

FRUIT IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY GARDENS

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Sandra is a horticulturist by training but garden history and conservation of historic designed landscapes has become the focus of her work more recently. She is researching these landscapes as artistic works resulting from the culture and society of the time in which they were created, both in the UK and abroad. One of her specialist interests is the role of fruit in historic gardens. Sandra also assists with the Design Summer Schools that are run each year by CADE at Writtle, and is the Conservation Officer for the Essex Gardens Trust



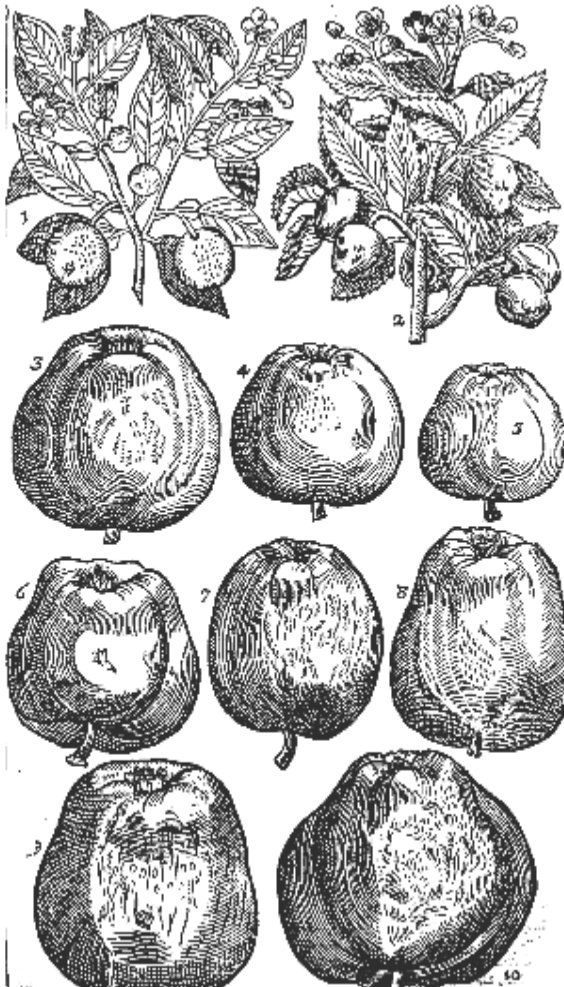
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When one thinks historically of fruit in the garden, it is likely that the image conjured up will be the walled kitchen garden of the 19th century but two centuries earlier fruit was a major component of the pleasure garden. It would be easy to assume that fruit was only grown for productive purposes but in the 17th century fruit was important for medicinal, culinary, aesthetic and spiritual or philosophical reasons. The concept of 'profit and pleasure' was an important underlying philosophical tenet of the 17th century. Garden owners would take pleasure in observing fruit at different stages of growth knowing that all being well, a profitable crop would result at harvest time. Ralph Austen's *A Treatise of Fruit Trees* (1653) which examines 'profit and pleasure' in detail, was strongly linked to the Puritanical movement. Oliver Cromwell's government was encouraged to promote the widespread growing of fruit.

The 17th century was an important period in the development of fruit culture; much literature was devoted to the subject, particularly in the later part of the century. However the early literature tended to be based on mythical or astronomical beliefs rather than scientific fact. There were however a few notable books in the pre-Civil War period such as William Lawson's *A New Orchard and Garden* (1618), and John Parkinson's *Paradisi in Sole Paradisus or A Garden of Pleasant Flowers* (1629), which included a section on the orchard. Lawson's book later became influential in

the 20th century Arts and Crafts movement when there was a renewed interest in using fruit in the flower garden (for example as a backdrop to the herbaceous border) and in creating decorative orchards where Clematis and hops would be trained up apple trees. Parkinson's book is fascinating in that he provides detail on different fruit grown at that time listing over 48 varieties of apple, 5 of apricots, 29 of cherries, 3 of figs, 6 of nectarines, 19 of peaches, 54 of pears, 53 of plums plus other fruit including currants, gooseberries, quinces, medlars, filberts and grapes. This is a much wider range of fruit than we can find in our shops today!



1. *Malus Arantia*—The Orange Tree
2. *Malus*—The Apple Tree
3. *Malum Carbonarium*—The Pomewater: *'is an excellent good and great whitifh apple, full of fap and moifture, fomewhat pleafant fharpe, but a little bitter withal; it will no laft long, the winter frofts caufing it to rot, and perifh'*
4. *Malum Curtipendulum*—The golden Pippin: *'the greateft and beft of all sorts of pippin'*
5. *Melapium*—The Pearmaine: *'differeth little either in tafte or durabilitie from the pippin and therefore next vnto it is accounted the beft of all apples'*
6. *Malus Regineum*—The Queens Apple: *'is of two forts, both of them greate faire red apples and well relifhed' but the greater is the beft'*
7. *Malum primis maturaum*—The Genneting: *'is a very pleafant and good apple'*
8. *Malum Regale*—The pound Royall: *'is a very great apple, of a very good and fharpe tafte.'*
9. *Malum Kentij ad feruefcendum*—The Kentish Codlin: *'is a faire great greenifh apple, very good to eat when it is ripe; but the beft to coddle of all apples.'*
10. *Malum Regineum/spurium*—The Bardfield Quining: or *'Baffard Queene apple is like the other (Queene's apple) for forme and colour, but not of good in tafte.'*

Drawings and quotes from John Parkinson, *'Paradisi in sole, paradisus terrestris.'* Faithfully reprinted from the edition of 1626' by Methuen & Co London 1904.

In later 17th century the literature was much more scientific in approach, reflecting the scientific advances occurring at this time both here and abroad, where fruit culture was just as important. Several important books were translated in to English, allowing gardeners here to benefit from new and improved growing techniques, such as Antoine Le Gendre's *The Manner of Ordering Fruit Trees* (1660) and Nicholas Venette's *The Art of Pruning*, published in 1685. Pruning and training was an

important part of fruit culture; pruning of wall fruit was rudimentary, more akin to shearing a hedge. Le Gendre advocated a more targeted approach:

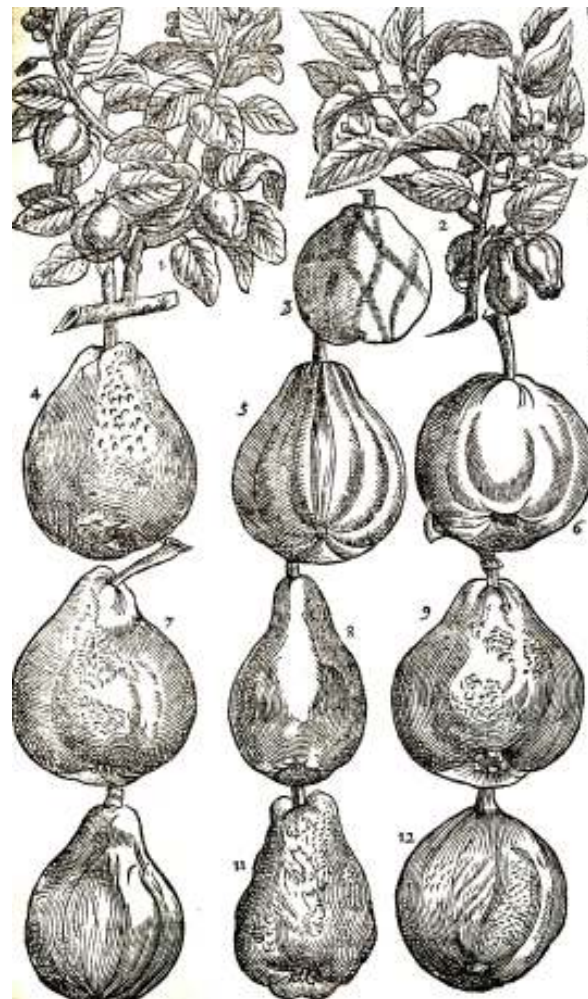
Guide them all [the branches] like the fingers of a mans hand when it is open, or like the ribs of a Fan when extended

This fan shape for the training of wall fruit was used until the end of the 17th century; the espalier as we know it now only came in to use later, and the very intricate forms of training are really associated with the 19th century.

What can also be deduced from the literature and illustrations is that fruit was accepted as a component of the garden. Large orchards, detached from the main garden, existed but would have been used to grow the more run-of-the-mill fruit. The choicer fruit was included in the garden either in an enclosed fruit garden or within the flower garden. Within the fruit garden, which was enclosed by walls, hedges or fences, you would find the more delicate fruits such as apricots, peaches, nectarines and cherries, trained as wall fruit. Only occasionally would the more decorative varieties of apple be found here. Soft fruit might be planted under the tree fruit to increase 'profit and pleasure'.



Cherries (Parkinson)



Pears (Parkinson)

Other flowering plants would also be included in the fruit garden in the same way that the more decorative fruit would be included in the flower garden. Fruit would also be trained to make fruit hedges and planted in Wildernesses. The introduction of the dwarfing fruitstocks in the later 17th century allowed dwarf fruit trees to be included in parterres and plates-bandes.

Orchards and fruit gardens also included decorative features such as seats, water (rivers, canals, stew ponds), mounts, bee hives and recreational features such as bowling alleys or archery butts. Such features are not mentioned in later literature, though that is not to say they did not still exist; what is consistently mentioned is the care of and devotion to the training and growing of a range of fruit. John Evelyn in his diary makes several mentions of gardens that he visited:

what was pretiest was the vineyard planted in strawberry borders, staked at 10 foot distance (visiting Mr. Tomb on 8th May 1654)

...After dinner ... we went to see Sir William Temples, neere to it: The most remarkeable thing, is his Orangerie and Gardens; where the wall Fruite-trees are most exquisitely nailed and applied, far better than in my life I had ever noted (28th March 1688)

Today many of the varieties that would have been known to 17th century gardeners have disappeared and been replaced by newer ones. However some have survived and there are a number of specialist nurseries who can provide some of the old varieties and even contract grow them for you for example Keepers Nurseries of Kent. It is therefore possible to recapture some of the spirit of the 17th century fruit garden.



Soft Fruits (Parkinson)

The Role and Use of Fruit in the 17th Century Garden was the topic of Sandra's dissertation for her MA Conservation (Landscapes and Gardens) undertaken at the Architectural Association, where it is lodged.

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