

The Oldest Danish Book about Gardening

Abstract

Our knowledge about which plants were cultivated in Denmark in the antiquity and in the Middle Ages is still improving, because of new excavations, studies of archives, better dating methods and macro- and micro- fossil analyses in old cultural layers (Lange, 1991).

Documentation about horticulture and garden design is not found until the middle of the 17th century. But studies are in progress to elucidate this at the King's garden at Rosenborg from the beginning of that century, and even earlier – the garden of Tycho Brahe at Uranienborg, at Hven from 1576. But there is one major, important written source, *Horticultura Danica* from 1647.

Horticultura danica

This book about gardening in Denmark was written by Hans Rasmusson Block. Very little is known about his origin and education. He uses an old title «URTEGÅRDSMAND» (a person who takes care of the herbs), and introduced himself by saying that «As he considers the skill to lay out gay and useful gardens is a rather important skill, he has since his childhood tried to go in for this skill, and he has served several masters ; among others, his own Majesty and other noblemen.» We know that he studied foreign books about gardening, and decided to make one in Danish.

When he served King Christian the Fourth, Block had worked in the King's own garden, Lundehave, in Elsinore. The book was published at the end of the King's reign, and was followed the next year by the work *Flora Danica* (Paulli, 1648).

The garden style in the Renaissance was mostly inspired from Italy which is a paradox because the flat topography of Denmark is more similar to that of northern France than to that of hilly Italy.

As is typical of the period, Block's book used Gothic letters, except for Latin names. The foreword expresses respect for and even servility to

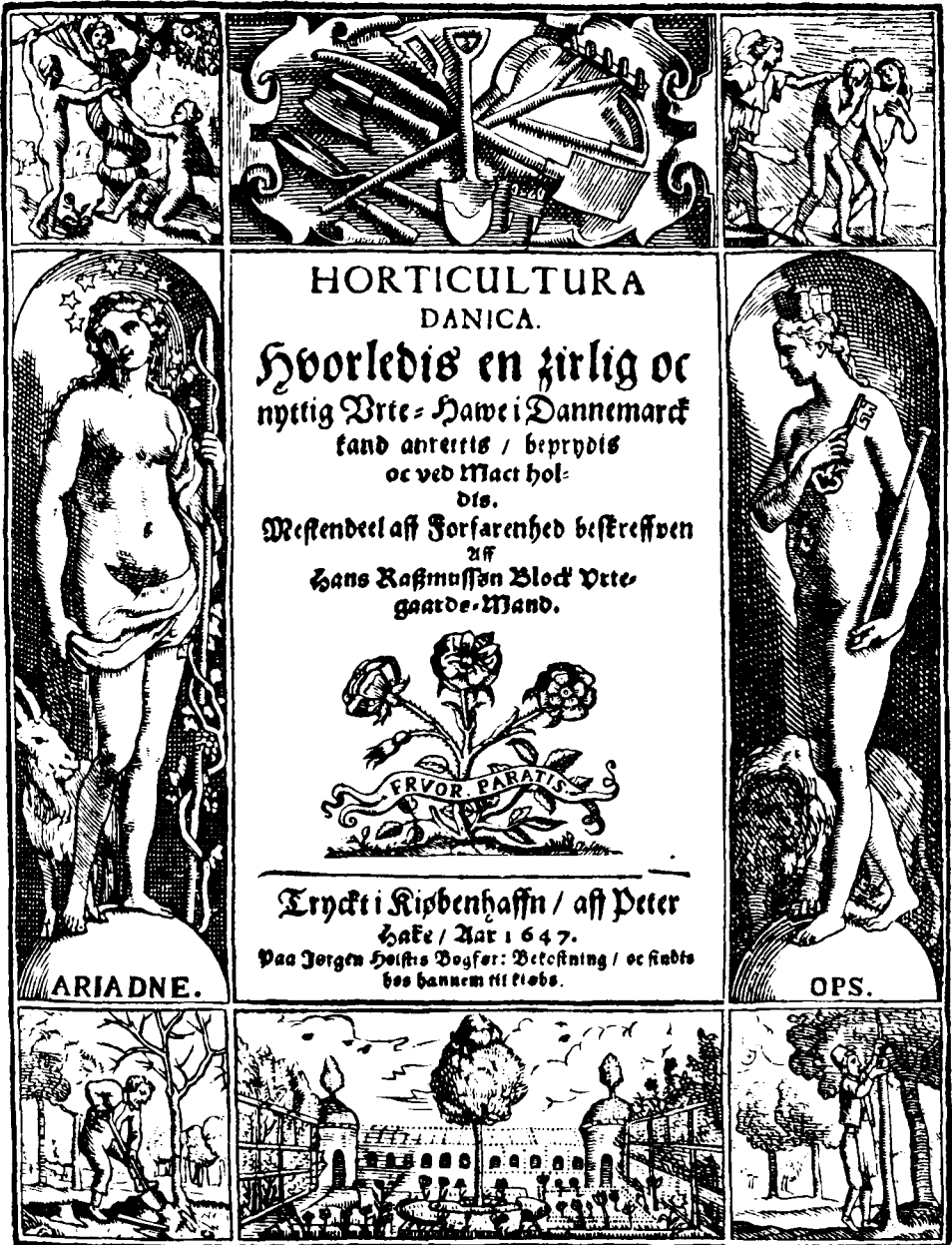


Fig. 1. The front page of the garden book from 1647 by Hans Rasmussen Block.

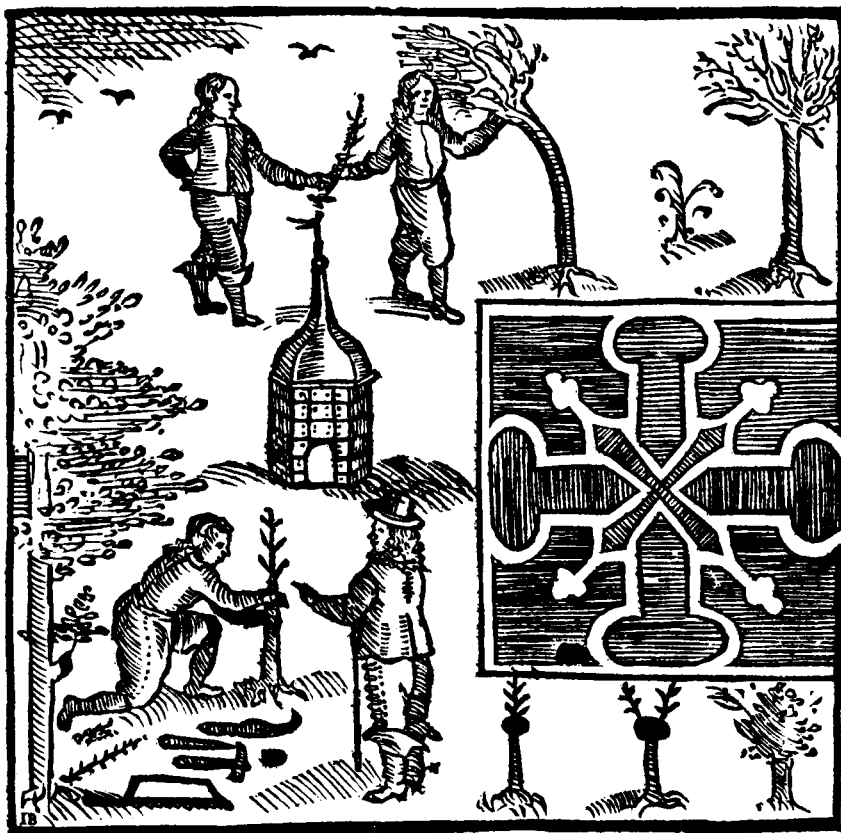


Fig. 2. «About tree planting». Illustration from *Blocks book*.

the reader. Block refers to God as the first gardener laying out the Garden of Paradise for Adam and Eve. He refers to the tales of Xenophon about how the King Cyrus requests his men to cultivate gardens, and to the poem of Homer about Laertes who is always to be found in his garden.

Block explains in the foreword to the readers that there are three reasons why he wrote the book. Firstly, several persons have asked him to do so. Secondly, he must introduce his neighbour to what is attractive. Thirdly, he wants to honour the Danish language.

The 150 page long publication is divided in three parts followed by register and plant lists. Part I gives in 11 chapters instructions about how to layout, to draw and trace patterns, and how to maintain a garden. Part II deals with the plants, herbaceous as well as trees and shrubs. Part III deals with propagation, the planting of fruit trees, grafting, wine growing, and conservation of the products from the garden.



Det elleffte Capitel.

Den rette oc beste Maade at pos- de med.

Fig. 3. «The best way of grafting». Illustration from *Blocks book*.

List of plants mentioned in alphabetical order :

Aconitum napellus	Amaranthus paniculatus	Armoracia rusticana
Acorus calamus	Amaranthus tricolor	Artemisia abrotanum
Adonis annua	Anchusa officinalis	Artemisia dracunculus
Alcea (Althaea) rosea	Anemone coronaria	Arum maculatum
Alcea rosea fl.pl.	Anethum graveolens	Asparagus officinalis
Allium ascalonicum	Angelica archangelica	Asphodelus albus
Allium cepa	Anthriscus cerefolium	Barbarea vulgaris
Allium sativum	Antirrhinum majus	Bellis perennis
Allium schoenoprasum	Aquilegia vulgaris	Berberis vulgaris
Amaranthus caudatus	Aquilegia vulgaris fl.pl.	Beta vulgaris

Betonica officinalis (Stachys betonica)	Eranthis hiemale	Malus (silvestris) domestica
Borago officinalis	Eryngium maritimum	Matthiola incana
Brassica oleracea capitata	Erythronium dens-canis	Medicago falcata
Brassica rapa var. rapa	Euphorbia lathyris	Melissa officinalis
Buxus sempervirens	Ficus carica	Mentha pulegium
Calendula officinalis	Foeniculum vulgare	Mentha spicata crispula
Campanula media	Fragaria vesca	Mespilus germanica
Campanula rapunculus	Fritillaria imperialis	Mirabilis jalapa
Canna indica	Fritillaria meleagris	Mormordica balsamina
Capsicum annuum	Galanthus nivalis	Muscari cf. neglectum
Carthamus tinctorius	Genista hispanica	Muscari cf. racemosum
Carum carvi	Gentiana verna	Myosotis sp.
Centaurea cyanus	Geranium macrorrhizum	Myrrhis odorata
Chamaemelum nobile	Gladiolus communis	Narcissus spp.
Chamaemelum nobile fl.pl.	Glaucium corniculatum	Nerium oleander
Cheiranthus cheiri	Hedysarum coronarium	Nicotiana tabacum
Chenopodium foliosum	Helianthus annuus	Nigella damascena fl.pl.
Chrysanthemum majus	Helleborus niger	Ocmium basilicum
Chrysanthemum parthenium	Helleborus viridis	Opuntia ficus-indica
Chrysanthemum parthenium fl.pl.	Hepatica nobilis fl.pl.	Orchis sp.
Chrysanthemum vulgare	Hibiscus trionum	Origanum majorana
Cichorium endivia	Hyacinthus orientalis	Origanum vulgare
Cistus ladanifer	Hyssopus officinalis	Ornithogalum sp.
Citrus aurantium aurantium	Iberis umbellata	Paeonia officinalis
Citrus lemon	Impatiens balsamina	Papaver rhoeas fl.pl.
Citrus limon	Inula helenium	Papaver somniferum
Clematis cfr. vitalba	Iris germanica	Pastinaca sativa
Clematis viticella plena	Iris pumila	Peucedanum ostruthium
Cnicus benedictus	Iris susiana	Pharbitis purpurea
Cochlearia officinalis	Iris xiphium	Phaseolus vulgaris
Colchicum autumnale	Jasminum officinale	Philadelphus coronarius
Convallaria majalis	Juglans regia	Phyllitis scolopendrium
Convolvulus tricolor	Juniperus sabina	Physalis alkekengi
Corylus avellana	Lactuca sativa	Pimpinella major
Crataegus sp.	Leguaria siceraria	Plantago major rosea
Crocus sativus	Lathyrus tuberosus	Polygonum bistorta
Crocus vernus	Laurus nobilis	Portulaca oleracea sativa
Cucumis melo	Lavandula angustifolia	Potentilla erecta
Cucumis sativus	Lavatera arborea	Primula auricula
Cyclamen purpurascens	Lepidium sativum	Primula variabilis
Cydonia oblongea	Levisticum officinale	Primula veris
Cynara scolymus	Ligustrum vulgare	Prunus cerasus
Daphne laureola	Lilium bulbiferum croceum	Prunus cerasus caproniana
Datura stramonium	Lilium martagon	Prunus domestica
Daucus carota	Linaria vulgaris	Prunus dulcis
Delphinium consolida	Lonicera caprifolium	Prunus laurocerasus
Dianthus barbatus	Lunaria annua	Prunus spinosa
Dianthus caryophyllus	Lupinus albus	Punica granatum
Dictamnus albus	Lupinus angustifolius	Pyrus communis
Digitalis purpurea	Lychnis chalcidonica	Ranunculus asiaticus
Dracunculus vulgaris	Lychnis coronaria fl.pl.	Raphanus sativus niger
	Lycopersicum lycopersicum	Raphanus sativus sativus
	Lysimachia vulgaris	Ribes rubrum

Ribes uva-crispa
 Ricinus communis
 Rosa centifolia
 Rosa spp.
 Rosmarinus officinalis
 Rumex acetosa
 Rumex patientia
 Ruta graveolens
 Salvia officinalis
 Salvia sclarea
 Saponaria officinalis plena

Satureja hortensis
 Silene coeli-rosa
 Sinapis alba
 Sium sisarum
 Syringa vulgaris
 Tagetes patula
 Thymus vulgaris
 Trapogon porrifolius
 Tropaeolum majus
 Tulipa gesneriana
 Urtica pilulifera

Valeriana phy
 Valerianella locusta
 Viburnum opulus roseum
 Vicia faba
 Vinca minor
 Viola cornuta
 Viola odorata
 Viola odorata fl.pl.
 Vitis vinifera

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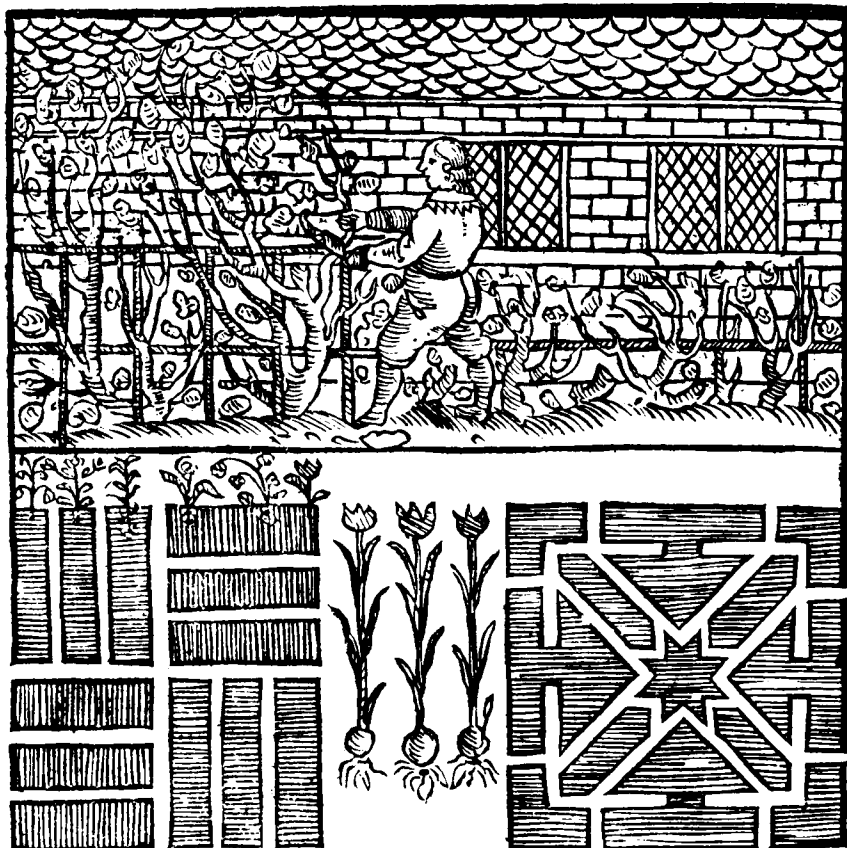


Fig. 4. «About how to cultivate grapes». Illustration from Blocks book.

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