului, o evoluție remarcabilă. Dacă în trecut grădina tradițională era ocupată în special cu plante legumicole și aromatice, caracterul ornamental al speciilor fiind, de cele mai multe ori, complementar, în decursul timpului au fost introduse plante cultivate în scop exclusiv decorativ. Aduse din flora spontană de către locuitorii satelor ori introduse prin diverse căi din alte zone ale lumii, acestea au îmbogățit sortimentul, ajungând astăzi la un număr impresionant de specii și cultivaruri. Lucrarea de față prezintă evoluția sortimentului de specii ornamentale specifice grădinilor tradiționale românești, modul de dispunere al acestora în perimetrul grădinii, precum și scopul pentru care acestea au fost utilizate. Totodată, sunt evidențiate plantele cu caracter ornamental frecvent folosite și care au un rol definitoriu la conturarea caracterului acestor grădini.

Cuvinte cheie: gospodăria țărănească, grădina tradițională, plante ornamentale

INTRODUCTION

The traditional Romanian garden has raised, over time, the interest of researchers and specialists in the field, mainly from the point of view of the plant assortment of utilitarian and ornamental plants that are found in it, but also

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regarding the elements connected to the typology and organization manner of the traditional garden.

The gardens on Romanian territory initially occupied small surfaces and were mainly utilitarian in nature (Iliescu, 2008), the spontaneous flora and natural landscape being predominant in peasant gardens up to the end of the 11th century (Glăman and Mircea, 2003). From the earliest times, a series of flower plants were appreciated in villages, such as the spotted tulip, lily, basil, mint, sage, sweet William, colchicum, wood lily, anemone, bluet etc. these being introduced in the utilitarian garden, some from the spontaneous flora, often with multiple usages (Glăman and Mircea, 2003). During the years, the plant assortment has greatly increased (Iliescu, 2008) so that the garden has become a mixture of plants, in which, from spring to late autumn, flowers such as hyacinths, daffodils, tulips, peonies, lilies, poppies, daisies, dahlia, chrysanthemums and many other showcase their beauty and fragrance one after the other, true colour oasis of an unique charm.

The purpose of the present paper is the identification of the ornamental flowers assortment from traditional Romanian gardens, with reference to the specifics of peasant gardens in the NE of Romania, namely Botoșani and Suceava districts.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to reach the paper's target, we have set the following objectives: monitoring the evolution of the species assortment identified over time in the rural garden, determination of the purpose (usefulness) of the used plants; identification of the ornamental plants that are commonly found in the traditional Romanian garden and that contribute to the definition of its character.

In order to draw up this paper, besides the theoretical documentation, we have also used the case study methods for Suceava and Botosani districts. In these areas, we have analysed a series of homesteads where we have monitored several aspects connected to the existent ornamental species, namely: number of individuals, vigour, purpose of the cultivation, associations and position covered in the garden.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Even in Romania we can't really talk about an art of gardening, as currently known, until the end of the 19th century, following the study and analysis of the existent documents and papers on this subject, we can draw up a basic pattern of the traditional Romanian garden that has evolved over time and suffered more or less positive influences.

For the Romanian peasant, nature has been a source of inspiration, and a part of nature reproduced in his garden, has always represented beauty, and has been his ideal from this point of view. Nature has been seen as a real "mother" that has taught him the secrets of gardening and to whom he has remained faithful for centuries. "Nature has always seemed unsurpassable to the Romanian individual" (Toma, 2001).

The plants used in the Romanian garden have never been ranked based on value, because the reasons why these plants have been selected for the garden are many and hard to separate. The aspect, fragrance, shape, colour diversity and last but not least the specific connotations (poetical, holly, healing etc.) have made them all equally important. "The roses, calendulas, forget-me-not, tulips, basil, jasmine bushes or cloves are valuable in nature's kingdom" (Toma, 2001).

The favourite manner to position these in the garden is that inspired from nature, where "the elements cannot be distinct, and lose themselves in each other, forming abundant and wild greenery". "For us, the entanglement, thickness and vigour of the plants are beautiful, like in a forest, like the mixture of flowers on a meadow" (Toma, 2001).

This preference in the positioning of ornamental plants is kept even nowadays in the traditional Romanian gardens, but there are some differences determined by the ethnographic characteristic of the area, by the ecopedoclimatic and economic conditions, etc. Thus, in Bucovina area, with more favourable climate conditions, the tendency to landscape the gardens with a more varied assortment of flower plants and more specimens is more evident (fig. 1 a-d).



Fig. 1 (a - d) - Manner of positioning ornamental species in the traditional garden from Bucovina (original)

The traditional garden in Botoșani, located in a poorer area with natural conditions that are less favourable for plant culture, we notice a decrease in the number of species, and specimens from the same species (fig. 2 a, b).



Fig. 2 (a, b) - Manner of positioning ornamental species in the traditional garden of Botoșani district (original)

Regarding the assortment of flower species characteristic for the traditional Romanian gardens, documents show that at the end of the 19th century, the following plants were among the most loved by the Romanian: basil, tansy, carnation, spleenwort, pelargonium, wormseed, reseda and marjoram (Marian, 2008). At the same time, a series of ornamental species were cultivated in gardens for “the beauty and fragrance of the flowers” the most common being: “tulip, hyacinth, snowdrop, daffodil, lily, viola, rose, gillyflower, sunflower, tuberose, garden balsam, colchicum, marigold” (Marian, 2008).

Analysing the flower species on the Romanian territory from a historic point of view, botanist Al. Borza classified them depending on their origin and age on the Romanian territory.

The oldest botanical inheritance are the species coming directly from the Romanian spontaneous flora (atropa, inula, hellebore, evergreen, wood lily and bluebonnet, peony - *Paeonia romanica*, cranesbill etc.) that are accompanied by a series of plants with large scale spread, that were cultivated more for their fragrance than for decor purposes. This group includes the rose, lily, basil, mint, sage, marjoram, balm, savory, tansy, marigold (Borza, 1960).

The species that were introduced in the Middle Ages (and later) in Western Europe, through boyar courts or by the population that have settled on Romanian territory have enlarged the variety of the plants cultivated in gardens. The Saxons, Hungarians and Germans have introduced many flowers that have in time become very popular in villages, such as: pelargonium (originally from the South of Africa), slippers (of American origin, gilly), sempervivum, gillyflower, carnation, robia, reseda. Hyacinths, mallow and almost all lilacs have entered horticulture due to the Turks, in the 16th century. Marigolds, nowadays very popular in Romanian gardens have come from America, through the Turks as well.

From the category of the flowers brought to Romania for more than two centuries, introduced in Europe from other continents (North America or Far East) we have: the autumn cutleaf coneflower, chrysanthemums, yellow cone-flowers, cosmos, sunflower, dahlia, carnation, verbena and lavender.

The range of ornamental plants used for the decoration of Romania gardens varies from one region to the other.

In 1952-1953, following an ethno-botanical campaign carried out in several representative regions of the country the ornamental flower plants species cultivated in peasant gardens at that time were identified: Banat - 71 species; Muntenia - 90 species; North of Moldavia - 54 species; South of Moldavia and North of Dobrogea - 102 species; Oltenia - 123 species; Transylvania – over 200 species (Borza, 1960).

In time, the assortment of ornamental species has evolved, so that some old species, frequently cultivated in the past have disappeared from the traditional garden, along with the customs connected to their cultivation. Others have remained up to present day, and their cultivation is extremely popular.

Among the old species whose culture is no longer popular or has even disappear we can list: velvetleaf (*Abutilon theophrasti*), southernwood (*Artemisia abrotanum*), absinth (*Artemisia absinthium*), sweet wormwood (*Artemisia annua*), milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), belladonna (*Atropa belladonna*), safflower (*Carthamus tinctorius*), wormseed (*Chenopodium ambrosioides*), costmary (*Chrysanthemum balsamita*), mugwort (*Chrysanthemum vulgare*), inula (*Inula helenium*), majoram (*Majorana hortensis*), mignonette (*Reseda odorata*).

Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), mint, savoy (*Satureja hortensis*), lily (*Lilium candidum*), calendula (*Calendula officinalis*), wood lily (*Convallaria majalis*), peony (*Paeonia* sp.) are part of the categories of plants frequently cultivated at present. These can be considered basic species that make up the plant assortment specific for traditional gardens. Besides these, rural gardens from the studied area (North of Moldavia – Suceava and Botoşani district) show at present a large number of ornamental plants that insure the decor for the entire period of vegetation. Flower species such as: common hollyhock (*Althaea rosea*), amaranth (*Amaranthus* sp.), European columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*), aster (*Aster* sp.), aster (*Callistephus chinensis*), celosia (*Celosia cristata*), wallflower (*Cheiranthus cheirii*), chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum indicum*), ox-eye (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*), garden cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus*), dahlia (*Dahlia hybrida*, *D. variabilis*), sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*, *D. chinensis*), snow-on-the-mountain (*Euphorbia marginata*), gladiola (*Gladiolus gandavensis*), sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*), yellow lily (*Hemerocallis* sp.), autumn lily (*Hosta plantaginea*), hyacinth (*Hyacinthus orientalis*), garden balsam (*Impatiens balsamina*), lupin (*Lupinus* sp.), four o'clock flower (*Mirabilis jalapa*), daffodil (*Narcissus poeticus*, *N. pseudonarcissus*), flowering tobacco (*Nicotiana* sp.), poppy (*Papaver orientale*), phlox (*Phlox paniculata*), primula (*Primula* sp.), ricinus (*Ricinus communis*), cutleaf coneflower (*Rudbeckia laciniata*), sage (*Salvia splendens*), houseleek (*Sempervivum tectorum*), marigolds (*Tagetes erecta*,

T. patula, *T. signata*), garden nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*), zinnias (*Zinnia elegans*) are often seen in the studied area.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The ornamental species assortment from the traditional Romanian gardens is varied and rich, including both species from the spontaneous flora and cultivated ones.

2. The traditional garden has evolved through time, from the utilitarian purpose garden to the garden that has a predominantly aesthetic purpose. More and more species are cultivated for exclusively ornamental purposes, which shows the housewives' interest for beauty; the flower garden –simple or mixed, being, oftentimes a visit card for the one taking care of it.

3. Regarding the number of used plants, the geo-climatic conditions and the economic status of the area, differences can be registered from one area to another, so that at the mountains or in smaller villages it is reduced and in the plains or in the villages near urban centres their number is significantly increased.

4. With the development of the peasant homestead, the flower assortment has changed, some species keeping their location in the traditional garden up to the present, while other, whose culture was significant in the past, have either disappeared today, or are cultivated on a sporadic basis. In parallel, a series of new plants have started to be cultivated for several decades, and are always present in the gardens of Romanian villages.

5. The resistant, unpretentious species, with a good breeding capacity (through self-seeding, division of bushes, root suckers, yearling etc.) are preferred by the inhabitants of villages who exchange propagating material among themselves.

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