

## University of Salamanca – The Lost Garden and Its Heirs

There used to be a botanic garden depending on the University, founded in the 16th century in an area south-west of the University. However, the place seems to be 'cursed': after the civil war athletic facilities were laid out there, locally known as "pistas del botánico", only 100 meters from the place where the old Colegio Trilingüe (Latin, Greek and Hebrew) was built in 1534. The College was destroyed in a fire during the Napoleonic Wars, then rebuilt, then burnt down again during the civil war, poorly and partially rebuilt and finally demolished in 1974. Today there is a new Faculty of Physics there. The only place now carrying the name 'botánico' is the street at a parking lot, where according to plans the new library of the Humanities is to be built, but it has been delayed.

However there are several parks in Salamanca, very small like the very special Calixto and Melibea Park (the Spanish version of Romeo and Juliet took place there), or bigger ones like the Huerta de los Jesuitas or Huerta Otea.

### Jardin botánico Huerto de Calixto y Melibea



This park is considered the most beautiful of the Salamanca parks and was constructed above the old city walls of the Salamantine capital bordering the Tormes River. The park is of modest dimensions, not exceeding 2,500 square meters. Its name is a reference to the two main characters of the Renaissance work *La Celestina* by Fernando de Rojas.

The garden is intended to invoke both a romantic and a mediaeval impression. This is obtained with the many and varied elements such as the walls, the entrance arch and the well, all of beauty and complemented by a clever distribution of plants and bushes. The various spaces and lanes all contribute to create a scenario dedicated to the natural environment. There is an abundance of nooks and corners suited to meditation and intimacy.

The vegetation is abundant with hundreds of varieties of tree, bushes and flowers such as fruit trees, mulberry trees, walnut trees and numerous climbing vines. There are also several species of great beauty such as the mimosa, the passion flower and the *Acanthus mollis*. The garden is surrounded by an edifice created of ancient stones with a surface that fits in with the overgrown wall. The *Jardín del Visir* was added to the Garden of Calixto and Melibea to enhance the green space in the area. The park was inaugurated in 1981 and integrated and preserved the vegetation and the ornamental elements of the old garden. The inauguration coincided with the twinning of Salamanca with Coimbra in Portugal and this is reflected on one of the walls in the garden.

## Jardin botánico Parque de los Jesuitas



The Parque de los Jesuitas is the largest of the green zones in Salamanca with around 10,000 square meters in the southern parts of the city centre. The park was created in the old Jesuit garden and with the intention to preserve as much as possible of the existing vegetation. As was done in the romantic Parque de Calixto y Melibea the Parque de los Jesuitas was to serve as a public area with several sport and leisure zones.

Several paths and lanes have been created to enhance the natural environment in the centre of the city. The park is divided into several well delineated zones. The entrance is bordered by an avenue of Indian chestnut trees and fruit trees. The perimeter of the park consists of a border of plane trees and poplars.

## Parque botánico Huerta Otea



## Jardin botánico Parque de la Aldehuela



The Aldehuela and Huerta Otea botanic parks are among the most ambitious environmental projects of the Ayuntamiento de Salamanca in the area along the Tormes River. They are both established to enhance the diversity of plants along the river and restore areas which have been eroded by the river. The layout is characterized by the creation of paths and ponds, play areas for children, etc., and it has provided the authorities with the opportunity to convert the whole area into a green space for public use.

The botanic park areas, around 10,000 square meters, include rehabilitation of an axis of about 1.5 kilometer of riverside vegetation.

- 0 -

Interestingly, there are some sequoyahs around town, one in the cloister of the main historical building of the University. People say they were brought here by Christopher Columbus. Perhaps he did bring some seeds. But the most famous one was planted in 1870 by Federico de Onís.

There have been archaeological excavations made in the Solar Botanico since 2001, the main reason for the building stop of the Humanities library. Remains of Romans, Celtic-Iberic, Arabic and Mudéjar ceramics have been identified and ceramics from the 16th century plus from the cemetery of the San Augustin monastery from the 16th and 17th centuries. The monastery burned down in 1744.



The University still hopes that the Humanities Library will be ready for the University's 8th centenary in 2018.