Åbo Botanic Garden 1640-1954

1640 The foundation of the so-called botanic garden at the Royal Åbo Academy. It was called “herb garden”, “cabbage garden” or “hortus” (the first academic hortus in Sweden).

1670 Elias Tillands, professor of medicine (1640-1693) became the director of the garden and began to grow medicinal plants. Tillands’ Hortus Medicus fell into disrepair after his death.

1700-21 The development of the garden was halted during the Great Northern War.

1732 On his way back from Lapland Carl Linnaeus visited Å and Åbo Academy. He was granted nobility in 1757 and became known as von Linné.

1738 The time of Linnaeans and utilitarians at Åbo Academy: Bishop and professor of physics (including botany) Johan Browallius (1707-1755) introduced the ideas of Linné in Finland, a colleague and friend of his. Browallius proposed in 1750 that the Academy’s botanic garden should be laid out on the Bishops Field, an empty area at the river normally used as pasture by the bishop’s wife.

1757 Åbo Academy’s botanic garden was founded on the plots of land at the church numbered 48 and 49 (now Bishop Street 17 and 15). Carl Frederik Mennander (1712-1786), professor of medicine and also a friend and student of Linné’s, was the garden’s prefect following Browallius.

1760 Pehr Kalm (1716-1779), professor of economics, founded a Hortus Oeconomicus in collaboration with professor of medicine Peter Leche (1701-1764). Kalm was a student of Linné, Browallius and Mennander. He specialised in studying the ability to acclimatise among foreign cultivars which he had brought back from his travels to Russia in 1744 and America 1747-51.
1769-70 The Orangery was established, although in a less grand version than the one designed by överintendent C.F. Adelkrantz (royal chief architect). It was destroyed in the fire of 1827.

1779 Linnée’s disciple Carl Niclas Hellenius (von Hellens) (1745-1820), professor of economics and natural history, became the prefect of the botanic garden.

1818-27 Professor of natural history and economics Carl Reinhold Sahlberg (1779-1860) was the last director of the Academy’s garden. The garden was destroyed during the Åbo fire of 1827. Sahlberg moved with the university to the new capital Helsinki, even brought along any leftover plants. What had been a botanic garden now became building plots.

1918 Åbo Academy (Rediviva) was founded.

1930-54 Arboriculturist Justus Montell (1689-1954) became the director of the biological collections at Åbo Academy and revived a part of the former botanic garden by laying out an alpine garden. The initiative originated from Professor Otto Andersson and agricultural adviser Erik Dahlström. The garden was abolished in 1954.

1966-68 The Sibeluis museum took up a large part of the former garden.
1993  Rose grower Toni Lowisa Grönqvist founded Åbo Academy’s Rosarium at Bishop Street 13-17 as a gift on the occasion of the university’s 75th anniversary.

2005  Of the original academy garden only Pehr Kalm’s oak close to the river and some stray bird-in-the-bush and Viper’s Bugloss in the neighbourhood – the heritage of the Linnaeans.

Åbo Academy Rosarium was founded in 1993 by the lady rose grower Toini Lowisa Grönqvist

Work of art to commemorate the Botanic Garden

In 2011 Åbo Akademi University has initiated a collection to install a work of art in the area between the Sibelius Museum and Pehr Kalm’s oak, the last part of the former botanic garden still left over. The idea behind the work of art is to re-install part of the former garden on an area measuring 30x20 meter. It will consist of ornaments and rails of various metals and will include flowers, bushes and paths covered in sand. There will also be plants dating back to the exploratory travels of Pehr Kalm in the 18th century and roses to celebrate the recipients of honorary degrees from Åbo Akademi.

On the botanic garden after the move to Helsinki: http://www.luomus.fi/svenska/botanik/historia.htm