

Useful Plants in Clusius' Garden (1594) : Fruit, Vegetables and Ornamentals

Abstract

In the first inventory of the Leiden Botanical Garden (1594) Carolus Clusius listed more than a thousand species and varieties of plants. Only about a third of this collection consisted of the traditional European medicinal plants. The greater part of the garden was planted with any plant Clusius thought worth studying.

There were very few European edible plants, but a number of rare and interesting food plants from the Middle East and the America.

A large part of the collection consisted of ornamental plants from various parts of the world then known to European scientists. From a garden history viewpoint the identification of these plants is essential.

The remaining plants have no known use to man and were planted for purely scientific reasons, thus making the Leiden Garden a real Hortus Botanicus.

Leslie Tjon Sie FAT
National Museum of Natural History
Dept. of Exhibition and Education
P.O.B. 9517
NL - 2300 RA LEIDEN, The Netherlands