

THE HISTORICAL GARDEN IN GROWING CITIES

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The main dangers to historical gardens are undoubtedly connected with urbanization. There is always a possibility of restoring a garden that has been simply neglected; but urbanized surroundings often destroy a garden, ecologically, visually and sometimes physically as well.

The different problems of conserving a historical garden in a fast developing city may be seen in Moscow's many historical gardens. The cases are far from identical. Some of the parks have existed in city surroundings for years, and have been used as city recreation grounds for so long, that their historical significance has been all but forgotten (Ostankino, Lefortovo, Razoumovsky garden). Others have been engulfed by the spreading city in the last few years, and are influenced by these changed conditions (Kouskovo, Arkhangelskoye, Tsarytsino), although this influence is felt in different ways.

The most obvious danger is the fast increase of the amount of visitors, damaging even to gardens, carefully preserved as museum. A good example of this is the fine garden of Arkhangelskoye, planned in the beginning of the XVIIIth century (which makes 70 or 80 years older than the existing house).

The gardens are laid out on three terraces, of which two, with their stairways, walls and statues, serve as a base for the house, and the third, a smooth plain lawn, measuring 70 by 210 metres, forms a link between architecture and nature—the lovely view over the river.

Arkhangelskoye's green carpet symbolizes the wide space of the rich river meadows, which used to be seen framed by two greenhouses at the end of the garden. These greenhouses were replaced in the 1930-ies by two rather massive sanatorium buildings, which nevertheless, retained the "framing" effect. The house itself became a museum, receiving, with the garden pavilions, great attention and care. The museum is one of the most popular in Moscow, and visiting rates have been rising so quickly, that now walking through the garden on a Sunday is no easy thing. This makes Arkhangelskoye one of the gardens, which, though quite well preserved up to now, are quickly succumbing under the stress of excessive visiting.

The problem of overuse is also crucial for a very different type of park—the romantic "wilderness" of Tsarytsino, with the ruins of Catherine the Great's

palace (never finished) and pretty park pavilions. Surrounded by large new housing developments, which have blocked some of the vistas designed by the architect V. Bazhenov, the park is used for picnics, sports and even camping. Another romantic XIXth century park, Kouzminky, suffers from the same sort of active and careless use. It seems that these picturesque landscapes, their design rather blurred by overgrowth, give people a feeling of being in natural surroundings, to be used freely, while a formal design seems to require some of discipline.

This may be seen through a comparison with Kouskovo, once the site of Moscow's most important fêtes and theatrical festivals.

Kouskovo's gardens and lake were laid out in the beginning of the XVIIIth century, although its best period came between 1750 and 1780, when the gardens were finished and the pavilions and existing house were built. Nearly all the work was done by the talented architect Argounoff, a slave owned by count Sheremetyeff.

The formal garden of 31 hectares, enclosed by a canal, was divided into three parts; the lawn parterre between the house and the greenhouse at the end of the garden, and shady groves with pavilions in the middle. An interesting point is that the "green rooms" of Italian and French gardens are replaced in Russia's climate by garden houses, to be used in cold and rainy weather. In Kouskovo one of them is the Dutch house, reflected in a small pond, joined to the lake by a miniature canal; it was once surrounded by a tiny "Dutch garden" of tulips.

Kouskovo, famous for its actors and musicians, had a unique open-air theatre, ruined in 1894, but still restorable.

The large green territory of the city park, surrounding Kouskovo, is quite capable of receiving thousands of visitors. This makes it possible to focus attention on the replacement of the trees and shrubs, overgrown, and falling apart. This will inevitably lead to its closing down for a rather long period. Kouskovo being one of Moscow's favorite parks, this fact raises some problems of its own.

The existence of sufficient green space near the historical garden is clearly essential to its conservation, but this fact has but recently come to the attention of city planners. Up to now historical gardens and parks, some of them quite large, have been summed up with other existing and planned green spaces of the city, to make up the 12 square metres of green space per person, specified by rules of city planning in the USSR. Only in the process of working out a detailed plan of Moscow's green territories, based on the General plan, has the category

of "special parks" (historical gardens among them) been accepted, meaning that these parks are added to the normal acreage of green spaces, based on the number of Moscow's citizens, bringing the total number to 18 square metres. This is very important, as a way of relieving the stress of day-to-day active use, under which many historical gardens are simply crumbling away.

City parks designed for active use and adjoining the historical gardens they are meant to shield are planned near Kouzminky, Tsarytsino, Kouskovo. But in some cases the problem remains unresolved. For instance, in the Northern zone of Moscow the Ostankino park, a historical garden, is itself used as the buffer park, taking the stress off Moscow's Botanical gardens (a special park in its own right). This is one of the most difficult cases in Moscow. The total of 18 metres per person, distributed unevenly among Moscow's zones, comes up to 50 metres in the Northern zone, mainly because of VDNH, a large exhibition park, the Botanical gardens and Ostankino. Yet this very zone is the one most lacking in green spaces for active use (skiing, for instance, is prohibited in VDNH and the Botanical gardens, and should be in Ostankino, if restored).

Ostankino has long been used as a city park of culture and rest, yet the main points of its design still exist and its restoration is quite possible. This is all the more true as the park's surroundings retain something of the original open character (it was described in the XIXth century as rising unexpectedly among the fields). The open space belonging to the new television tower and the reconstructed old lake in front of the house and church give the necessary effect. On the other side Ostankino is separated by a creek from the large territory of the Botanical gardens.

Ostankino's restoration is especially desirable, as it is historically inseparable from Kouskovo, described above. Built only a few years later, and by many of the same artists, builders and gardeners, the park is nevertheless very different in character. Kouskovo and Ostankino illustrate the transition from the formal treatment of the landscape (as in early St. Petersburg gardens—Peterhof, Strelna, Oranienbaum) to the romantic approach, stressing the natural features of the site (as in Arkhangelskoye, and the great parks of Tsarskoye Selo and Pavlovsk).

Moscow's General plan contains an idea of forming a chain of green spaces along the small river Yauza (to be cleaned and reclaimed, according to the plan). The valley of Yauza, once a picturesque stream, flowing among meadows and low hills, used to be a collection of houses and gardens, forming an aristocratic dwelling region of XVIIIth century Moscow. Most of the sites were parcelled out and built up in the XIXth century, but a few of the old garden sites still exist, forming

the main points of the new plan.

Of these, one of the earliest is Golovinsky garden. A simple residence with a wooden house, it was purchased in 1721 by czar Peter for his own Moscow residence. In the planning and layout of the new gardens an important part was played by Nicholas Bidloo, a Dutch scientist and doctor, who, at the death of King William of Orange, came to Russia on czar Peter's invitation. The work was mostly done in 1722-24. The gardens included a system of canals, ponds and grottoes, along which a vista opened on the quiet-flowing Yauza and the green shores opposite.

In 1731 the gardens were enlarged by the building of Annenhof, a garden situated on the top terrace, behind the new palace. This was done by Rastrelli. A little earlier part of Franz Lefort's garden was added, and the gardens were sometimes called Lefortovo—the name most often used now.

After several fires the upper gardens were destroyed, and Lefortovo came back to its original size. A great part of the garden has been changed because of use as a park of culture and rest (for instance, sport fields were built). The view along the main axis has been blocked by a large office building on the opposite shore. But the water system still exists, and with it, one might say, the soul of the garden, subtly reminding one of the great water landscapes of St. Petersburg.

Another example of Yauza's gardens are the grounds of Razoumovsky house, where the Institute of Physical Culture is now situated. This is a very old garden site, first laid out in the XVIIth century by David Bahart, a Danish merchant, and known as Bahartov house. It was rebuilt in the middle of the XVIIIth century as an intricate five-part garden, with three vistas opening on the Yauza valley. Later, when Razoumovsky house was built, the gardens were redone once again, along simpler lines. The parterres have now been turned into sports fields belonging to the Institute, although in this way most of the terracing has been preserved.

Vysokye Gory, a XIXth century garden in the romantic style, is rather better preserved, although here the planting has been changed by adding to it, with the view of separating the grounds (now belonging to a hospital) from the surrounding city.

The Yauza valley restorations, as well as others planned in Moscow, bring up the very serious problem of organizing special nurseries, making the needed trees and shrubs available for replanting the historical gardens as their turn comes along.

This, perhaps unexpectedly, comes up as a great problem, not only in Moscow, but in other cities as well, even in Leningrad. The restoration jobs being now done

have to rely on the city nurseries, which, as there are too few of them, hardly fulfill the needs of current landscaping; Another point is that planting the city's new green spaces is mostly done the cheapest way, with young saplings, while the old gardens in Russia were made by replanting large trees. It may be mentioned, that for some years czar Peter imported large trees for his new gardens from Haarlem; there is a 1713 letter from him to Courakin, the Russian ambassador in Holland, ordering two thousand linden trees six inches around. Imported trees did not acclimatize very well, so later great numbers of trees were obtained in different parts of the state, almost all of them of 20 years and more. It might be said that the gardens were put together from ready-made elements, giving instant effect. Fir trees, white birches became popular, with some oaks and chestnuts in the warmer parts. Apple, cherry and plum trees were often used in gardens, prized for their bloom, as well as for the fruit they brought. The more important gardens had their own greenhouses, growing laurels, orange and lemon trees, used for decorating the gardens in summer.

All these trees, as well as boxwood for the parterres, are still grown in Moscow and other cities. But modern nurseries simply don't grow a sufficient amount of trees to the age necessary for restoration work.

Flowers are less of a problem, because Moscow's gardens never relied much on flowers in their design, emphasizing lawn and water and shady trees, with lilacs blooming in June and, in the more formal gardens, a more or less intricate clipped parterre.

The absence of specialized nurseries is perhaps the strongest obstacle which must be removed, if the planned garden restorations are to be carried out.

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