The History of Gardening: A Timeline
From Ancient Times to the Twentieth Century

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March 12, 2011

35,000 BCE (BCE = Before the Common Era, or Before the Roman Era)
B.C. = Before Caesar (Julius Caesar), or Before Christ (Jesus of Nazareth)
Before the Communications Era of Handwritten Books and Scholarly Libraries
(450 BCE - 450 CE) BCE does not mean "Before the Christian Era." There are numerous Internet resources that discuss this topic of dating schemes. Actually, I would prefer BP = Before Printing and AP = After Printing (Gutenberg, 1453-) to date the "Common Era." Many experts consider the invention of printing as the most important invention of the last 1,000 years. There is no doubt that the widespread dissemination of knowledge via printed books greatly changed the consciousness of modern man. We left the "Dark Ages" and moved into the Renaissance.

Evidence from archeological sites (tools, corporelites) indicates that Homo Sapiens at the end of the Paleolithic period had knowledge of many plants derived from food gathering techniques. Different kinds of fruits, nuts, and roots were only gathered, not cultivated.

8500 BCE
In Mesopotamia, humans raised domesticated goats, sheep, and cereal grains. Neolithic cultures involved farming.

"Scientists have carried out carbon-14 testing of animal and plant remains and have dated finds of domesticated sheep at 9000 BC in northern Iraq; cattle in the 6th millennium BC in northeastern Iran; goats at 8000 BC in central Iran; pigs at 8000 BC in Thailand and 7000 BC in Thessaly; onagers, or asses, at 7000 BC in Jarmo, Iraq; and horses at 4350 BC in Ukraine." Bio-Tech's History of Agriculture.

8000 BCE
Certain cereals and pulses (legumes) were domesticated in very ancient times. In about 8000 BC in the Fertile Crescent of the Near and Middle East (present-day Syria, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Jordan, Israel), wheats, barley, lentil, pea, bitter vetch, chick-pea, and possibly faba bean, were brought into cultivation by the Neolithic people. These crops spread from the point of origin. Archaeological evidence indicates that the wheats, and some of the legumes, had reached Greece by 6000 BC and evidence of their presence within that millennium has been found in the Danube Basin, the Nile valley, and the Indian subcontinent (Pakistan). Dispersal continued throughout Europe, the crops reaching Britain and Scandinavia in 4,000-2,000 BC." - The New Oxford Book of Food Plants [Vaughan 1997]

"The first evidence for plant domestication is approximately 10,000 years old, but the first society in which people were primarily dependent on domesticated crops and livestock does not appear until about 6,000 years ago."

Khabur Basin farming in Syria. "The only factor that can account for the irreversible and nearly uniform emergence of agriculture throughout the world is the growth of populations beyond the size that hunting and gathering would support." Mark Cohen's Thesis. [Heiser 1990]
7000 BCE
People in Central America cultivate corn and other crops.
People at Tepe Ali Khosh in Iran cultivated 'Emmer' and 'Einkorn' wheat. [Baker 1978]
Gardening myths
Chatal Huyuk is the largest Neolithic site in the Near East.
Rice cultivation in Yangtze Valley of China.
Apples cultivated in southwestern Asia.

6000 BCE
Evidence of cultivation of wheat (but not breadwheat), barley (naked, not hulled), and lentils were found in the Neolithic Greek cultures of Thessaly, Crete, and the Cyclades.
Evidence of rice cultivation at Ho-mu-tu in South China; and, at Ban-po-ts'un in North China. Oranges cultivated in India and Tigris River Valley.
Cultivation of maize in Peru.

5000 BCE
Wild pod corn is cultivated in the Tehuacan valley in Mexico. [Baker 1978]
Millet grown along the Yellow River (Huang Ho) in China.
The Native people of North America inhabit river flood plains and cultivate crops.
Irrigation begins in the Middle East. [Heiser 1990]
Cotton grown in Mexico.
Domestication of some wild plants by people living in the Mississippi River drainage basin.
Wine making in Iran.

4800 BCE
Archaeological evidence from Tehuacan in south central Mexico shows that maize, squash, chili peppers, avocados, and amaranth were cultivated. [Heiser 1990]
Domestication of citrus species in various parts of the world. Sweet Oranges by Stephen Hui.

4500 BCE
Evidence of managed woodlands in Britain.

4000 BCE
"As in the case of the cereals, the legumes are amongst the oldest crops cultivated by the human race. Between the cereals and legumes there is a parallel domestication: wheat, barley, pea, lentil, broad bean, and chick pea in West Asia and Europe; maize and common bean in Central America; ground nut in South America; pearl millet, sorghum, cowpea, and bambara groundnut in Africa; rice and soya bean in China." - - The New Oxford Book of Food Plants, xviii, 1997, by J. G. Vaughan and C. A. Geissler. Farming in Mesopotamia by Sumerians. Hittites. Indus Valley agriculture is very extensive: wheat, peas, sesame seed, barley, dates, mangoes.

3900 BCE
Rice grown in Southeast Asia, Korat area of Thailand.
Ancient World Web Index, Ancient Scripts - Web Resources

3700 BCE
Uruk period of Sumerian agriculture.

3500 BCE
Egyptian agriculture using extensive irrigation techniques.
Egyptian garden art
Cotton growing and cotton textiles quite advanced in India, and remained so until the 13th
Ancient Egyptian Horticulture and Agriculture

3000 BCE
Written manuals for the use of herbs in medicine existed in Mesopotamia (now Iraq) and in China. Herbal remedies were widely used by the ancient people. Potatoes are cultivated in the Andes mountains of Peru.

Lost Crops of the Incas

"Of the two thousand or so species in the bulging genus *Solanum*, about 170 are tuber-bearers. Of the tuber-bearers, only eight are routinely cultivated and eaten by people, and most of these have stuck pretty close to home in the Andes of Peru. Only one has reached international stardom: *S. tuberosum*, commonly known as the potato. The potato probably originated in Peru, where indications are that it was domesticated over six thousand years ago by high-altitude-dwelling ancestors of the Incas."


Egyptians in the Nile Valley manufacturing and wearing cotton clothes.

Egyptian tomb paintings show walled gardens with fish ponds and fruit trees.

Carved water basin from Tello in Mesopotamia. [Hirst 1999]

Olives cultivated in Crete and Syria.

Farming in India.

2700 BCE

Rhubarb cultivated in China for medicinal purposes.

Egyptians used over 500 plants, wild and cultivated, for medicinal purposes. Egyptian wine making.

Chinese Emperor Shen Nung's plant classification lists.

Hemp cultivation in China.

2500 BCE

Rice was an important food in Mohenjo-Daro near the Arabian Sea, and in the Yangtze Basin in China.

Cotton was cultivated and its fibers spun and woven in Peru and the Indus Valley of Asia. [Baker 1978]

Figs, grape vines, pomegranates, and dates in cultivation in Egypt and Asia. The first garden art was probably decorated grape arbors [Gothein 1928]. Olive trees cultivated in Crete.

Farming in England.

2000 BCE

Native Americans are growing many varieties of corn, beans, squash, sunflowers, as well as using many wild plants as foods.

Egyptians making paper from the papyrus plant. Watermelon cultivated in Africa, tea and bananas in India, apples in the Indus Valley.

1750 BCE

The Hammurabic Code. Includes sections on maintaining irrigation canals and ditches, and property laws regarding gardens. Sumerian "Farmer's Almanac."

1495 BCE

Queen Hatshepsut of Egypt imports trees from conquered territory in North Africa.

Farming in Ancient Egypt

One of the oldest surviving garden plans is for the garden of a court official in Thebes.
1300 BCE
Ramses II has **apples** cultivated along the Nile.

1167 BCE
Ramses III, **Egyptian** King, (1198-1167) benefactor to many grand temple gardens and public buildings.

1275 BCE
The Torah establishes rules for **kosher** food.

1000 BCE
Irrigation begins in Mexico. [Heiser 1990]
Sacred Places: Trees and the Sacred.
Tiglath Pileser I, King in Mesopotamia, enthusiastic gardener

800 BCE
Peanuts cultivated in **Peru**.
Farming in **Africa**.

700 BCE
*Works and Days* by Hesiod.

540 BCE
**Hanging Gardens of Babylon**. Built by slaves and peasants directed by King Nebuchadnezzar II.
Sugar cane grown along the Indus River.

485 BCE
King **Darius the Great** (521-485) and his paradise garden in Persia.

440 BCE
Herodotus of Halicarnassos (484-426) writes on history, **customs** and life in the ancient world.

377 BCE
Hippocrates (circa 460-377) Greek physician. Wrote 87 treatises. Many herbal remedies.

350 BCE
Gardens at the Academy, Athens, Greece
Natural history **references** in the Jewish sacred scriptures - *Pentateuch*.
Trees: Living Links to the Classical Past. By John M. McMahon.

322 BCE
Theophrastus inherited Aristotle's botanic garden in Athens, and many of Aristotle's treatises. Books on plants and gardening written by Theophrastus. One of his books: *De Causis Plantarum*. Theophrastus is considered by some to be the "Father of Botany."
Exchange of information, seeds and plants between Greece and Persia.

301 BCE
*History of Plants and Theoretical Botany* by Theophrastus.
*Trees: Living Links to the Classical Past*. By John M. McMahon.
**Summary** of Greek biology.
Rice growing in **Japan**.
271 BCE
Epicurus (341-271) used a large garden for gatherings and walks. *The Philosophy Garden Upon the Gardens of Epicurus; or, Of Gardening*. By Sir William Temple, 1685.

207 BCE
The opulent and extensive gardens and palace of the first Chinese emperor Ch'in Shih Huang-ti were burned by peasants and Confucian rebels.

200 BCE
King Dutthagamini in India has a large artwork of the Sacred Fig Tree (Buddha's tree) made of precious materials and placed in the Great Gold Dust Dagoba park and gardens.
*Gardens at Pompeii, Italy* [Helphand 1977]  
Greco-Roman eating, drinking, farming, farming and starving exhibit.  
*Almonds* cultivated in Greece.  
Cultivation and trade of *coconuts* between East Africa and India.  
The Hopewellian *farming* culture in Ohio, North America, is thriving.

149 BCE
*Cato* (234-149) wrote on the simple country life.  
*De Agriculture*, by Cato the Elder, emphasizes planting olives and grapes.

100 BCE
Grain harvesting at *Karanis*, Egypt  
The Shang Lin (Great Grove) immense imperial garden of the Chinese emperor Wu-ti.  
*Shanlin Yuan* ("yuan" is chinese for "garden") occupied over 1000 km² and contained more than 300 palaces.

87 BCE
The royal park and gardens of the Chinese Emperor Wu Ti (140-87) in West China, Chang-an.  
The Roman's staple grain was *spelt*.

40 BCE
*De Re Rustica*. *Varro* (116-27). Roman agriculture. Varro was a prolific author, and he noted that there were over 40 known treatises available on the subject in 40 BCE.

29 BCE
*Georgics*. Virgil. Roman rural life.  
Celtic *Druids* and Sacred Trees

50 A.D. = "Anno Domini" in Latin or "the year of the Lord" in English. Or ...  
*CE* = Common Era. The word "common" simply means that this is the most frequently used calendar system: the Gregorian Calendar. It does *not* mean "Christian Era."

*De Materia Medica*. *Dioscorides the Greek*. Herbal medicine.

60 CE
*De Re Rustica, On Agriculture and Trees* ... *Columella.*

79 CE
*Natural History (Naturalis Historica)*. *Pliny the Elder* (23-79). Roman naturalist.
90 CE
*De Aquae Ductibus.* Frontinus. Waterworks in the garden and farm.

105 CE
Tuscan villa at the base of the Apennines

113 CE
Pliny the Younger (61-113) Letters about villa gardens.

138 CE
Emperor Hadrian's Villa near Tivoli.
Karanis, a farming town in Roman Egypt.

250 CE
The administrators of the Roman Empire (circa 100 BCE - 500 AD) actively exchanged information on agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, hydraulics, and botany. Seeds and plants were widely shared.
Chinese making paper from rags, bark, hemp and other fibrous materials. [Baker 1978]

400 CE
The Palace Garden at Sigiriya in Sri Lanka

460 CE
Sidonius writes about his Roman villa in Lac d'Aydat in Auvergne, France.
*Flora of Southeast Asia (Nan-fang ts'ao-mu chuang)* by Hui-lin Li.
Chinese "scholar gardens."
Eggplants cultivated in China and India.

550 CE
In the year 2000, coffee imports and exports are second only to oil on the world trade market.

560 CE
Ono No Imoko, Japanese Buddhist priest and scholar, living by a lake "ikebono", developed an elemental Ikebana flower arrangement style.
Mayan agriculture research
Various styles of fountains and water gardens reflect Persian, Indian and Roman influences.

618 CE
The Chinese emperor Yang-ti constructs the vast imperial garden called The Western Garden.
Suzho, China - "City of Gardens"; Pi Jiang Garden.
Arabs in Persia are impressed by gardening concept of *chahar bagh.*

670 CE
St. Fiacre - Patron Saint of Gardeners (620-670)
Sacred Trees of the Celts
Venerable Bede, Saint Bede (673-735) English historian, scholar, and theologian. *De Natura Rerum* - Medieval science. Many notes on monastic kitchen gardens.

**750 CE**

Arabs capture Chinese papermakers at Samarkand and adopt the process for papermaking.

**760 CE**
Hindu and Arabic mathematicians and thinkers are using a decimal arithmetic. Farmers and gardeners frequently keep detailed logs of their work, and decimal arithmetic is widely used to track important details, e.g., costs of plants and materials, percentage of plants in a batch of cuttings that took, quarts of berries picked, current supermarket price of fresh green beans, etc..

**800 CE**
The city of Baghdad is a center of Arab Islamic culture. Extensive scientific work on agriculture and botany for many centuries before and after. Soft soap making widespread. Chinese garden concepts and the Foolishman's Garden.

**812 CE**
Charlemagne (742-812) King of Franks, Emperor of Western Europe, patron of arts, sciences, and literature. Experimented with plants in a private garden and coordinated planting efforts on estates.

**850 CE**
*Hortulus- Liber de Cultura Hortorum (Book Concerning the Cultivation of Gardens)*. Walafridus Strabo (809-849). *Viking Age Foodstuffs*

**900 CE**

**1044 CE**
The Great Hunger of 1044: The Progress of a Medieval Famine
Sacred Trees in Celtic Traditions

**1050 CE**

**1080 CE**

**1085 CE**
The great Arab libraries in Toledo, Spain, provide Europeans access to sophisticated Islamic and Greek writings in science and agriculture. The success of Arab agriculture in Andalusia, Spain, is renowned.

Horizontal looms are used in Europe.

1094 CE
*Sakuteiki.* Tachibana no Toshitsuna. Japan treatise on garden design.

1120 CE
The Chinese emperor Hui-tsung has the famous Ken Yeh Garden "The Impregnable Peak" constructed.

Manor system in Europe. A manor was roughly 900 to 2,000 acres of arable land.

Hard soaps in wide use.

1130 CE
Percussion drilling of wells in France.

1140 CE

1150 CE
The use of windmills for grinding grains.

1160 CE

1180 CE

1191 CE
Tea from China becomes popular in Japan.

1227 CE
Vatican botanical garden founded. A medicinal or physic garden which still exists today, although in a different location.

St. Frances of Assisi (1182-1126). A holy man now known for his love of animals and nature, and his kindness.

1250 CE
The Japanese Buddhist priest Eisai (1141-1215) utilized a tea ritual as practiced in Chinese Buddhist temples.

Medieval European views about the spontaneous generation of organisms.

The wheelbarrow makes its way into European books.

1260 CE
*De vegetabilibus.* Saint Albert the Great. (1193-1280).

1280 CE
Marco Polo visits the palace garden of the Mogol ruler, Kubilai, in China. Then he reports on visiting the famous Hsi Hu (West Lake) imperial gardens in the largest and probably most advanced city in the world at the time - (Kinsay) Hangchou, China. He brought some new pasta making techniques back to Europe.

1305 CE
*Opus Ruralium Commodorum,* by Petrus de Crescentiis of Bologna.

Medieval agriculture.

1339 CE
Koki-dera (Moss Garden) of Muso Soseki, Japan.
Herding dogs used on European manors.

1350 CE
The great formal gardens of the Moorish Arabs (e.g., Generallife in the Alhambra, Granada, Spain) set standards.
Decameron. Giovanni Boccaccio. County gardens provide a retreat for those fleeing the plague.

1357 CE
The Black Death in Europe. A plague that reduced the population of Europe by 60%.
Alcazar gardens in Seville, Spain.

1390 CE
Forme of Cury: A Roll of Ancient English Cookery.

1400 CE
The Feate of Gardening.

1450 CE
Emperor Yoshimasa of Japan made flower arrangement part of universal education.
Johann Gutenberg began printing with moveable type in Mainz, Germany. By 1500, the world of ideas would never be the same in Western Europe because of this single invention.
Medieval gingerbread candy.

1460 CE
Hortus Sanitatis. Printed in Mainz. Herbal medicine.
Fifteenth Century Life in Europe - Roses

1470 CE
De re aedificatoria. Leone Battista Alberti (1404-1472). Renaissance scholar.
The Topkapi Palace in Turkish Constantinople has renowned fruit trees, gardens and landscaping.
Ottoman Turks introduce coffee to Constantinople. "The world's first coffee shop, Kiva Han, opens in 1475."
Pietro Creszenzi of Bologna compiled ancient works into The Opus Ruralium Commodorum. Encyclopedia by Bartholomeus Anglicus. Apples and apple cider.

1480 CE
Giovanni Medici's villa garden.
Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany, may be the birthplace of the hot dog.

1490 CE
Temple garden of Royanjii, Japan.

1492 CE
Voyage of Christopher Columbus from Spain to the edge of the Americas.
The beginning of plant exchanges between Europe and the Americas.
Christopher Columbus: A Culinary History

1497 CE
Portuguese control the spice trade in the Indian Ocean.
1510 CE
Sunflowers from South America introduced in Spain.

1513 CE
Daisen-in garden in Koyoto, Japan. Designed by So-ami. This is a famous dry garden (*Kare-Sanui*).

1516 CE
First use of the term 'herbal' per the Oxford English Dictionary.

1528 CE
Hernando Cortes introduces vanilla beans, fava beans, cocoa, sweet potatoes, and haricot to Spain.

1529 CE
*Historia General de Nueva Espana*. Bernardino de Sahugun. Aztec gardening arts reported.

1530 CE
Gardens of Babur (1483-1530), Mughal Emperor, in Persia and India.
Persian botanical art, particularly miniatures, is renowned.
Plants exchanged between Europe and the Americas.

1533 CE
Oldest university chair of botany in Europe, founded in Padua by the Venetian Republic.
Spainards started caco tree plantations in Venezuela and Trinidad.

1535 CE
*Nature Mysticism* of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim (1487-1535) and Theophrastus Paracelsus (1493-1541).

1543 CE
Europe's first bontanic garden, established in Pisa by botany professor Luca Ghini.
Potatoes and tomatoes from South America, via Spain, cultivated in Europe.

1545 CE
The Ikenobo School "formulated the principles of rikka arrangements by naming the seven principal branches used in that type of arrangement."

1550 CE
Villa Medici in Rome.
Europe's first museum of natural history in Bologna.
The first printed almanacs in English become available.

1555 CE
Georgius Agricola [George Buaer} (1494-1555) German geologist, metallurgist, and paleontologist.
Carolus Clusius, Dutch botanist, cultivating tulip bulbs imported from Constantinople.
*Fuch's Botanical*, Leonhard Fuchs (1501-1566).

1557 CE
Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdes (1478-1557) Described *flora* of New World.
Bontanical book treasures in the Vatican Library.
1561 CE
De Historia Plantarum. Valerius Cordus.

1568 CE
William Turner (1510-1568), "Father of English Botany."

1569 CE
Nicolas Monardes writing about the botany of the New World based on Spanish accounts.

1570 CE
Villa d'Este, Little Rome, constructed at Tivoli, Italy. Elaborate water garden. Spanish explorers bring potatoes back to Europe.
Francisco Hernandez, private physician to Philip II of Spain, explores the New World and reports on over 1,000 plants considered of medicinal value. This research was not published until 1651 as Rerum Medicarum Novae Hispaniae. The Enchanted Gardens of the Renaissance Facts about three Renaissance gardens near Rome: Villa D'Este - Tivoli, Villa Lante - Bagnaia, Bomarzo's Sacred Groves.

1576 CE

1577 CE
Gardener's Labyrinth. Thomas Hill (Didymus Mountain). Sultan Murad III had the area of Anatolian Maras send him 100,000 hyacinth bulbs.

1580 CE
Villa Lante, Renaissance garden, Bagnaia, Italy.

1583 CE

1586 CE

1591 CE
Sen no Soyeki or Rikyu (1522-1591). Japanese tea master, poet, and garden lover. Tea. A great selection of teas and teaware; and some good information about tea.

1593 CE
First French botanic garden in Montpellier. Influenced by Moorish Spain.
1595 CE
Frances Bacon prepares lists of common garden plants.
Floriculture and plant collecting are very popular in England and the Low Countries.

1597 CE
The Dutch take over from the Portuguese in controlling the spice trade in the Indian Ocean.

1600 CE
European forests are becoming depleted, and shortages of wood effect various industries.
In later years, coal, petroleum, hydroelectric and finally nuclear power sources are increasingly utilized. [Ponting 1991]
Mannerism in gardening.