

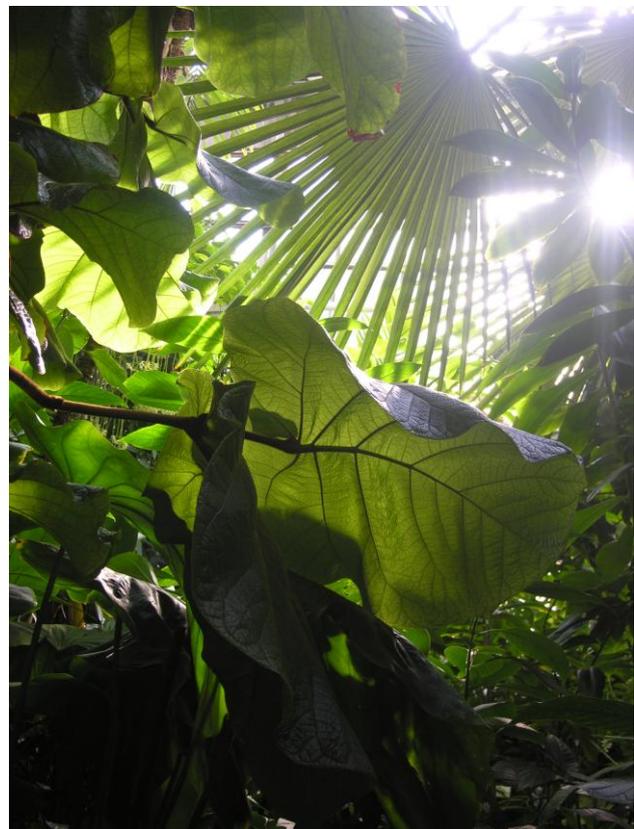


In 1736, in the first days of the University at Göttingen, the Botanical Garden was founded by the famous Doctor of Medicine ALBRECHT VON HALLER. In its original concept the garden was a *Hortus Medicus*, meant for teaching medical aspects of plants to students of medicine and pharmacy. But the interest of HALLER stretched far beyond the mere healing purpose of the plants, and by corresponding and sharing seeds and cuttings with botanists and plants men all over Europe he managed to enlarge the plant collections of the garden to an impressive 1500 species in the first seven years of its existence. “This will be, so I hope, the best garden of Germany” he proudly wrote to a friend.

With the epoch of exploration journeys, the garden continued to grow beyond the limitation of medical themes and became a harbour for plants from all over the world. Regarding the richness of species, the garden in Göttingen claimed to be the “number one” in Germany several times in its history.

From the foundation to the present day, its principal function is to supply teaching and research in the many disciplines of Botany, and the collections and displays play a central role in the study of Biology at Göttingen. Connections between academic teaching and learning in the nearby institute and the topics and displays in the garden are close, tight, and multiple. Lessons are made visual and intensified by supplying the courses with plants, or, much appreciated by the students, by conducting guided interactive tours right into the rich collections of the garden itself. Lectures on morphology, systematics and taxonomy, ecology and other aspects of botany and biodiversity refer to the “garden of evolution”, the “rainforest house” and other displays.

A variety of research projects make use of the collections in the garden. The material is shared with the scientific community via the *Index seminum* (a shipping of seeds on request to any research institution worldwide), or the garden is asked for living material directly, often regarding plants difficult to obtain anywhere else.



Rainforest house

The garden is, besides its primary academic purpose, regarded as the most scenic green area of Göttingen. Situated in very centre of the city, the garden is a “window to nature” highly

appreciated by the visitors, who are welcome to have a walk in the shade of old trees, enjoy colourful flower beds or give themselves over to the fascinating world of the desert or the tropical rainforest in the greenhouses. Even if not all parts of the plant collections are open to the public, it can be said that with its estimated 100,000 visitors per year, the old botanic garden is the most “visible”, popular part of the University and a treasure within the scientific city of Göttingen.



Evolution Garden

As a third topic of growing importance in today’s world, the garden feels obliged to work for the ‘the preservation of nature, the environment and endangered species (*Ex-situ-conservation*). Situated on both sides of the forested city wall over the centuries the Garden has become a refuge for birds, small mammals, bats, amphibians and a remarkable variety of insects, some of which have become very rare in the wild. And even more importantly, the collections of the garden harbour a wide range of rare and endangered species, some even extinct in nature, which are kept, propagated and distributed to other botanic gardens. With this, the garden acts in the spirit of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, Rio de Janeiro 1992) and plays an active role in the network of the “Verband Botanischer Gärten e.V.” With its approx. 19,000 species, subspecies, varieties and provenances, the small botanic garden in Göttingen ranges second among the botanic gardens of Germany, topped only by the biggest botanic garden in Germany at Berlin-Dahlem.



Obviously, a stock of the most important plant groups is essential for all students at any university and is expected by the public at any place. Other collections diversify between gardens, and the community of Botanic Gardens cooperates in building a network of profiles and specializations, with the aim to cover the diversity of the plant kingdom as thoroughly as possible.



Victoria cruziana

For the Botanic Garden in Göttingen, the following can be regarded as themes and collections of special academic interest: *Ex-situ-conservation* cultures of certain native endangered species, the *Garden of Evolution* with an array of plant families and major systematic groups as representative as possible, the *Rainforest house*, displaying the ecological characteristics and strategies of the neotropical lowland rainforest with trees, lianas and epiphytes, the *Victoria house* with tropical water plants and the giant *Victoria* water lily, which is cultivated and propagated successfully in Göttingen for more than a hundred years (indeed, Göttingen supplies other Botanic Gardens with *Victoria* plantlets), the historical *Fern House* with an interesting research collection of tropical ferns housed in a historical greenhouse, built during the era of the *Victorian fern craze* in 1857.



During the summer months, hundreds of potted subtropical ornamental plants are arranged around the greenhouses in a most attractive and impressive way. Naming only one single plant family, Göttingen houses a collection of plants of the Pineapple family (Bromeliaceae) in amazing richness of species, forms and provenances (3000 accessions) and in a breathtaking quality. This collection ranges among the leading Bromeliad collections in Europe and is frequented by international specialists.

In the 1960s the University planned to gather most of the then scattered old institutes in a new University campus outside the city, and with this, the old Botanic Garden, after 250 years of existence, was meant to be abandoned and replaced by a modern one outside the city walls.

Neoregelia concentrica

Fortunately, in the following years the value of the old, scenic institution was recognized, and now, the New Botanic Garden (“Experimenteller Botanischer Garten”) and the Old Botanic Garden work together in close collaboration in a most effective way: While the latter holds the broad variety of plant families, themes and topics of world-wide diversity, the former focuses on ecophysiological research and yields facilities for experimental plots and research arrays. Together with the third Botanic Garden in Göttingen, the “Forstbotanischer Garten” of the Department of Forestry the three institutions are connected in friendship in the supporting fellowship of the “Freunde der Botanischen Gärten Göttingen e.V.”



Hosta plantaginea

Opening hours:
The garden - daily 8-18
The green houses – daily 8-15



Nymphaea “Director G.T.Moore”