

Damsgård Garden, the Plants Used in a Restored and Reconstructed Baroque Garden from 1780

Abstract

The garden at Damsgård in Bergen originates from the early 18th century and reached its full development under the period of Baron Gyldenkrantz about 1780. Very little is known about the garden at that time. The most important remains are a carp pond, a duck pond, several original garden sculptures and some elm trees.

The garden has been reconstructed to what it might have looked like in the late 18th century, in connection with a restoration of the house. It had a curiously mixed function with intricate patterns of strict, formal symmetry of the gardens of Europe, with ornamental plants, but also served as a garden for medicinal plants. In western Norway Damsgård must have looked luxurious, but in a European context it was a miniature, and this has enabled us to consider all important details in the reconstruction.

As a matter of principle, all the plants used in the reconstruction are known to have been grown in late 18th century Norway. Generally very few trees and ornamental plants were available, due to the country's remote position in Europe. They had to be transported as living specimens, an uncertain and expensive method that inevitably limited their availability. Bulbs and seeds of annuals and biennials travelled more easily, and plants of these groups were much more plentiful. This historical period valued cultivated varieties in colours which were unusual for the particular species. Double (flore pleno), balllike blooms were especially popular. A heavy, intense fragrance was also a typical preference of that period.

Many of the plants in the present garden have been brought from cottages or parsonages in remote parts of Norway, where they had not been replaced by modern cultivated varieties. In our search for the correct old varieties we have also been assisted by several persons and institutions, particularly the Royal Horticultural Society, London.

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Fig. 1. The Rococco building of Damsgård from about 1780 seen from the north. The miniature Baroque garden lies close to the main house on the left, and a carp-pond and a duck-pond to the right (Photo T. Indahl).



Fig. 2. The Baroque garden with Taxus baccata, Buxus sempervirens, and varieties of the different species used in the 18th century (Photo Bergen Reklame Foto).



Fig. 3. Two of the quarters are for ornamental species only with *Lavendula angustifolium* and old varieties of *Primula*, *Tagetes erecta*, *Dianthus barbatus*, *Rosa*, etc. (Photo D. Moe).



Fig. 4. The duck-pond with two Rouen-ducks (Photo G. Jørgensen).



Fig. 5. The «Maiden's blush» rose from the 15th century. (Photo P.M. Jørgensen).



Fig. 6. The filled *Ranunculus aconitifolium* (Photo D.Moe).