

Goethe's Scientific Garden

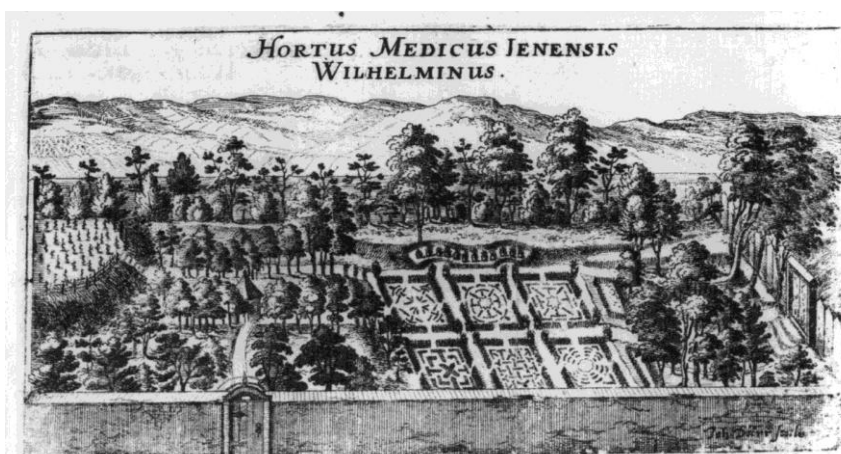
The Botanical Garden of the Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena

From its foundation the Botanical Garden of Jena has been devoted to generate modern scientific knowledge and to present modern plant science to the public. In the tradition of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe the aim of the garden is to visualise plant diversity, its structuring and to foster the understanding of the function of the plant and its ecology. The garden is actively involved in research and has its role as a public area of recreation in an urban context and as an interface between the public and the university. The garden is finally engaged in programmes of nature conservation.

History

The University at Jena opened its first botanical garden in 1586, only 28 years after its foundation. The "Hortus Medicus in Collegio" was repeatedly enlarged and renewed, e.g. when Werner Rolfinck came to Jena from Padova, where he had seen the extraordinary garden. The first heated greenhouse in the Jena Hortus Medicus was built in 1674. Between 1640 and 1662 the "Hortus Wilhelminus", a ducal pleasure ground, served as a second botanical garden.

In 1690 a natural arrangement of plants was implemented by G.C. Schelhammer following new ideas of John Ray. In 1770 G. Baldinger introduced the Linnaean nomenclature of plants.



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe lived at Weimar from 1776 onwards. In 1794 he, together with A.J.G.C. Batsch, professor of botany at the university founded the Botanical Garden on behalf of Carl August, duke of Saxony Weimar Eisenach in the area of the "Hortus Wilhelminus". Carl August was a dedicated botanical amateur who owned a rich plant collection. In the new garden Goethe found retirement and

the contemplation he needed to work. For example, he spent more than 300 days in the garden between 1817 and 1822. Here, in the intimacy and calm of the garden and its surrounding nature he found inspiration not only for his literary creations. Besides several essays on natural science, art and antiquity and studies on Sanskrit he worked intensely on the manuscript of his "Italian journey".

One of the most important books he wrote in this environment was the "West-östlicher Divan", where he mentions the famous and emblematic Ginkgo tree for the first time. Still today the tree he could observe from the windows of his living room on the first floor of the "Inspectorhaus" (right) can be seen by visitors of the garden.



The reconstructed "Goethergarten" in front of the Inspector's house (1727) and the Goethe-Ginkgo

Goethe and Batsch designed the garden for its use in academic teaching. Moreover, they tried to present in the garden their own original ideas on plant affinities. That meant that the plants were arranged in beds according to their affinities and the beds themselves in their relative positions to each other represented the natural order of the plant kingdom. The plants were selected and planted to visualize the process of metamorphosis which in the concept of Goethe was the underlying principle to understand the origin and development of the individual plant and also for diversity in the plant kingdom. In a way Goethe implemented in this garden the observations he had made during his Italian journey and on other occasions in his home garden at Weimar. A part of the garden as it was in Goethe's day has recently been reconstructed.



Students practicing in the botanical garden

After the early death of Batsch, the garden was continuously enlarged and the greenhouses improved. Among the directors of the garden figure important botanists as Matthias Jacob Schleiden, Nathanael Pringsheim, Eduard Strasburger, Ernst Stahl, and Otto Renner.

Since 1948 the garden has formed part of the Institute of Systematic Botany (*Institut für Spezielle Botanik mit Botanischem Garten und Herbarium Haussknecht*). The institute itself belongs to the Faculty of Biology and Pharmacy that also includes Nutritional Sciences.



Intense colours in the alpine garden (Gentiana aculis)

Today

The Botanical Garden in Jena covers an area of 4.5 ha, 2700 m² are under glass. The natural setting with its diverse contours forms a fine stage to present plant diversity from all over the world in many different habitats. Major parts are the arboretum with many old exotic trees, systematic beds, the rose garden, the historical garden, the alpine garden and the collection of useful plants.

The collections comprise more than 10,000 plant species from all over the world. It harbours one of the largest plant collections of Cuban plants outside that country. Other important collections present succulents, wild orchids, and carnivorous plants. Special collections serve as a basis for research projects, while others are designed to support teaching activities or to delight the visitors.



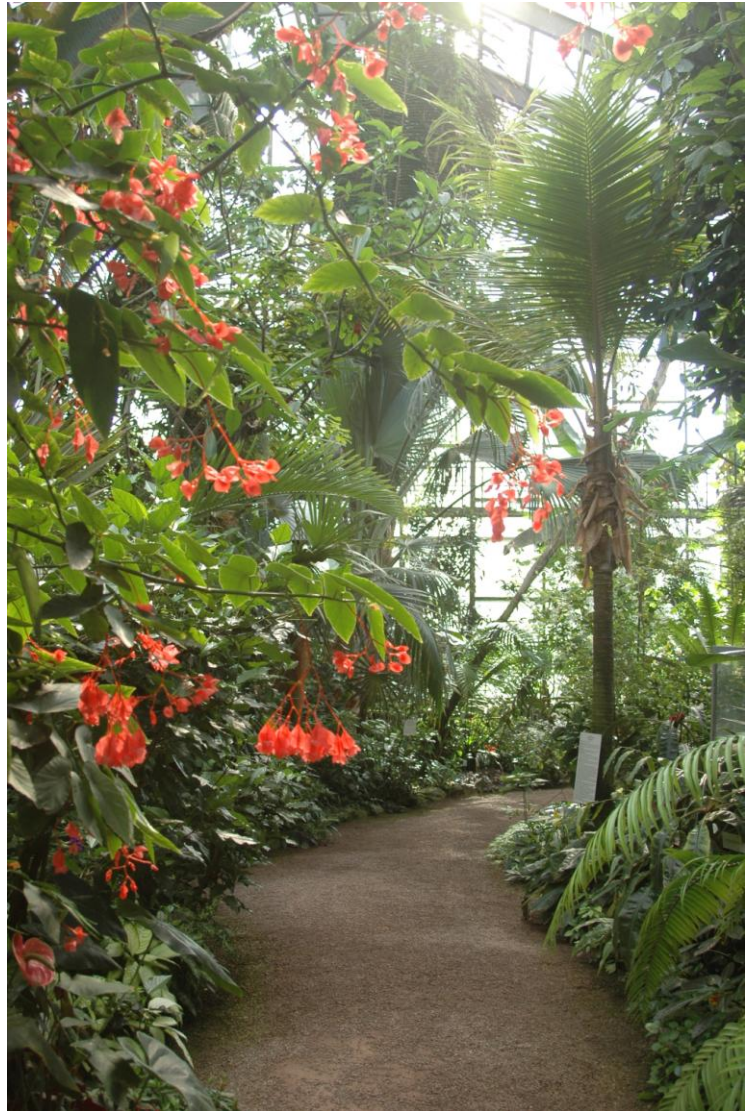
Ranunculus Trollius caucasicus



The Botanical garden has a collection of trees from all over the world (*Catalpa speciosa*)



Lady's slippers orchid (*Cypripedium macranthos*)



The large palm-house harbours many tropical economic and ornamental plants from the Tropics



Wealth of tropical flowers – *Brownea ariza*

The garden is frequented by more than 50,000 visitors a year. It provides a green classroom which is frequently used by teachers and pupils of all ages. Temporary exhibitions around plant life but also art exhibitions are offered to the public and attract visitors from far beyond the city of Jena. Once a year, the garden assembles thousands of people to celebrate the university garden party, one of the most important social events in Jena.



School children visiting the alpine garden

Contact information

The garden is open to the public daily throughout the year.

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For further information visit our homepage: www2.uni-jena.de/biologie/spezbot/

“Victoriahaus” Leaves of the giant water lily in the Victoria regia house

