

Summary

AGATA KUBALA/ Art of gardens in Antiquity

The paper aims at presenting development of the art of gardens in the Mediterranean countries in ancient times. The beginnings of this art reach back over two thousand years BC and are simultaneous to the emergence of the first civilisations of an urban type. The first gardens were designed with regard to size and shape of the available areas, and were created in Egypt in the period of the Old Kingdom. Since the very beginning these gardens had many features which later became a standard. Functions of an Egyptian garden used to play a crucial role and determined its form, but also its significance was important, especially when the gardens were situated near temples and tombs. The gardens which were a part of noblemen's properties and those established around royal palaces were of a more private character.

Garden complexes were also a part of architecture of ancient Middle East. The ability to irrigate, combined with human efforts, was the main factor of creating and maintaining gardens in Mesopotamia. Initially they played mainly an economical role of food suppliers, but as time went by, they became foremost ornamental complexes of a recreational character, founded within city borders. The royal palace gardens were the most characteristic of them all, they were imitations of mountain or highland landscapes, filled with plants brought from the conquered lands and architectural objects whose forms were borrowed from foreign cultures.

Mild climate favoured garden establishing in ancient Greece. One can presume that the beginnings of Greek art of gardens date back to the Egyptian period, even though there is not much evidence left. Gardens of continental Greece are slightly better recognised thanks to literature sources and results of research excavations. Except for strictly functional gardens, in ancient Greece we can find also vast recreational complexes, situated next to public edifices. The researchers led in Greek cities have proved lack of gardens attached to city houses.

Gardens were a constant element in housing estates and public edifices in ancient Rome. An original humble *hortus* was transformed at the beginnings of the Empire into a formal, neatly planned complex with its shape determined by architecture. Peristyle gardens, characteristic for urban villas, followed large garden complexes that were created in the countryside estates by Roman aristocrats. The preserved letters of Pliny the Younger are precious source of knowledge about these gardens. Monumental gardens embellished emperors' residences and public buildings designed for the people.