Historic Garden Styles

Historic Garden Styles in America
By Larry Sagers
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Historic Garden Styles

• Spanish Settlers in California Found Climatic Conditions Resembling Their Home Country
Historic Garden Styles

• English and Dutch Settlers in Virginia and New England Made Gardens Like Those They Had Known at Home
Historic Garden Styles

- Copies of Gerard's Herbal (1597, Reprinted in 1633) Traveled With the Settlers and Guided Them in Planting for Medicinal and Culinary Purposes
Historic Garden Styles

- Williamsburg Became the Capital of Virginia and a Center of Gardening Activity
Historic Garden Styles

• The Protestant Community Remembered England in the Reign of William III (1688-1702) and Admired the Dutch Style As It Was Employed in Holland and in England
Historic Garden Styles

• Loathing Autocracy and Living in What They Saw As an Untamed Wilderness They Had No Enthusiasm for the French Style or the Emerging Augustan Style
Historic Garden Styles

- The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg Has a Christopher Wren Building With a Formal Garden and Topiary
Historic Garden Styles

• When Governor Alexander Spotswood Was Appointed, in 1710, He Built a Large Garden for the Governor's Mansion, With Hedges, Parterres and a Canal
Historic Garden Styles

• Williamsburg Ceased to Be a Capital During the War of Independence and When a Virginian Became President He Introduced Palladianism and the Serpentine Style to America
Historic Garden Styles

• The Mixed Style Became Popular During the Nineteenth Century, Under the Influence of Downing and Olmsted
Historic Garden Styles

- Its Popularity Extended Into the First Half of the Twentieth Century, Known As the Country Place Era (C1820-1920)
Historic Garden Styles

• The Profession Which Practiced Garden Design in America Adopted the Name Landscape Architecture
Historic Garden Styles

• As in Europe, Designers Were Influenced by the Arts and Crafts Style in First Half of the Twentieth Century
Historic Garden Styles

• During the Century's Second Half American Designers, Including Church and Kiley, Developed Some Excellent Gardens in the Abstract Style
Historic Garden Styles

• El Novillero, in Sonoma County, Is Rightly Described by the Oxford Companion to Gardens As 'One of the Most Significant Gardens of the Twentieth Century'
Historic Garden Styles

• Pre-colonial European Styles
Historic Garden Styles

- North America Has Many Interesting Recreations of European Styles. The J Paul Getty Museum at Malibu in California Is One of the Best Places to See a Roman Courtyard Garden
Historic Garden Styles

• There Are Examples of Re-created Cloister Gardens at Fort Tyron Park (12 Miles North of Midtown Manhattan) and the Franciscan Monastery Gardens in Washington DC
Historic Garden Styles

• The Villa Vizcaya, in Miami, Is an Italian Renaissance Garden Which Incorporates Many Features Obtained From Gardens in Italy
Historic Garden Styles

• Colonial Gardens
Historic Garden Styles

• Early Colonization of North America Was Dominated by Europe's Maritime Powers: Britain, France, Holland, Spain and Portugal
Historic Garden Styles

• Like All Colonists, They Brought Design Styles From Their Home Countries
Historic Garden Styles

• In California, This Led to the Foundation of Spanish Missions With Enclosed and Planted Courtyard Gardens, Drawing More From Monastic Traditions Than From Renaissance Gardens
Historic Garden Styles

- Since They Were Engaged in a Struggle for Survival, Courtyard Space Was Planted Rather Than Kept As a Cloister
Historic Garden Styles

- French Canadians Looked to the Style of Seventeenth Century Baroque Gardens
Historic Garden Styles

- English and Dutch Settlers Remembered the Style of William and Mary
Historic Garden Styles

• Colonial Williamsburg Has Examples of Gardens Dating From the Reign of William III
Historic Garden Styles

• George Washington's Garden, at Mount Vernon, Is Perhaps Best Understood As an Example of the Augustan Style
Historic Garden Styles

• Landscape Gardens
• America Joined the Mainstream of Western Garden Design in the Course of the Eighteenth Century and Was Fortunate That the Second President Had Even More Enthusiasm for Gardens Than the First President
Historic Garden Styles

• Thomas Jefferson Was Also a Talented Designer. Work on His Estate, at Monticello (Charlottesville, Virginia), Began in 1768
Historic Garden Styles

• While an Ambassador in Paris (1784-9), Jefferson Toured French and English Gardens. Work at Monticello Continued Until His Death in 1826, by Which Time It Had Become an Example of the Landscape Style.
Historic Garden Styles

- Mixed Style
Historic Garden Styles

• North America Proved to Be Exceptionally Fertile Ground for the Eclecticism of the Mixed Style. This Was the Style of Andrew Jackson Downing and Its Influence Continued Long After His Death
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• William Randolph Hearst's Estate at San Simeon Is a Prime Example and Montreal Botanical Garden Has 30 Areas of Distinct Character
Historic Garden Styles

- Italian Revival
Historic Garden Styles

- Like Britain, America Enjoyed an Italian Revival in the Nineteenth Early Twentieth Centuries
Historic Garden Styles

• Villa Vizcaya, in Miami, Is an Example
Historic Garden Styles

- Filoli, at Woodside in California, As a Very Suitable Landform and Climate for the Style
Historic Garden Styles

• Longwood Gardens at Kennett Square in Pennsylvania Was Started in 1902 and Designed by the Owner, Pierre Dupont
Historic Garden Styles

• J C Loudon's Idea, of Using Exotic Plants in Picturesque Compositions, Became the Dominant Compositional Principle for America's Botanic Gardens
Historic Garden Styles

- Loudon Invented the Name Gardenesque Style
Historic Garden Styles

- America Has Examples at the Arnold Arboretum, the Winterthur Garden in Delaware
Historic Garden Styles

• Arts and Crafts Style
Historic Garden Styles

- There Are Many Examples of This Style in America, by Owner-designers and by Professional Designers
Historic Garden Styles

• Beatrix Farrand Was a Leading Professional Exponent of the Style. The Finest Example of Her Work Is at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington DC
Historic Garden Styles

• She Also Worked at Dartington Hall in England. Old Westbury Gardens at Long Island in New York is a Fine Example of the Style
Historic Garden Styles

• Abstract Style
Historic Garden Styles

• Thomas Church and Dan Kiley, America Has Two of the World's Leading Exponents of the Abstract Style
Historic Garden Styles

• Many of Church's Gardens Were for Private Clients and Are Not Easy to Visit. Many of Kiley's Projects Were for Corporate Clients, Including the Oakland Museum
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• It is the American Social Ideal that each family should have an independent home; that this home should consist of
  – A detached house in a plot of ground
  – The plot should be planted with trees, shrubs, flowers and grass
Historic Garden Styles

• This Was the Ideal From the Days of the First Settlements, and It Is Even Now the American Style
Historic Garden Styles

• American Landscape Gardening is Primarily devoted to the Home-grounds and the Design and Planting of Back Yards
Historic Garden Styles

• The Majority of Home Gardens Are Enclosed Yards. They Were First Rough Stockades; but Soon the Neat Fence of Sawn Wooden Pickets Became the Recognized Mode
Historic Garden Styles

• This Style of Making Yards Persisted for Many Years. Wood Being Plentiful and Woodworking a Universal Industry
Historic Garden Styles

• Much Ingenuity Was Shown in Making Elaborate Picket Fences. Posts Were Elaborately Turned, Sawn or Built up of Wood, and Surmounted by Turned or Carved Capitals, Often of Quite Artistic Design
Historic Garden Styles

• The Pickets Themselves Were Shaped and Spaced in Various Ways to Gain Effects Pleasing to the Eye; and the Fences Were Nearly Always Neatly Painted, White Being the Traditional Color
Historic Garden Styles

• Naturally, Also, the Swinging Gates in These White Picket Fences Received Special Attention, Sometimes Being Real Works of Art. These Enclosures Were Made for Protection From Live Stock
• The Early American Colonial Gardens Enclosed by These White Picket Fences Were Very Simple. They Had Fruit-trees, Kitchen Vegetables and Medicinal Herbs, Interspersed With Flowering Plants. Next the House and in the Front Yard, Flowers and Ornamental Shrubs Were Grown
Historic Garden Styles

• The Lilac Was an Early Favorite, As Were Roses, Sweetbriers, Hollyhocks, Lemon Lilies, and “ Flags “ (Iris). These Front Yards Were Narrow, Seldom More Than Six to Ten Feet Wide, Though the Larger Houses Were Sometimes Set Farther Back
Historic Garden Styles

• Roughly Speaking, the Modern American Taste for a Wide Set-back Did Not Develop Till After the Civil War (1865).
Historic Garden Styles

• As Soon As Pioneer Conditions Began to Wane This Necessity Disappeared, and After a Time the Picket Fences Also Disappeared
Historic Garden Styles

• Although They Were Retained for a Time on Custom, There Presently Arose the Counter Style of Having Front Yards All Open to the Street—a Style Which Is Popular In Many Areas Of the Country
Historic Garden Styles

• The Movement of the Dwelling-houses Back Farther From the Street Made The Front Yards Considerably Larger More Open
Historic Garden Styles

• These Front Yards Were a Major Feature of the Home Grounds. They Were Large, Open, Democratic, and Showy
Historic Garden Styles

• At the Same Time the English and German Habit of Living in the Garden Was Lost in America
Historic Garden Styles

• The Demand for Privacy, Either in the Front Yard or in Any Other Part of the Garden, Diminished, or Vanished Altogether
Historic Garden Styles

• Indeed, American Landscape Architects and Laymen of Taste Have Long Lamented This Lack of Privacy in Home Gardens
Historic Garden Styles

• The Best of These Front Yards Have One or Two Large Shade Trees, Possibly More. In the Northern States Elms and Maples Were Preferred; in the Southern States, Live Oaks and Magnolias
Historic Garden Styles

• Many Other Species Were Used Here and There. It Also Became the Custom, Less Praise-Worthy, to Plant One or Two Showy Exotic “Ornamental” Trees on the Front Lawn. Copper Beech, Weeping Birch and Camperdown Elm Were Old Favorites: in Recent Times Blue Spruce Has Outdistanced All Competitors
Historic Garden Styles

• Fine Shrubs, Often As Single Specimens, Sometimes in Beds or Groups, Were Also Employed
Historic Garden Styles

• The Early Colonists Brought With Them Their Plants From England, Which Were Grown in Raised Beds for Beauty, Food and Medicines - And, More Than Likely, As a Reminder of Home
Historic Garden Styles

• The Gardens, Enclosed by Hedges to Keep Out Roaming Cattle, Were, Essentially, Cottage Gardens Transplanted Across the Atlantic
Historic Garden Styles

• As the 18th Century Progressed, So New Ideas Came From Britain, and the Small, Intimate and Formal Gardens of Colonial Williamsburg Echo the Anglo-Dutch Style
While ‘Capability' Brown was transforming thousands of acres to make them look more natural than nature, the colonialists were making their relatively small gardens to a formal style, which had its origins in the late 16th century.
Historic Garden Styles

• Their Gardens Were Enclosed by a White Painted Post and Rail Fence or a Hedge of Box, the Garden Was Nature Was Tamed, Trimmed and Kept in Order
Historic Garden Styles

- People Descended From a Balustraded Wooden Veranda or Porch Paths of Brick or Gravel Lead Between a Series of Geometrically-shaped and Symmetrically-arranged Beds, Which Were Often Edged With a Low Box Hedge or Bricks Inserted Into the Ground at 45 Degrees
Historic Garden Styles

• Along the Perimeter, Inside the Hedge or Fence Was Wooden Trellis Against Which Were Trained Fruit Trees
Historic Garden Styles

• Planting
Historic Garden Styles

• The Beds Were Planted With a Mix of Indigenous American Species and Imports From Europe, Arranged to Give a Tapestry Effect of Color Through the Seasons
Historic Garden Styles

• In Many Cases This Was Augmented With Geometric Topiary Made From Clipped Box. Other Additions to These Utilitarian Gardens Could Be an Ornamental Wellhead, a White Painted Shed, or an Outside Privy
Historic Garden Styles

• An American Style
Historic Garden Styles

• With Time an American Style Evolved, Pioneered by Those Two Nation-builders - Thomas Jefferson at Monticello, and George Washington at Mount Vernon
Historic Garden Styles

• This 'Plantation Style' Was Most Effectively Displayed on Those Estates That Flanked the Coast and Rivers From Maryland to South Georgia, and Used Plantings of Predominantly Natives
Historic Garden Styles

• The American Garden Travels to England
Historic Garden Styles

• So Exciting Were These Plant Discoveries, That an 'American Garden' Became a Very Fashionable Addition to the Estate Gardens of Georgian England
Historic Garden Styles

• This Passion for Plants American, and Conifers in Particular, Was Given a Fillip With the Plant Hunting Expeditions of David Douglas to the Pacific North West
Historic Garden Styles

• In the 1820s and '30s, His Discovery of Over 120 New Species Including, the Tassel Tree (Garrya Elliptica), the Flowering Currant (Ribes Sanguineum), the Monterey Pine (Pinus Radiata), And, of Course, the Douglas Fir (Pseudotsuga Menziesii.)
Historic Garden Styles

• Four Phases of European Influence on American Gardens Can Be Identified:
1. Early American landowners employed immigrants who had learned their skills in the gardens of the Old World. The houses and gardens they made form an integral part of the European tradition.
Historic Garden Styles

2. When America Began to Train Its Own Gardeners and Designers, They Learned About European Gardens and Gardening From Books, Especially the Publications of Humphry Repton and John Claudius Loudon
Historic Garden Styles

• Given the Strength of European Influence, It Is Possible to Use the Same Stylistic Classifications As for American and European Gardens (As in the Section on American Examples of Garden Styles)
Historic Garden Styles

3. When American Families Became Wealthy They Booked Passages on Ocean Liners and a European Tour Became As Important to the American Rich As a Grand Tour Had Been for the English During the Eighteenth Century. Americans Were Interested Both in Ancient Gardens and in Contemporary Trends
Historic Garden Styles

4. European Designers Influenced the Development of the International Modern Style Gardens in America
Historic Garden Styles

• In Studying the Progress of Garden Art and Landscape Architecture in America, Especially Whenever Any Comparison With Europe Is Implied, One Fundamental Difference Should Always Be Taken Into Account
Historic Garden Styles

• By Comparison With Europe, America Has Never Had a Large Number of Great Private Garden Estates. A Certain Number Were Indeed Created, but Many of Them Have Already Been Abandoned, and None Has Ever Had a Permanent Leadership or Influence. At Most They Represent a Transitory Phase of American Culture
Historic Garden Styles

• On the Other Hand the American Taste in Small Home Grounds Represents Something Permanent, General and Significant; and This May Be Said to Be a Natural Corollary of the Earliest Traditions. Civilization in America Began, As It Were, Full-fledged
Historic Garden Styles

• The Early Colonists Came Direct From the Settled Civilizations of Europe, Particularly From England. Many of Them Were Persons of Education and Refinement; Some Were Men of Substance
Historic Garden Styles

- Under Such Circumstances One Might Expect That Evidences of Culture, Including the Making of Gardens in America, Would Be Shown Very Early, and That Some of the Slow and Painful Stages of Progress As Witnessed in the Old World Might Be Altogether Elided
Historic Garden Styles

• Other Circumstances Contributed to the Popularity of Gardening in America. Every Colony Was Compelled Under Threat of Imminent Starvation to Gain an Immediate Living From the Soil. Practical Gardening and Simple Agriculture Began at Once and in Great Earnestness
Historic Garden Styles

• The American Colonists Were Forced to Strain Every Nerve, Not Alone to Make a Living, but to Make Homes and Gardens. These They Conceived Inevitably in English Terms—a House Surrounded by a Garden, and in the Garden Always Plants Both for Food and for Delight. There Were Flowers for Color and for Perfume
Even the First-comers Brought Seeds and Cuttings and With These Began at Once the Experiment of Growing the English Favorites: Apples, Plums, Cherries; Beetroots, Turnips and Carrots; Catnip, Marjoram and Thyme; Gillyflowers, Poppies and Roses
Historic Garden Styles

• While Some of These Failed, Others Happily Succeeded. Then There Were the Native Plants of the New World, Which Were Not to Be Neglected. Here Were Fruits and Shrubs and Gay Flowers Ready to Be Pressed Into Cultivation. Their Enlistment Moved More Slowly Than One Might Have Expected, but It Went on
Historic Garden Styles

• There Is to Be Considered the Further Fact That the First Colonies Were Planted in Regions of Propitious Soil and Climate. Gardening Came Easily. The First American Colonists Were Practically All English
Historic Garden Styles

• They Came From a Country of Gardens. They Had Been Bred in the Tradition of Gardens and Some of Them Were Skilled in Garden Practice
Historic Garden Styles

• The Great Preponderance of English Blood and of English Culture, So Marked in the Beginning, Has Continued to Rule American Life Even to the Present Day, in No Realm — Not Excepting Even Literature and Common Law — more Strongly Than in Gardening
Historic Garden Styles

• In Later Years America Received Large Levies of Immigrants From Other Nations, Notably From Germany and the Scandinavian Countries, and Quite Recently From Italy, Greece and Their Neighbors
Historic Garden Styles

• These Immigrants, Especially the Germans and the Scandinavians, Contributed Substantially to Some Departments of American Thought and Culture—to Education, Science and Technology, for Example—but Not Appreciably to Gardening
Historic Garden Styles

• To Conclude in a Sentence This Very Brief Account of Foreign Influence in American Landscape Architecture, It May Be Noted That French Contributions Have Been Nil: Only Two French Settlements Survived on the Continent, a Small One at New Orleans and a Larger, More Prolific and More Permanent One in Quebec in Canada
Historic Garden Styles

• Neither Has Affected American Culture, Least of All American Gardening America Is a Large Country, and No One Can Gain Any Comprehension of the Garden-making Problem There Without Due Consideration of Factors of Geography, Topography and Climate
Historic Garden Styles

• In Latitude and Longitude the Inhabited Portions of North America Cover a Territory Equal to the British Isles, All of Western Europe, All Eastern Russia, One-half of Siberia, and the Whole Mediterranean Basin, Including Turkey, Persia and Northern Africa
Historic Garden Styles

• If It Is Necessary, in Writing of European Gardening, to Discriminate Carefully Such Areas As Italy, Germany, Russia and Great Britain, It Is Equally Necessary to Examine the Peculiarities of California, Florida, the Mississippi Basin, New England and Canada in Speaking of Gardening in North America
Historic Garden Styles

• Aside From Its Mere Physical Vastness, This North American Continent Has a Highly Varied Topography. Beginning at the Eastern Seaboard There Is Found a Narrow Coastal Plain Marked by Low Hills, Often Rocky. Back of This Lies the Geologically Old Appalachian Mountain Range, Heavily Wooded and Watered, and in Its Northern Reaches Strongly Glaciated
Historic Garden Styles

• Next Comes the Mississippi Valley, Very Wide, Generally Level, Considerably Varied in Its Soil but Largely of Limestone Derivation, Exceedingly Fertile and Mostly Well Cultivated. The Eastern Two-thirds of This Basin Has an Ample Rainfall, Ranging Roughly From Twenty-Five to Thirty-five Inches Annually
Historic Garden Styles

• The Western Third Verges Toward Arid Conditions, the Rainfall Diminishing Westward to the Rocky Mountains. In This System of High Mountains Is Found a Remarkable Range of Physical Conditions, Varying From Narrow, Sunny, Fertile, Well-watered Valleys to Arid Steppes and Mountain Peaks Capped With Eternal Snow
Historic Garden Styles

- West of the Rocky Mountains Lies the Great Interior Plateau, About the Size of France and Comprising Several States. The Elevation Ranges From 2000 to 6000 Feet Above Sea-level, With Many Local Mountains Running Considerably Higher, a Few up to 10,000 Feet
Historic Garden Styles

- Rainfall is deficient, but a few small areas under irrigation are highly fruitful. This brings us to the Sierra Nevada Range, almost as high as the Rockies and perhaps more picturesque. These mountains are heavily wooded on their western slopes but nearly arid on their eastern side.
Historic Garden Styles

• This Amelioration of the Pacific Coast Climate by the Warm Ocean Currents From Japan Is a Factor of Commanding Importance This Noble Leadership, Though Implanted Before the Civil War, Flowered and Bore Its Fruit After That Interregnum
And in This Later Period It Was Reinforced and Ably Continued in the Leadership of Frederick Law Olmsted, Senior. Olmsted Was Born at Hartford, Conn., In 1822 and Died in Brookline, Mass., 1903
Historic Garden Styles

- He Came to Public Notice During the War, but His Real Work As Landscape Architect Had Begun in 1857, When He Was Appointed Superintendent of the New Central Park, New York City, Then Under Construction
This Project Was Resumed Under His Direction After the War; and at About the Same Time He Began to Make Plans for Other Important Parks in Brooklyn, N.Y., New Britain, Conn., San Francisco, Calif., Chicago, Ills, and Other Cities
Historic Garden Styles

• With Him Was Associated for a Time Calvert Vaux, a Capable English-trained Architect, Who Had Previously Been the Professional Partner of Downing
Historic Garden Styles

- Olmsted Continued the Traditions of Downing. He Strongly Favoured the English or Natural Style of Landscape Architecture (This Term Has to Be Used Rather Inexactlly, Since a Strict Analysis Will Show That Every “Natural Style “ Is More or Less Conventionalised, and by Each Worker in His Own Way)
Historic Garden Styles

• He Was the First Man in America to Organize and Practice the Profession of the Landscape Architect on a Large Scale. For a Time He Had Associated With Him Charles Eliot (Lamented for His Early Death); Also His Stepson John C. Olmsted and His Son Frederick Law Olmsted, Junior
Historic Garden Styles

• The Firm Is Still Very Active. During All These Years, Mainly the Time From 1870 to 1890, a Number of Young Men Worked With the Firm, Afterward Setting up for Themselves, Thus Propagating in Wider Circles the Olmsted Influence
Historic Garden Styles

- Olmsted, With Sore Misgivings, Took the Style of Landscape Architect, Discarding the Earlier Nomenclature; and His Example, More Than Anything Else, Fixed the Use of “Landscape Architect” and “Landscape Architecture” on America in Place of the Older English Terms, “Landscape Gardener” and “Landscape Gardening.”
Historic Garden Styles

• Frederick Law Olmsted Wrote Little for the Public. His Great Influence Was Exerted Through His Personal Disciples and Through His Works. These Works Were Very Many, of Large Proportions, Widely Placed Throughout the United States and Canada, and Lay in the Main Trend of the Developments of the Period
Historic Garden Styles

• This Period Might Fairly Be Called the Park Era. The Construction of Central Park in New York (Already Advocated by Downing Before His Death) Advertised Widely Both the Park Idea and the Landscape Architect in Charge. American Cities Were Multiplying and Growing Under the Impetus of Heavy Immigration and the First Burst of Modern Industrialism, and the Park Idea Matched the Times
Historic Garden Styles

• Frederick Law Olmsted and His Associates Designed Many Parks Besides Those Enumerated Above, Insomuch That His Ideas Were Easily Dominant Throughout This Distinct Chapter in American Landscape Architecture
Historic Garden Styles

• Briefly, the Olmstedian Principles May Be Described As Follows:
  – Preserve the Natural Scenery and If Necessary Restore and Emphasize It
  – Avoid All Formal Design Except in Very Limited Areas About Buildings
  – Keep Open Lawns and Meadows in Large Central Areas
Historic Garden Styles

– Use Native Trees and Shrubs, Especially in Heavy Border Plantings
– Provide Circulation by Means of Paths and Roads Laid in Wide-sweeping Curves
– Place the Principal Road So That It Will Approximately Circumscribe the Whole Area
Historic Garden Styles

• These Principles May Still Be Seen Exemplified in Several of His Parks, Perhaps Best of All in Mount Royal Park, Montreal, and in Franklin Park, Boston
Historic Garden Styles

• Along With the Park Movement, and As an Integral Feature of It, Came the Park Cemetery. This Idea Is a Distinctively American Contribution to Landscape Architecture, For, While Park Cemeteries Have Been Made in Other Countries, the First and Most Numerous Successes Were Those in the United States and Canada
Historic Garden Styles

- The First Park Cemetery to Attract Wide Attention Was Mount Auburn, Near Boston, Founded in 1831. Spring Grove Cemetery at Cincinnati Came About Twenty Years Later and Was Generally Admired. But Perhaps the Most Influential Example of All Has Been Graceland Cemetery in Chicago of Still Later Date.