

Home landscapes have long history

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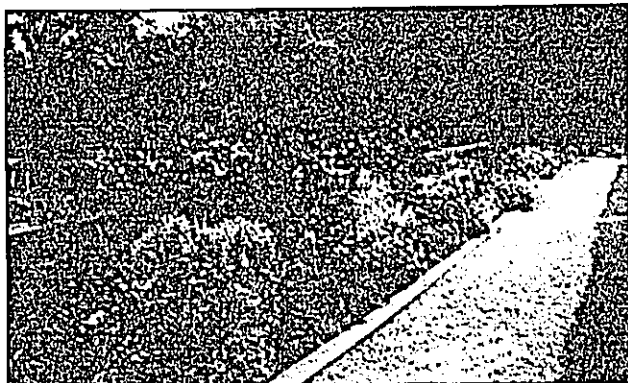
The landscaping of our American homes is an interesting subject and I was privileged to hear Scott Kunst speak about it.

His firm, Old House Gardens, is America's only mail-order source devoted to antique bulbs.

Kunst spoke about the American home landscapes from the 1800s through the 1940s and explained the trends and why they evolved. He illustrated his talk with photographs that gave a clear picture of the evolving styles. His presentation was most interesting and well done.

During the 1800s, the houses built in America were plain with traditional architecture and had no foundation plantings. Usually there were fenced gardens for special plants, probably vegetables. The fences kept the critters out. Straight paths and rectangular beds inside the fences defined the area. Later, sometimes the large area in front of the house contained paths outlining parlor gardens. Shrub roses and lilacs may have been planted.

Everyone had fencing made in different styles. Picket fences were put around vegetable gardens to keep animals out; another fence divided fruit



To the border: This border garden with its gravel path at Cranbrook contains many kinds of plants.

trees, grapes and vegetables. Large trees were used in the landscape; those included weeping willows, lombardy poplars, maples and oaks. Typical shrubs were lilacs, snowball viburnum, Rose of Sharon and roses. Old varieties of tulips with stripes on the petals were

preferred. Madonna lilies and violets were also grown at that time, as were tough perennials such as iris and peonies.

Annual flowers included self-sowers such as bachelor buttons, honesty, columbine, four o'clock, yucca and tiger lilies. Some herbs such as sage were

also grown among the other plants.

Romantic

From the 1840s to 1870s the style of landscaping became romantic, with a new style for gardens. Ornaments, often an urn, were placed on the front lawn, trees were planted in clusters and vines were used extensively. Those people with large properties had rolling lawns and serpentine lakes, curving drives and broad sweeps of lawn with shrubs scattered on them. The back yards remained in a straight regimented arrangement.

Cemeteries were landscaped, and people visited them for their beauty; this led to the development of public parks.

Now evergreens were added to the landscapes, usually planted in straight lines, and more grass was sown with the advent of the lawn mower. The lawns weren't tended very well and were filled with dandelions, violets, etc. Within the lawns geometric shaped flower beds were made and planted with either one color or species of plant such as petunias, verbenas and dahlias. Curved paths came into fashion and were made of cut square blocks of stone, dirt, gravel or wooden boards.

Snowberry, spicebush (clove currant), flowering quince, weigelia, kerria and forsythia were added to the plant lists.

Some of the same type of fencing was still used, but refinement was necessary in the new gardens and iron fencing became popular. Cast iron was also used for urns and statues.

By this time more vines and garlands appeared on the scene. Morning glory, hyacinth bean, Virginia creeper, trumpet creeper, clematis, Japanese honeysuckle and Dutchman's pipes were grown.

Another stage

The third stage of the garden history began in the 1870s, and the designs were elaborated on, still curving paths and arches for the houses - a Victorian flavor. Bedding plants (sometime called carpet or patterned designs) became the rage.

Pansies were Burpee's best seller at the turn of the century. Gardeners would rip out their bedding plants and replace them two or three times a season. Salvia, ageratum, cannas, phlox, dusty miller, Joseph's coat and many succulents filled them. The red geranium was the most popular plant at that time. Subtropical bedding plants included castor beans and elephant ears. Ornamental grasses were often used.

Lilies and ferns were also popular. Statues, gazebos and porches with hanging pots of begonias and fuchsias were de rigueur at that time. House plants began appearing on porches during the summertime. Wicker furniture and porch swings found a comfortable place there.

About this time foundation plantings began to appear around houses, usually of one kind of shrub such as spiraea. The

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