

Garden Ramblings



Herb gardens on a grander scale than this were a most important source of food and medicine and by the 15th century they were becoming places of learning. The physic garden would contain vast collections of useful plants and then rare and exciting plants. They were often connected to universities where the study of plants could be made using many varieties and no doubt the usefulness could be tried out on people.

From there the Botanic Garden came into being and those collectors and many more I haven't mentioned scoured the world for plants with the Wow factor.

Plant hunters became famous and wrote about their travels and the amazing plants they had found. Cabinets and store rooms became filled with seeds, dry, pressed plants and extremely beautiful drawings and paintings.

Both paintings and plants were sold for significant sums of money. A rare plant could be the envy of all your friends and show how wealthy you were. My £20 pomegranate does not raise my status as it would have done 200 years ago but just shows my naive belief that one day I could pick a pomegranate or at least see the flowers in my garden.

Now, Botanic Gardens are important for the preservation of as many varieties and species of plants and encouraging the growth of seed banks. These are useful in the maintaining the greatest varieties that can grow in different environments hopefully saving plants that could survive in changing climates. A discovery after the horrendous famine in Ireland was that it could have been lessened if it had been realised that it was important to grow different varieties of potato. The Eden Project is a great tourist attraction but it has scientific purposes as well.

This does not just mean the feeding of people but the enjoyment of plants. One great over production of plant cuttings came through celebration! Between 1935 and 1939, Francois Meilland developed a rose he called Madame Meilland. In order to save this he sent cuttings to Italy and Turkey and some cuttings just caught the last flight to USA as France was invaded. This rose was then sold after the war as the rose Peace. Over 100 million were sold, but it was noticed that the sturdy plants were becoming weak through over propagation and much work had to be done to renovate the strain. Poor old Cox apples were going that way but the delicious Queen ox developed from that is delicious. I am getting ready for the day when those on my tree are really ripe.

I must get on with caring for my collection of pernicious weeds.