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## The French Style

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## The French style

In the reign of Louis XIV., the formal garden reached a height that could never be surpassed.

This era combined an ingenious artist, an enthusiastic ruler with unlimited powers, technical skill unknown up until that time and a abundance of practical fellow-artists to make the individual arts and garden areas combine to be successful as a whole

It followed that the art of gardens grew to its utmost height, and became a dominate style in the western world

The northern garden style originated in France, and became the one shining example for Middle and Northern Europe.

All eyes were fixed on the magic place Versailles; and to emulate this work of art was the aim of all ambitions.

No imitator, however, could attain his object completely, because nowhere else did circumstances combine so favorably.

The great importance of the style lay in its adaptability to the natural conditions of the North, and in the fact that it was easily taught and understood.

Thus we have a remarkable spectacle: in spite of the fact that immediately after Louis' death the picturesque style appeared—that enemy destined to strike a mortal blow at a fashion which was at least a thousand years old—for some decades later there came into being many specimens of the finest formal gardens, and the art flourished, especially in countries like Germany, Russia, and Sweden. France did not become mistress of Europe in garden art merely because of such of her examples as could be copied; of almost equal importance was the wide popularity of a book which first appeared anonymously in France in 1709 under the name of *Théorie et Pratique du Jardinage*.

In the third edition this work was fathered by the architect Le Blond, who had distinguished himself in the construction of gardens. Some had thought D'Argenville Dezalliers to be the author. Never before did a book lay down the principles of any style so surely and so intelligibly in instructive precepts.

It claimed to be the first work entirely devoted to the pleasure-garden, the kitchen-garden being dismissed with complete indifference, " In large gardens there are good vegetable plots worth looking at, but they are kept away from the house and do not contribute to its grandeur or beauty."

The author will accept only Boyceau and Mollet as his predecessors, and then only in certain departments. The great diversity in garden art, which gives a place to every other art, compels the garden student to receive a many-sided education. "He must be something of a geometrician, must understand architecture, must be able to draw well, must know the character and effect of every plant he makes use of for fine gardens, and must also know the art of ornament. He must be inventive, and above all intelligent; he must have a natural good taste cultivated by the sight of beautiful objects and the criticism of ugly ones, and must also have an all-round interest and insight in these matters."

Le Nôtre had brought up a generation of pupils who were educated in these qualities and could easily apply what they knew, and Le Blond, who was busied with the drawings, at any rate, for this work, was one of them. He explains the garden in a methodical way. After preliminary tests have been made, a site is to be preferred where the land is either flat or gently inclined, and not a steep hill. He objects to very high terraces, commanding stone steps, too much trellis, and too many figures. Here we clearly get the opposite of the Italian Renaissance style. In vain had the attempt been made on the French side of the Alps to imitate Italian

gardens; it was labour in vain to do here what came so easily to an Italian. This is expressed in that classical sentence: *Le cose che si murano sono superiori a quei che si piantano* (The things that are walled in are better than the things that are only planted).

The French garden produces a plant-architecture to which statues, fountains, and water must accommodate themselves. The house must, of course, be somewhat raised on a terrace overlooking the garden, and the site must be fixed in obedience to four main principles, (1) art must be subject to nature, (2) the garden must not be too shady, (3) it must not be too much exposed, (4) must always look bigger than it really is. The first principle, soon to be put forward by the picturesque style as a destructive criticism, only emphasises the opposition between French plant-architecture and Italian wall-architecture. The other principles refer to the effort made by the French garden to combine the greatest possible variety with the strictly formal style. House and garden are so united by a single idea that their size is relatively and immovably fixed, and the open garden, the parterres, and their contrasting bosquets must exactly correspond to them.

It is perhaps in the laying-out of the parterre that Le Blond has least gone beyond Boyceau. He was acquainted with all the kinds, including the parterre de broderie, with arabesque patterns marked out in box and combined in one large design—this was now the favourite kind—and the other sort that had geometrical shapes of flower-beds edged with box, now somewhat out of fashion, and generally used, in combination with the broderie style, to give greater variety. From England had come the fashion of laying out the parterre in great stretches of lawn, with a pattern in coloured clay, and a strip of flowers or dwarf trees round. The bosquets were now made into novel and hitherto unheard-of forms, and these “ contain all that is most beautiful in a garden.” We have become familiar with such arrangements in Le Nôtre’s great works. Every garden must needs have bosquets of the kind as a necessary background for the open parterre, to conceal the secluded

#### FIG. 438. ORNAMENTAL VASE IN A FRENCH GARDEN

parts and the variété from spectators on the house terrace, whose view over the open parterre was to be checked here; in these places there was the desirable unbroken shade, the theatre for fêtes, protection from every rough wind, and solitude. The splendour and importance of a garden depended on its many-sidedness; but even the most simple and unadorned could show beauty and symmetry, with a background of thicket, and with pretty paths cut in the massif of the hornbeam with which these small woods were generally planted. In spite of the love for variety, the book utters that cry for simplicity which inspired the last period of the creation of Le Nôtre. It warns people against dividing and subdividing, a habit in which the author thought—rightly as the future showed—that he saw the greatest enemy of the French garden. The porticoes of many kinds that were cut in greenery, the winding trellis which was overdone, the extravagant clipping of trees into the shapes of animals, men on horseback, men on foot, and many other things—all this was disliked by the writer. What the French garden needed, he said, for its main lines, was most of all simple tall hedges. Everything mean and shabby, even in garden sculpture, should be avoided: better no statues at all than bad ones. Le Blond’s treatment of water corresponds to this idea in the main. When avenues and squares are planned there should be a really useful surround of water, but he is contemptuous of petty detail in the way of shell-work and small basins— and calls them colifichets (gewgaws), All the important fountains ought to be visible from one central point. It is clear that the art of Le Nôtre could not have found a better or more lucid exponent. There must needs be powerful, if unseen, reasons at work, if so noble

FIG. 439. CLIPPED HEDGES IN A PRINCELY GARDEN

an art was to be brought to ruin. The success of the book was remarkable : edition after edition appeared, then pirated issues and translations. And it had significant results. To its influence was due the improvement in skill and the lightness of touch which came about in gardens at that time.

France was behind other countries in the matter of new works in the eighteenth century, especially in those districts in the north that were influenced by the Parisian court. They always harked back to Versailles, without which French taste could not have produced so manifold a progeny in the rest of Europe. But the court, as we have seen, changed its taste; the new century was not one of fêtes and displays, because for one thing money, exhausted by the Thirty Years' War, was scarce in the state treasury and was not forthcoming for new creations, which could only have compared unfavourably with those of the seventeenth century. After Louis the Fourteenth's death the spirit of the time expressed itself in places like the Little Trianon at the time of its first garden. In the ever-increasing artistry of the parterre there developed very markedly that transition state, of which we shall speak hereafter. Before we turn our attention to the influence of France on other European nations, one more garden, standing outside the limiting circle of the court, must be considered—the so-called Jardin de la Fontaine at Nimes (Fig. 440).

FIG. 440. JARDIN DE LA  
FONTAINE, NIMES- GROUND  
PLAN

This is perhaps the most important work that exhibits directly the newly awakened interest in antique art. When the foundations of mighty Roman remains were discovered in the thirties of the eighteenth century, the enthusiasm of the people was so great that they demanded restoration. The work was entrusted to Maréchal, a fortress-builder, in 1740; and he proceeded to design a most imposing scheme of terraces, steps, basins, statues and gardens, mostly on the old foundations. It was the best kind of baroque work, and translated the spirit of Roman life into the style of the great age. At one time there had stood in this place temples, baths, corridors richly adorned with statues, and a theatre. The chief garden is in a straight line with the main street of the town, the Boulevard de la République, and old foundations of baths were utilised as canals, flowing round the different terraces. At a spot where there is now reposing, on a high pedestal, a nymph with children, at the top of the basin of the baths, there was in former days the statue of Augustus on a stylobate, with decorated columns at its four corners. The spring itself lies somewhat removed from the main axis, exactly at the foot of the hill; and on the top of the hill stands a Roman watch-tower, La Tour Magne, while farther towards the side is a Temple of Diana, where the nymph of the stream was worshipped. This enforced bending from the axial line, in which we discern a sure indication of the Roman spirit, is here only a special case of rhythm, for there is evident everywhere a strong feeling for unity, shown in the all-pervading balustrades, statues, vases at the corners, steps, and bridges (Fig. 441).

FIG. 441, NIMES—JARDIN DE LA FONTAINE

The true feeling of the antique world, which restrained the architect, served as a protection to this late work (as also to the Villa Albani in Italy, whose date is much the same) from all the pettiness and prettiness of the court style in Northern France. And now we must consider the period when all the countries of Europe directly or indirectly felt the influence of Versailles, that central sun of France, so long as it maintained its full and original splendour.

## Eighteenth Century Garden History

Photos & Text by Robert Viau, Ph.D.

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From the deliberate, meticulous attention to geometrical order and bi-lateral symmetry to an equally deliberate attention to the appearance of natural disorder and asymmetry.

From Nature as the creation of a supremely rational and logical GOD to NATURE as the expression of God's and man's loving relationship with a divinely-inspired and emotionally-infused world.

From the Newtonian Sythethesis and Paradigm to the Romantic, indeed "Gothic," Paradigm.

From Alexander Pope and the Essay on Man to William Wordsworth and Beyond!

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Indeed, from the end of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, that is to say, during the period often referred to as the "long" eighteenth century (1660-1840), the aesthetic of garden design shifted gradually from one that stressed restraint, control, limit, and order to one that emphasized freedom and openness. From the geometrical severity of Versaille and Hampton Court in the late seventeenth century to the well regulated naturalness of Blenheim, Castle Howard, and Stowe, by the middle of the eighteenth century designed gardens grew almost to resemble open landscape or raw nature.

At the opening of the eighteenth century, the dominant force in landscape design was Andre Le Notre, chief garden designer for Louis XIV at Versaille. The most popular garden designs of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century were the French, Italian, and Dutch formal gardens executed to exhibit bilateral symmetry, and no one surpassed Le Notre in his realization of this rigid style.

In this garden style, the part of the garden closest to the palace or house was handled architecturally, like another room-extension of the house proper. The garden consisted of a perfectly regular series of geometrical compartments formed by closely clipped shrubs and trees and straight gravel walks, stone paths, terraces, and steps. Often the

compartments were parterres de broderie (plots resembling embroidery) carpeted with low evergreens (often box), flowers (actually rare until the nineteenth century), colored earth, brick dust, coal dust, white and yellow sand, etc.

In the largest gardens, rigid geometry was imposed as far as the eye could see. Garden walks extended and radiated in geometrical patterns, along with canals and avenues of trees. Fountains, statues, mazes, and small woods and groves were all arranged symmetrically with reference to one central axis extending from the exact center of the house.

The overriding impression of such gardens is of man's tyranny over nature--perfectly suitable for Louis XIV and other European absolute monarchs.

The masterpiece of this style of gardening was Versailles as laid out for Louis XIV by Andre L Notre. Versailles became the model for princely gardens throughout Europe, and this includes the garden laid out for William III in front of Sir Christopher Wren's new east front of Hampton Court Palace. The principal gardener for Hampton Court was Henry Wise (1653-1738)

Here are some pictures of Versailles and other formal gardens of the period.

At the end of the seventeenth century, the English inheritor of the Le Notre tradition was Henry Wise (1653-1738), one of the principal gardeners of Hampton Court Palace. He also worked for James Brydges, the Duke of Chandos, at the elaborate and expensive gardens at Cannon, Middlesex, which Pope's contemporaries believed to be Timon's Villa in the "Epistle to Burlington." The style of these gardens is "autocratic": palatial grandeur radiates outward from the patriarchal seat, its rigid order dominating nature and bending it to man's will.

The Great expense of maintaining Hampton Court's extensive gardens eventually led Queen Anne to order Wise to reduce the cost of upkeep by two thirds. Thus in 1704 the box parterres de broderie were replaced by open lawn, in a step towards the freer landscape style that would dominate much of the rest of the century.

In recent years, formal gardens have been restored at Hampton Court. Check out this link: [Hampton Court Gardens](#).

My Picture Gallery of Hampton Court

Transitions from Formal to Landscape Gardens

In reaction to the rigid formality of the French and Italian gardens of the late seventeenth century, a new style began to emerge which was much freer. Advocates of what eventually became the irregular landscape garden opposed

symmetry, ostentation, and what they regarded as the tyranny of the French style, which they in turn associated with the tyranny of French government. Thus the growing freedom of English garden design gradually became associated with the freedom of English government. Garden aesthetics took on political meaning, sometimes, as in the case of Stowe, overt political meaning.

Here are some texts which greatly influenced this transition from formal to informal garden design:

A. J. Dezallier d'Argenville, *La Theorie et la Pratique du Jardinage* (1709). This was translated into English in 1712. It is the first text to mention the ha-ha or dry moat, which essentially enabled landscape designers to take down walls and fences and thus free up wide areas of green space.

Stephen Switzer (1682-1745), *Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener's Recreation* (1715), enlarged as *Ichonographia Rustica* (1718). Switzer advocates a system of rural and forest gardening which unites formal garden features from French gardens with park and pasture and timber land to for a unified design. He further advocates the union of the beautiful with the useful; and he strongly urges economy and opposes gardens which are expensive to maintain. This combination of beauty and utility is close to the spirit of the aesthetic described by Pope in his *Epistle to Burlington*, 177-180:

Who then shall grace, or who improve the soil?

Who plants like Bathurst\*, or who builds like Boyle\*.

'Tis Use alone that sanctifies expense,

And splendour borrows all her rays from sense.

\*Bathurst is Allen, Lord Bathurst, friend of Swift, Pope, and others; he was keenly interested in gardening.

\*Boyle is the Burlington of the poem, Pope's friend and fellow amateur gardener and architect. He is best known for his severe Neo-Palladian home in Chiswick outside London. Besides its architecture, Chiswick is well known for its landscape design, which includes a serpentine lake, a rustic bridge, a palladian bridge, an Ionic temple, and much more, all available for view at :

Chiswick House.

Landscape gardeners also attempted to create ideal nature or to teach nature, in the words of Switzer, "even to exceed herself." Such idealization of nature has significant classical literary antecedents in the poetry of Horace and Virgil, which celebrates rural life and retreat from the cares of the city and public life. Also implied by this garden aesthetic is the original Garden of Eden in which man and nature are in perfect (if temporary) harmony. It is

interesting (and profoundly significant) that Horace Walpole and others who advocated the new garden aesthetic also admired Milton's Paradise Lost, whose descriptions of Paradise are remarkably vivid.

The new freer style of gardening is evident at Castle Howard in Yorkshire and Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire.

Early in the century both formal and informal gardens exist side by side. By the middle of the century the new style dominated.

#### Charles Bridgeman (1680-1738) & Stowe

Charles Bridgeman succeeded Wise as the Royal Gardener. His most famous achievement in landscape design is the famous garden at Stowe under Bridgeman's direction since 1713. This masterpiece of landscape design was added to later by Kent and Capability Brown.

Bridgeman stands midway between Le Notre and Capability Brown in garden style. In the 1720's Kent took up landscape gardening in what is called the painterly manner. His most notable painterly garden is Rousham in Oxfordshire. Bridgeman prepared the main lines of the garden in the 1720s, preparing the way for Kent's work in the 1730s. The painterly manner attempted to evoke something of the theatrical qualities of the landscapes of Poussin and Claude.

For the Complete history and guided tours of Stowe, clicke below:

STOWE-1

STOWE-2 Site by John Tatters--Truly Amazing!

#### STOWE-3 My Photos from Summer Study Abroad 1999

Stowe is a landscape garden with political meaning. On the one hand, it celebrates the solid classical foundations of eighteenth century society, as embodied in the Neo-Palladian building and the numerous Neo-Palladian garden monuments and follies. On the other hand, in its free and open treatment of garden space, Stowe also embodies the freedom which eighteenth century theorists associated with ancient British (Saxon) principles.

But the political meaning of Stowe is sharper and more specific still: it represents opposition politics through allegorical monuments. A large valley called the Elysian Fields lies between two ridges. On one ridge sits the Temple of Ancient Virtue, designed by Kent in 1734, which exhibits life-size Statues of Homer, Lycurgus, Socrates, and Epaminondas. Facing it but from lower ground stands the the Shrine of British Worthies, also by Kent, exhibiting



busts of sixteen national heroes, including modern figures like Shakespeare, Locke, Newton, and Pope as well as men of old like King Alfred. The Shrine of British Worthies literally looks up towards the Temple of Ancient Virtue in a powerful demonstration of reverence for classical ideals. For a while there was a third building nearby, the Temple of Modern Virtue, a ruin that allegedly satirized Sir Robert Walpole, the Whig Minister of State whom Cobham, Pope, Swift, and many other Tory writers loved to hate. The Temple of Liberty, by Gibbs (1741) is in the Gothic style associated by architects and landscape designers with ancient British ideals.

### Alexander Pope & His Garden in Twickenham

Pope has been called the presiding genius of the gardening revolution in the 1720s-30s. His own garden in Twickenham as well as the gardens of wealthy friends with whom Pope consulted testify to his remarkable influence.

Little survives of Pope's garden. We do know from drawings and descriptions that it perfectly embodied the landscaping principles espoused in "Epistle to Burlington." To Pope, landscape gardening was an act of the imagination expressing his inner "romantic" impulses.

Bridgeman had introduced a garden design based on a relatively formal straight central axis with flanking areas treated irregularly, so that symmetry and balance are combined with variety. Pope adapted this principle and applied it to his small garden plot across the London road from his villa in Twickenham. The bounds of the garden were concealed by dense thickets to create an enclosed irregular garden containing monuments with both ancient and modern associations. At the eastern end of the garden stood the Shell Temple, a Rococo pleasure dome; at the western and darker end of the garden stood an obelisk commemorating the death of Pope's mother. From the garden a passage ran beneath the London road and into a Grotto located in Pope's basement. At the garden end the Grotto looked out over an open lawn towards the Thames and open country. When the doors of the Grotto were closed, it became a camera obscura reflecting thousands of images from the sparkling shells and bits of mirror in the Grotto walls, a truly remarkable and "poetic" folly of the fancy.

Perhaps Pope's most remarkable indirect influence was at Stowe, Lord Cobham's 400 acre garden worked on by sixty years of landscape gardeners, architects, and sculptors: Bridgeman, Vanbrugh, Kent, Brown, and many more.

### Stourhead in Wiltshire

Stourhead was built in the 1740s by wealthy banker Henry Hoare. He began by building dams on several streams to

raise a lake, around which he then planted trees. He arranged buildings and trees to form a series of pictures, of views, along a serpentine walk. He added a Grotto for private reflection, as well as a Pantheon copied by "Burlington Harry" Fritchcroft which appears in a Claude painting owned by Hoare and now in the National Gallery in London. The Pantheon houses statues of Hercules by Rysbrack, and the Latin inscription establishes parallels between Aeneas (who sought a new home in Rome) and Hoare (who sought a new home in Wiltshire).

#### Chinese and Japanese Influences

Eighteenth century garden ornaments and follies generally were either Classical or Gothic, but gradually throughout the century oriental styles began to be incorporated into landscape design, as they were into rood decoration. In the 1740s Chinese House at Shugborough and the House of Confucius at Kew were built. In the 1750s many pagodas, pavilions, and kiosks were built, along with Chinese style bridges such as the one across the Thames at Hampton Court. By the 1750s French descriptions of the Imperial Gardens at Peking had been published in English. Architect Sir William Chambers visited Canton, China, as a young man and in the 50s published *Designs of Chinese Buildings, Furniture, Dresses, etc.* (1757), followed by *Dissertation On Oriental Gardening* (1772). Chambers argues strongly for great variety in garden design, and many believe that this is a reaction against the rising popularity of the garden designs of Lancelot "Capability" Brown, by far the most popular and prolific designer of the second half of the eighteenth century.

#### The Pagoda at Kew Gardens (See also the Chinese House at Stowe)

#### Lancelot "Capability" Brown (1716-1783)

In the "capable" hands of Lancelot Brown, gardens design lost nearly all of its formality and appearance of artifice.

At Blenheim, he eliminated the great Le Notre style parterres laid out by Henry Wise and replaced it with an open expanse of lawn brought up to the walls of the house, near which he planted dark trees to frame the view of the landscape from the house. For some contemporaries such as Chamber, Brown's gardens "differ very little from common fields, so closely is common nature copied in them."

Brown created this effect of the appearance of unrestrained nature by planting a vast stretch of lawn punctuated by small clusters of trees or single trees irregularly placed in wavy belts. The land dips away from the house towards a winding lake and rise beyond to a distant woodland, completing the "landscape."

Longleat, Wiltshire (1757) Before Capability Brown:

Rigid Bi-Lateral Symmetry a la Henry Wise and Andre Le Notre

Longleat After Capability Brown

Other Capability Brown Gardens

The last stage in the development of eighteenth century gardens is the result of the powerful influence of Edmund Burke's Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime (1757). This text profoundly influenced the emergence of gothic literature, gothic revival architecture, and landscape design modeled on Burke's notion of the sublime or terrible in nature.

Burke divided all aesthetic responses into two categories, the beautiful and the sublime. The beautiful includes all that is smooth, regular, delicate, and harmonious; the sublime, all that is rough, gloomy, violent, and gigantic. Sublimity among objects of nature includes all that is untamed and uncivilized, such as the wilder parts of the countryside, mountains, cataracts, volcanoes, and scenes that are savage and primitive as opposed to "cultivated." Obviously even the wealthiest landowner cannot heave up majestic mountains or carve out canyons to create Burke's sublime landscape, but small scale "wildness" and "roughness" were easily manageable. Increasingly, from the mid century onward, landscape designs, already freed up almost entirely by "Capability" Brown, incorporated elements of the wild and the rough. Where these elements could not be found on a landowner's, they were constructed. If a real Gothic ruin did not exist on the property, an imitation ruin would be constructed from scratch. Likewise with caves, grottos, rustic bridges, and many more garden ornaments that were often quite grand in scale and magnitude. These made-up bits of fake antiquity and "natural wildness" came to be called follies.

Stowe Gardens in Buckinghamshire (see above) features several of these elements of what eventually became known as the Sublime or the Terrible Garden. Look at these:

Gothic Temple

Dido's Cave

Rustic Bridge

Once wilderness enters the landscape gardens of England, we can readily see that the groundwork has been laid for the Romantic movement.

### German Baroque Garden Design

Herrenhausen Wilhelmshöhe Schleissheim Nymphenburg Karlsruhe Ludwigsburg Brühl Schönborn Marquardsburg Favorite Gaibach Pommersfelden Brüchsal Waghäusel Würzburg Veitshochheim

Germany had to begin almost all over again from the middle of the seventeenth century, after the Thirty Years' War. The cultivation of the garden is a peaceful art; and it was only exceptional men such as Wallenstein and Maurice of Nassau who tried to keep the country to its peaceful occupations while they were in the midst of war, weapons in hand. For the most part the war had left wasted lands bare of inhabitants, but there was more than this—the tradition that was never very strong in Germany was completely destroyed. It was just this state of things, however, that drove a generation hungry for peace to seek for teachers whose instruction it could follow with delight. One important factor in making garden art flourish in Germany was the increased power of the many princelings, great and small. The feeling of sovereignty showed itself in the second half of the seventeenth century, when prosperity was increasing, in the creation of splendid homes. For most of the princes, especially those in the north and west. Versailles served as a fascinating visible example. Only a few, who were interested in Italy, took their inspiration in these days from the old forms of art on the other side of the Alps. Le Nôtre's was the truly great name, and as soon as his reputation had once extended across the Rhine, it was considered good luck to secure a garden artist who had somehow or other got his education by actual study of the works of Le Nôtre. Duke Ernst Johann Friedrich of Hanover reckoned himself one of the fortunate ones when he secured Charbonnier, who belonged to the school of Le Nôtre, to lay out his garden at Herrenhausen. The architect for the house was Quirini, a Venetian, and he gave it an Italian look with two wings of one story, which jutted forward and showed a flat roof with balustrades. At small German courts, we often find, as late as the middle of the eighteenth century, a partnership of Italian architect and French garden artist, for the French style in building arrived later in Germany than the garden style, and was never really naturalised. The duke loved magnificence, and he rejoiced in the stir and bustle that a tribe of foreign artists, French and Italian, brought to his place. Although the keeping up of the pleasure-grounds at Herrenhausen cost nearly six thousand dollars in 1679, the year of Duke Ernst Johann's death; and although his successor, Prince Ernst August, was very angry about the extravagance, it was this very successor who extended the garden to double its size, and gave it pretty much the appearance that it still has (Fig. 449).

FIG. 449. HERRENHAUSEN, HANOVER—GENERAL PLAN

It is natural to think of the close relationship between the Hanoverian and French courts, which was kept up in the liveliest way in the correspondence of the gay Princess Sophia of Hanover with her niece Lieselotte, Duchess of Orleans; and it may easily be believed that as the two ladies took such an interest in gardens, they shared some direct advice and even plans by Le Nôtre. The plans were as formal as any we know, giving the impression of an example in a school-book. There seems to be a kind of anxiety not to omit any of the rules or injunctions: first there are the fine parterres with a central fountain, behind them four almost square

ponds, then a simpler parterre with two little pavilions, which have now disappeared. They formed the connection with the baskets, which were traversed by regular star-arranged paths with tall hedges of box, and which all had a basin in the centre. There was a very large round pond at the end of the middle walk, and the two side paths led to summer-houses built like temples. Avenues of limes encircled the whole garden, with canals running beside them, which formed a semicircular bay behind the round basin in the middle axis. The first half of the garden, which lies nearest to the house, shows clear traces of the earliest phase of Versailles. The grotto occurs at exactly the same point; but as complete regularity demanded a corresponding site on the opposite side, here were the so-called cascades and a wall with grotto and shells, enlivened by waterfalls and springs. Here also was the attractive orangery beside the castle, and corresponding to it on the other side a garden for flowers or vegetables.

The only part that was not formal was the theatre on the east of the great parterre. This stands on a made terrace, varying the monotony of the otherwise level ground. The back of it is occupied by the stage, from which steps lead to the garden beside a beautiful fountain at the supporting wall. The side scenes are trapezium-shaped, meeting together at the back, and cut out like small green dressing-rooms, with statues in front of them (Fig. 450).

FIG. 450. HERRENHAUSEN, HANOVER—GARDEN THEATRE IN ITS PRESENT STATE

The stage is separated from the amphitheatre for spectators by a low wide gangway, on a level with the garden, and approached by steps from the stage. This must have been a great help to the performances, as it served as a sort of orchestra. The garden was quite finished by 1700, but the theatre was so placed in the body of it that one may perhaps assume that it was adopted into the ground-plan, and it thus would be one of the earliest of the kind. The garden at Herrenhausen had no particular park of its own; from the treatment of the canal surrounding the whole place, this would have been impossible. The omission may have been due to Dutch influence, for gardeners from Holland were working here later.