

THE CENTRAL PAVILION OF THE CONSERVATORY AT CHISWICK.

The Italian Garden at Chiswick House

Jan Woudstra

After the long reign of landscape gardens in England one of the earliest instances of the revival of formal gardens was the Italian Garden at Chiswick House, laid out on the southern part of the garden of Moreton Hall, which the 6th Duke of Devonshire had bought in 1812. Samuel Ware built a 300-feet-long conservatory and Lewis Kennedy provided a design for the garden in early 1814. Kennedy's design was maintained for more than 40 years by Charles Edmunds, who assured that the garden was planted according to the latest fashions. It was initially planted in the mingled system with a range of perennials, but was one of the first gardens to experiment with massed planting of annuals in some of the beds.

In 1880 its design was rationalised by the Marquess of Bute's gardener, Michael May, to make it easier to maintain. May's design included the restoration of a mingled planting scheme with a range of perennials, while massed planting of annuals was retained in some of the beds.

In 1929 Chiswick House was acquired by Brentford and Chiswick Urban District Council; the mingled planting was once again replaced with the annual bedding schemes for which the Italian Garden was renowned; and in 1933 the conservatory was rebuilt by Messenger and Co. The layout of the beds, however, remained similar to the proposals of 1880 with minor modifications. In 1997 a Landscape Restoration Plan was accepted, which, while recognising the significance of the Kennedy design, proposed the repair of the May design. The restoration was completed in 2010.

Fig. 1. Woodcut from *The Pictorial Times*, 28 March 1846 showing a larger bowl shaped fountain in the centre of the Conservatory at Chiswick House, which replaced a basin and fountain and a few waterplants recorded in 1817.

THE NOTION OF AN ITALIAN GARDEN

The 18th-century taste for the landscape garden had relegated flower gardens to discrete areas, not necessarily adjacent to the main building, and often informally shaped. Formal flower gardens never completely disappeared, but, until revived by Humphry Repton in the late 18th century, they were at least unfashionable. Thus in 1800 Charles Marshall, vicar of Brixworth, Northamptonshire, wrote, in respect of the prevalent taste for landscape gardening, 'Figured parterres in scrolls, flourishes, &c. have got out of fashion'. But he qualified this: 'when beds are not too fanciful, but regular in their shapes, and chiefly at right angles, (after the Chinese manner) an assemblage of all sorts of flowers, in a fancy spot of about sixty feet square, is a delightful home source of pleasure, worthy of pursuit.' 1

By 1837–8, when Charles M'Intosh distinguished a whole range of different types of

formal gardens in his Flower Garden, they were quite commonplace. They were defined by national styles: Italian, French, Dutch and English. The Italian style was defined as 'characterized by one or more terraces, sometimes supported by parapet walls, on the coping of which vases of different forms are occasionally placed, either as ornaments, or for the purpose of containing plants. Where the ground slopes much, and commands a supply of water from above, jetsd'eau and fountains are introduced with good effect.'2 One of the gardens which M'Intosh probably had in mind was that at Chiswick House, which he depicted later in his The Book of the Garden (1853). Laid out by Lewis Kennedy in 1814, this was one of the earliest formal gardens that in England went under the name of 'Italian Garden', only preceded by Mount Edgcumbe, where the area in front of the orangery was known by this name in 1812.³



Fig. 2. Samuel Ware's survey of Moreton Hall (1812). showing the additional part acquired by the Sixth Duke of Devonshire; Stephen Fox's former gardens are now noted as 'Copyhold Paddock', and this became the location of the Italian Garden Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth. NB All maps have been arranged in a North South orientation

THE MAKING OF THE ITALIAN GARDEN AT

The 6th Duke of Devonshire inherited the Chiswick estate in 1811, and in the following year acquired the property adjacent to the east, Moreton Hall, which had been built and its garden laid out for Sir Stephen Fox by Hugh May in 1682–4.4 The Duke engaged the architect Samuel Ware (1781–1860) to survey and value the property and draw up plans. Ware, who also worked for him at Chatsworth in 1813 and Lismore Castle in 1814, and for the Duke's brother, Lord George Cavendish, at Burlington House, Piccadilly, in 1815-18, is

perhaps most famous as architect of the Burlington Arcade for Lord George; but he was also a land surveyor, and he managed the Marylebone estate of the 4th Duke of Portland.⁵ Moreton Hall was advertised for sale 'by auction by Peter Coxe, At his Establishment, in Maddox-Street, Hanover-Square, On Friday, the 12th of June, 1812, at one o'clock precisely',6 and was bought by Ware for the Duke on that date for 7,050 guineas. By that date the formal garden of Moreton Hall, an elongated rectangle north of the house, had been combined with an identical sized enclosure to its east to form a paddock; a slightly shorter enclosure north of the first had become a kitchen garden; and an enclosure east of this last, with sub-dividing walls aligned exactly east-west (presumably for fruit), and thus at acute angles to the enclosing walls, was occupied by a William Cock, a market gardener, as a melon ground. Ground adjoining the east side of all of these enclosures, and bigger than their combined area, had been sold to Cock by the Earl of Moreton, who had owned the property between 1780 and 1783 (Fig. 2).8 Ware exchanged land with Cock, acquiring this last on 29 June 1813, and in 1821 a drive aligned in a northerly to southerly direction was formed on it, along the eastern perimeter of the newly enlarged estate.9 At the same time Burlington Lane, which ran from east to west quite close to the south side of both Moreton Hall and Chiswick House, was re-aligned on its present, curved plan, further to the south. 10 Moreton Hall itself was demolished in 1813, but the fine orangery adjoining it to the west was left standing at least until 1818.11 The paddock was sub-divided on its east-west axis by a 302-foot long conservatory, designed by Ware, its west end on part of the original Chiswick House property. 12 The conservatory had a central dome, with stained glass, but was otherwise a conventional lean-to hothouse, chiefly unusual for its great length (Fig. 3). North of it, and south of the high wall of the kitchen garden, a new melon ground was formed; and south of it a semi-circular formal garden was laid out, the subject of this paper.

Ware proposed a formal garden of compressed semi circular form, divided by a path running from the rear of the arcade built by the 3rd Earl of Burlington on the east side of his Chiswick House garden, to the new drive on the east side of the enlarged estate. A 'Canal and jet d'eau' were to lie parallel to this, on its south side (Fig. 4). Ware's conservatory proposal was realised in less than a

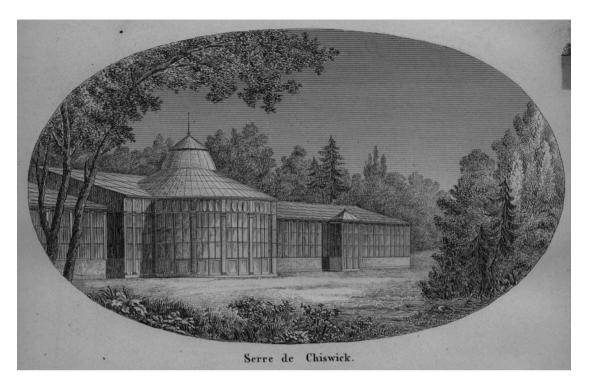


Fig. 3. An illustration of the 'Serre de Chiswick' depicted in a French treatise on garden design concentrated on the conservatory and showed none of the features of the Italian Garden. The building had a gilded dome in the middle of the range, which was 'partly glazed' (from Nicolas Vergnaud, L'art de créer les jardins (Paris, 1835).⁵⁰

year. On 1 June 1813 the Duke showed it to Miss Mary Berry, who described it as a hothouse and conservatory 'for flowers', suggesting that it had not yet been planted. 13 But instead of Ware's

garden design the Duke adopted that of Lewis Kennedy (1789–1877). Kennedy was the grandson of Lewis Kennedy (1721-82), who had established the Vineyard Nurseries (Kennedy and Lee) at

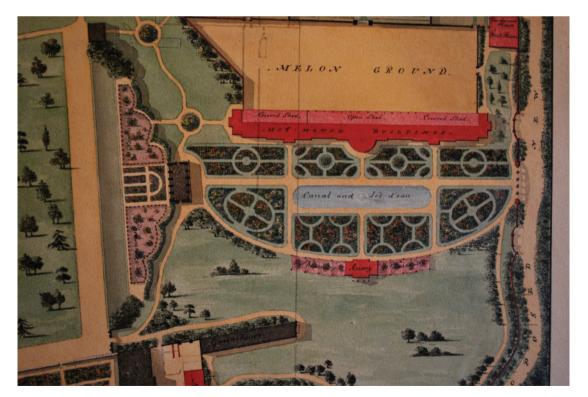


Fig. 4. One of Samuel Ware's proposals for the additional part of the former Moreton Hall, (c.1812) with new conservatory and suggestions for a flattened semi circular formal garden, dominated by a perpendicularly positioned canal, with jets d'eau Drawing tipped into Kennedy 'Notitiae'. Devonshire MSS, ${\it Chatsworth.}$

Hammersmith in about 1745, and had possibly worked at Chiswick House for the 3rd Earl of Burlington. 14 John Kennedy, son of the elder Lewis and father of the younger, had continued the business in Hammersmith, but in 1804 he had sent Lewis, his sixth son, to Riga to make business contacts, and by the age of 22 Lewis had established a reputation, supplying plants to the former Empress Josephine of France for the château of Malmaison. When he married in 1817 his address was 56 St James's Street, Kensington. 15 Writing about the Italian garden at Chiswick in 1853, Charles M'Intosh described Kennedy as 'the leading landscape-gardener in England'. 16

Kennedy's beautiful, but less exact drawings, dated from Kensington in January 1814, were bound in a magnificent green vellum volume with explanatory text, entitled 'Notitiae for Chiswick Gardens'. In place of Ware's compressed semicircular plan, Kennedy proposed a full semi-circular flower garden (Fig. 5). Concerned about the great length and 'proportionately small height' of the conservatory which 'gives them a rather depres'd appearance', he recommended a terrace wall with pilasters 'and trellis-work between surmounted with a balustrade', in order to form the base and thus visually extend the height. This would create 'a proper, clasical and

determin'd finish' to the Italian Garden, which he declared 'unique in this style of Gardening for Beauty, Grandeur, and Magnificence'. 17 The accompanying perspectives (Figs 5 and 6) proposed a flight of stairs connecting the flower garden with the raised terrace and two further flights on either end of the terrace, an avenue of small columnar trees emphasising the central axis, an intricate pattern of beds planted with low flowers, and two fountains with figures on either side in the main cross axis, surrounded by more bushy vegetation.

It is not clear which of Kennedy's details were realized, but Peter Potter's survey of 1818 shows that the plan was implemented more or less as proposed (Fig. 8). 18 The conservatory stood on a raised terrace, whose middle projected into the semicircular garden, and was connected to it by a stair. It also shows the steps proposed by Kennedy at the east and west ends of the terrace. A central gravel path projected the axis of the demolished Moreton Hall and its surviving garden north of the conservatory, through whose central rotunda it passed. The central path was apparently flanked by hedges, with narrower paths behind them, in parallel. On either side of the main axis were two configurations taken from a pattern for 'A Parterre of Compartments' in John James's The Theory and Practice of Gardening of



Fig. 5. A part of Lewis Kennedy's plan for Chiswick House (1814), showing the Italian garden and the conservatory. Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth.



Fig. 6. Lewis Kennedy's proposals for an Italian Garden in front of Samuel Ware's conservatory, as included in his 'Notitiae for Chiswick', January 1814. Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth.

1712, itself a translation of Dézallier d'Argenville's La Theorie et la Pratique du Jardinage of 1709 (Fig. 9). They were simplified from the original, but maintained the main borders and central circular beds (fountains in Dézallier d'Argenville's original). The left-over areas were filled with classical patterns taken from designs for fountains and cabinets also in Dézallier d'Argenville's book.

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE ITALIAN GARDEN In the autumn of 1817 the Caledonian Horticultural Society had visited Chiswick, leaving the earliest description of the Italian Garden:

a magnificent suite of hot-houses, 303 feet in length, and said to have cost L.15,000 Sterling. The

conservatory is placed in the middle of the, having a gilded dome, partly glazed, and forming a portion of the roof. In the centre of the conservatory there is a fountain and basin, with a few aquatic plants in it: the fountain is only permitted to play on particular occasions, as the supply of water can only be obtained by forcing it up from the Thames.

Behind the conservatory they found 'a small company room, furnished with chairs and sofas'. The compartments at each end of the house were pineries, fronted 'east and west, and are placed in connection with the range at each end, projecting north-wards over the gable of the sheds.' While the total effect was considered to be 'certainly very grand', the horticulturalists criticised it for the fact that 'more



Fig. 7. View of Italian Garden to south as initially proposed by Lewis Kennedy in his 'Notitiae for Chiswick', 1814. Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth.



Fig. 8. Despite its large scope Peter Potter's survey appears to show a considerable amount of detail within the gardens. It reveals that while the Kennedy proposals for the flower garden were adopted this was not the case for the surrounding area which in reality was much less formal (Peter Potter, 'A Plan of the Mansion and Estate at Chiswick in the County of Middlesex belonging to the most Hon^{ble} William Spencer Duke of Devonshire', 1818). Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth.

attention seems to have been paid to ornament than to the adaptation of the buildings to the principal object for which they are intended'. They recorded an Agave americana with a 30-foot flowering stem. The flower garden in front of the hot houses was considered to be 'disposed with good taste', unfortunately without providing a detailed description. They also mentioned a jet d'eau 'between the palace and hot-houses', which may mean a fountain west of the Italian garden, probably in front of the former orangery and arcade, which had formed the eastern limit of the 3rd Earl of Burlington's garden. 19

In 1822 John Claudius Loudon was not impressed by the conservatory, which, although 'one of the most ornamental ranges ... in the neighbourhood of London', was, he considered, 'the most gloomy within, of any we have seen'. 20 Loudon, who promoted lighter wrought iron structures, presumably found a timber one old-fashioned. Unfortunately he did not comment on the Italian Garden, merely describing it as 'a large flower-garden'.21

Prince Pückler Muskau, who visited in early October 1826, considered the conservatory better proof of the taste of the owner than the pleasure ground which was criticized for the shaping of shrubs as rounded balls instead of being left to grow into more naturalistic shapes. The parterre he found richly decorated:

Chaque fleur a pourtant tout l'espace nécessaire pour s'étendre tant les plate-bandes sont faiblement remplies, excepté toutefois, celles où l'on ne cultive qu'une seule sorte. Ces dernières sont aussi pleines que possible, et sont conséquent beaucoup plus belles que les autres.

This suggests that there were two types of beds, one containing widely spaced flowers and others with only one sort densely planted. It was also here that Muskau for the first time saw a Providence pineapple weighing twelve pound.²²

Lord Burlington's orangery had been converted into a roofless arcade in 1813 when the Morton Hall



Fig. 9. The layout of the central sections in the Italian garden were inspired by a French model for a parterre by Dézallier d'Argenville, La Theorie et la Pratique du Jardinage (1709), translated by John James, The Theory and Practice of Gardening (1712).

Gardens were added. Until it was demolished at some time between 1868 and 1891 it served as a link to the Burlington gardens. Good views might be obtained from it across the Italian Garden, as shown on an illustration in The Pictorial Times of 22 August 1844 (Fig. 10). This illustration also shows Coade stone vases apparently at the top, rather than the bottom of the terrace, and two Kentian flask-type urns at the bottom of steps at the west end of the conservatory, as well as a wide bowl on top of the steps. The latter is similar in shape to that shown in The Pictorial Times on 28 March 1846 situated in the centre of the conservatory, a basin for a fountain (Fig. 9). It could be the 'Fountain and stone vase in centre' recorded in the 'List of Fixtures' of 1910, but that cannot be verified (Fig. 11).²³ The outside bowl however was recorded on an early 20th-century photograph, possibly associated with the above list, but now at the bottom of the step. While the general shape suggests a cast iron construction, such items do not occur on the 1910 list. Included are: '6 Cement vases on pedestals (5 badly damaged) in Italian Garden' and also '1 Lead vase on stone pedestal. ditto. (damaged)'. It suggests therefore that this may have been a lead vase.

In 1848 the Visitor, or Monthly Instructor recorded a 'Visit to the Chiswick gardens' in which the Italian Garden was considered to have been laid out with 'great taste', noting that 'In one part,

the flowers are not mingled together, but every bed contains its own individual kind. The effect is beautiful; for though each bed glows with one particular hue, the effect of the whole is a galaxy of glorious colours.'24

A much fuller description was made by Edward Kemp in 1851. He described the conservatory as 'a handsome old range of glass houses, relieved by porches, and by a semi-circular projection in the centre, where the roof rises into a dome, part of which is glazed with stained glass and crowned with a gilt ornament.' He records its original use as a range of 'forcing houses', except for the central compartment. Partitions had by then been removed, creating one large conservatory, but those for two small houses at either end, normally used for stove plants and orchids, had been maintained. He did not suggest that they had been used as pineries before. These sections were slightly set back, but were much deeper than the rest of the glass house. The total length was then listed as 310 feet, and the depth as 21 feet, with a gravel walk the whole length. The two-tiered stone stage was covered by pelargoniums and azaleas when in flower, 'with chrysanthemums late in the autumn' and a more mixed collection of flowering plants during the rest of the year. The earth bed between the gravel walk and the back wall was largely filled with various sorts of camellias 'and a few varieties of Rhododendron arboreum'. There

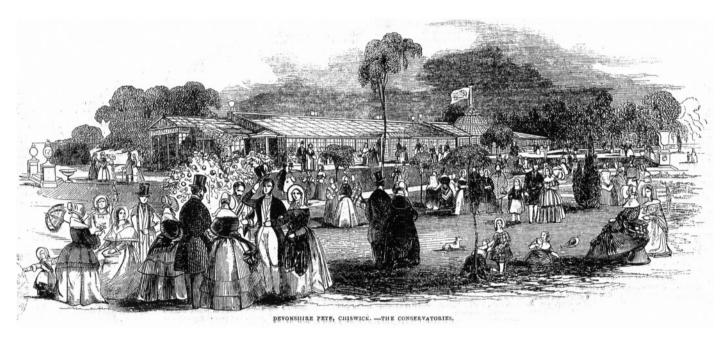


Fig. 10. Wood engraving of 'The Duke of Devonshire's Fete' in The Pictorial Times, 22 August 1846, showing a distorted perspective of the terrace; the Coade stone vases appear to be positioned on top rather than at the bottom of the terrace. The tall lanky tree in the foreground may be the 18 foot tall standard rose with drooping head, seen there by Edward Kemp in 1851. A similar shaped bowl as seen in the centre of the conservatory appears at the top of the flight of steps to the west of the conservatory. There are two Kentian flask type urns at the bottom of the flight.

were also camellias trained against the back wall. A number of light pillars along the walk were covered with 'Acacias, Passion-flowers, Tacsonia, and a variety of climbing plants'. A wisteria and Banksian rose were trained inside around the dome. In the beds below there were some Camellia reticulata and 'Rhododendron metropolitanum'. The centre of this part of the conservatory was recorded as containing 'generally a cluster of some rarer things' that were changed seasonally. This contained 'a collection of Mr Smith's best yellow rhododendrons' in the summer; a group of azaleas, 'or a large Rhododendron formosanum ... at other seasons'; and some of the best chrysanthemums in the autumn. The small house at the eastern end of the conservatory, usually planted with orchids and ferns, also contained 'one of the earliest specimens of Clerodendron splendens'.

The narrow border immediately in front of the conservatory was 'partially covered with masses of tufa', thereby providing a place for the 'prettier and more curious kinds of alpine and herbaceous plants, with a few trailing shrubs as Cotoneaster microphylla, Alyssum sempervirens, &c.' This border was edged with a double row of Gentiana acaulis.

South of the conservatory a 'vista passes through the flower garden, and down a grass glade to a boundary walk'. When the garden was viewed from the terrace bank in July or August, when all the plants were well filled out, there was 'nothing of the kind in the neighbourhood of London at all equal to

it'. At the position where the bank projects at the centre of the conservatory, the broad flight of steps was 'supported by large handsome vases on pedestals', presumably the Coade stone vases which are still in place. A 'few busts on therms' are positioned at 'a little distance from these'. They are clearly visible on the 1853 plan by M'Intosh. The centre walk of the flower garden was flanked on either side by a row of mop-headed acacias, kept pruned into a roundish shape. There was a row of standard roses in front of these. There were various trees positioned elsewhere in the garden, including a beautiful cork tree, a large Salisburia, and some fine scarlet thorns'. At the north-west corner, near Lord Burlington's arcade, was 'a cluster of good climbing roses, on poles, and a remarkable standard rose, with a clear stem nearly 18ft. in height, and a drooping head.' This may have been the plant illustrated on a print of the Duke of Devonshire's Fete, published in The Pictorial Times, 22 August 1846 (Fig. 10).

The semi-circular gravel walk that defined the garden on the southern side had some large and ancient urns 'at intervals along the outer margin of this walk'. Behind these was a border of plants placed in lines, ensuring an extensive flowering season, producing a 'strip of flowers of one conspicuous colour'.

In the front rows are Iberis sempervirens and Alyssum saxatile. Then there is a broad band of China roses, which bloom for a very long period.







Behind these is a row of common white lilies, and, still further back, a row of hollyhocks. The border is backed by festoons of climbing roses, with a plantation, chiefly of evergreens, to finish and support the whole.

The beds arranged in geometric figures were conceived as several distinct compartments, some cut out in grass, with broad grass margins, but others on gravel with box edgings. 'Some of the larger and central beds in the compartments are raised a foot or two above the rest, to relieve the flatness which would otherwise result from having so large a surface covered with flowers.' Kemp praised the method of planting this garden for adopting the 'system of putting one sort of plant, with flowers of a distinct and decided colour, in each

Fig. 11 (top left). Flowerbowl at bottom of western flight of steps leading to conservatory, photographed c.1910. Possibly lead bowl on stone pedestal. Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth.

Fig. 12 (top right). On of the Coade stone urns after those at the Villas Borghese and Medici, at bottom of central flight of steps, recast in 1994 by Cliveden Conservation after those at Kedleston. Jan Woudstra, 1994.

Fig. 13 (bottom left). Flask type urns decorated with garland, reminiscent of those by William Kent; there were eight around the southern edge of the Italian Garden, with probably four more at both flights of steps to the east and west entrances of the conservatory. Jan Woudstra, 2009.

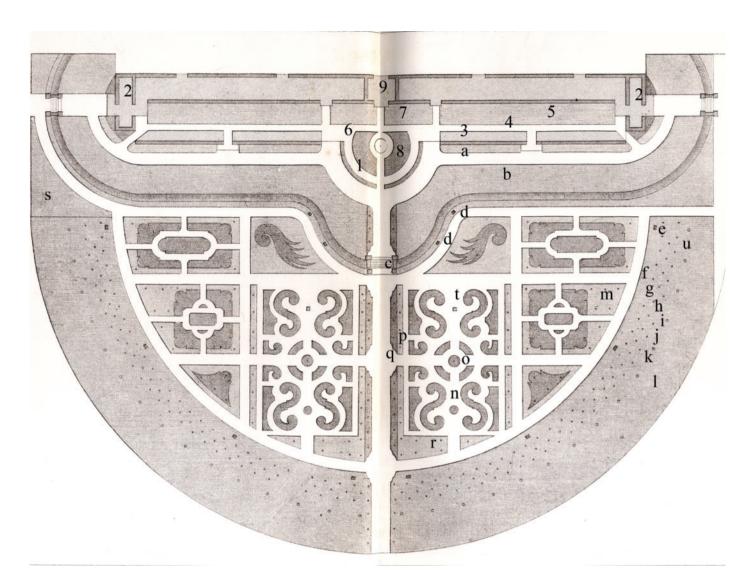


Fig. 14. Charles M'Intosh's survey of the Italian Garden at Chiswick House, as it was in 1853 [from Charles M'Intosh. The Book of the Garden, London, 1853, I, plate 26, annotated with comments by Edward Kemp (1851), pp. 107-109, and Thomas Appleby (1855), pp. 69-70] (numbering by author).

KEY

Conservatory:

- 1 conservatory 310ft \times 21ft, with glazed dome and gilt ornament;
- 2 porch end for stove plants and orchids: east: one of earliest ${\it `Clerodendron splendens' introduced;}$
- 3 stone stage in two steps; plants changed seasonally, with pelargoniums and azaleas/chrysanthemum/mixed flowering plants;
- 4 gravel walk; pillars alongside covered with 'Acacias' Passionflowers, Tacsonia, and a variety of climbing plants';
- 5 bed of earth with camellias and 'Rhododendron arboreum';
- 6 wisteria and Banksian rose trained round dome;
- 7 beds with Camellia reticulata;
- 8 cluster of rarer plants: e.g. Mr Smith's yellow rhododendrons;
- 9 room with drawing of Victoria regia in wild by Bartholemew;

Italian Garden:

- a border with tufa; with alpine and herbaceous plants, Cotoneaster microphylla, Alyssum sempervirens, etc. edged with double row of Gentiana acaulis;
- b terrace bank;
- c flight of steps with vases on pedestals;
- d busts on terms:
- e row of equally spaced ancient urns;
- f row of Iberis sempervirens;
- g row of Alyssum saxatile;
- h three rows of China roses;
- i row of common white lilies;
- j row of hollyhocks;
- k festoons of climbing roses;
- l plantation chiefly of evergreens;
- m beds cut out of grass;
- n beds separated by gravel walks;
- o some of the larger and central beds raised a foot or two above the rest;

- p row of standard 'Robinia inermis';
- q row of standard roses;
- r specimen trees, such as a cork tree, 'Salisburia', and some scarlet thorns;
- s 'cluster of good climbing roses on poles, and a remarkable standard rose, with a clear stem nearly 18ft. in height, and a drooping head';
- t a few small sculptured figures on pedestals, and some plain vases;
- u row of standard 'Robinia inermis'.

of the beds', which he considered better than what he had seen there several years earlier - mixed herbaceous plants, which 'had an exceedingly tame and common appearance'. As his observation confirmed that recorded in the Visitor, or Monthly Instructor in 1848, his earlier visit may have been made before this last date. During the winter and spring pansies were used 'a good deal' for covering the beds. Furthermore a 'few small sculptured figures, on pedestals, and some plain vases, filled with scarlet pelargoniums and other summer plants, form agreeable breaks and raised points in the garden during summer.'25

In 1853 Charles M'Intosh provided a description, helpfully supplemented by a plan.

The flower-garden is of a semicircular form, placed in front of a splendid conservatory, elevated upon a well proportioned terrace base. This conservatory is approached in front- at the centre, as well as at the two ends- by flights of steps. It is kept continually gay with flowers, and has long been remarkable for the excellence of cultivation and high keeping which is displayed, even to the minutest points. The greater part of the beds are cut out on grass, and bordered with gravel walks. The two central or principal parterres are on gravel, with box edgings. The squares along the sides of the outer walks, as well as two within the parterre, are pedestals, on which excellent specimens of sculpture are placed; and behind those, by the side of the semicircular walk are three rows of standard roses.²⁶

M'Intosh's plan (Fig. 14) reveals that Kennedy's beds had only been slightly altered in the intervening 41 years. The bell-shaped beds in the southern ordinal corners were adaptations of the shapes recorded by Potter in 1818. The feather- or flame-shaped beds on either side of the central protrusion of the terrace were a newer development. Beds had apparently replaced the hedges which Potter had shown flanking the central axial path. Trees were planted on the lawn areas. Three rows of standard roses planted in a quincunx pattern can be identified on the M'Intosh plan around the edge of the semi circle, as well as a row of trees immediately beyond that.

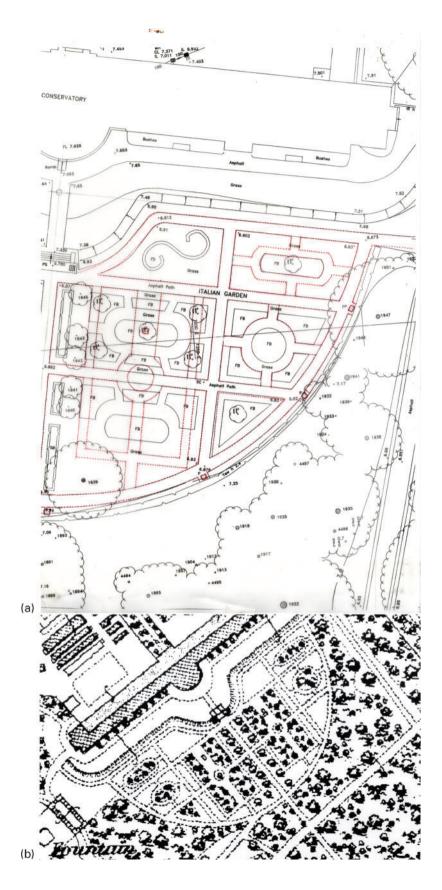
M'Intosh's plan only shows the central flight of steps proposed by Kennedy. Nor does it show Kennedy's proposed terrace wall. As neither were shown by Potter, they may not have been realised. Nor does it show the centrally positioned fountains



Fig. 15. Charles Edmonds (1811-80), head gardener at Chiswick 1838-c.1878. Gardeners' Chronicle (1875), ii, p. 581.

within the parterres, although these were confirmed by Potter. Instead M'Intosh reveals ornaments positioned in the centre of the northern half of the compartments. There are four equally spaced ornaments along the edge of each of the two quarters of the semi-circular perimeter path, a total of eight. These must have been the urns mentioned by Kemp (Figs 12 and 13). There are a further four ornaments around the semi-circular projection of the terrace into the flower garden. These are recorded by Kemp as being terms.

ALTERATIONS TO THE CONSERVATORY In 1850 the head gardener, Charles Edmonds (1811-80), expressed concerns about the poor condition of the conservatory. Edmonds had worked at Chiswick as an under gardener from 1830 to 1835, followed by a spell at Chatsworth under Paxton, and returned to Chiswick as head gardener from May 1838 till he retired from ill health in about 1878.²⁷ Woolcott, the builder, estimated that a simple patching-up would cost between £300 and £400, and a proper refurbishment £700. The architect William Currey estimated the cost more like £1,000.²⁸ Currey drew up plans for renewal which he presented to the



Duke, who refused to look at them as they had not been shown to Paxton first.²⁹

The conservatory was not redesigned, but extensively refurbished in 1855. During a visit in the autumn of that year Thomas Appleby found the 'oldfashioned small glass' being removed, and 'long squares of the best glass' being put in. The garden was 'crowded with strange workmen, such as carpenters, bricklayers, glaziers, painters and whitesmiths. The latter were putting up a new hot-water apparatus (the houses hitherto had been heated by common flues), and double rows of four-inch pipes.' Like previous visitors, Appleby described the interior of the building; there was the broad border at the back, the walk in front and 'two flagged platforms' in front of the windows, the one in front along the wall slightly lower than the other. He observed camellias, 'Rhododendron arboreum', magnolias, acacias, and other conservatory plants within the border; and climbing plants, including 'Acacia pubescens', against the supporting pillars.

Appleby described the 'unique' flower garden as having generally large beds 'hence each forms a good mass of colour', which suggests that the beds were planted with single species, although he was too late to see them in bloom. He described the mopheaded acacias along the central avenue as 'lofty standards', and suggested that there was a half circle of these trees in front of the shrubbery also. He regretted, however, that 'the trees in the plantation are not cut down to show them off distinctly in the foreground'. 30 It seems therefore that these had lost their round-headed shape. These must be the trees shown on the M'Intosh plan, but referred to neither by M'Intosh, nor Kemp in their descriptions.

TENANTS 1858-77

On the death of the 6th Duke in 1858 the estate was inherited by his sister, Lady Granville, who died in 1862. After this the estate was tenanted, first by the Duchess of Sutherland until her death in October 1868; then by the Prince of Wales until 1877.³¹ Charles Edmonds (Fig. 15), 'the unassuming and courteous gardener' remained as head gardener during these tenancies.³² He edited Jane Loudon's eighth edition of The Ladies Companion to the Flower Garden (1865), where he was referred to as 'Gardener to Her Grace The Dowager Duchess of Sutherland, Chiswick House'. During the Prince of Wales's tenancy he was referred to as 'the Duke of Devonshire's steward'. He was not an innovator, but 'a safe and sound practitioner and advisor'. 33



Fig. 16. Overlay of first edition 1:2,500 OS map of 1870-1 (16b) onto a modern survey by Ploughman, showing that this layout has largely survived into the 21st century. The green areas mark the grassed areas of the 1880s proposal. The major differences occur in the central southern beds, which have been reshaped (or were never laid out as proposed) possibly to accommodate the growing trees in these areas. The original proposal has been drawn on a slightly inexact base; this has been corrected in this plan.

Substantial alterations to the Italian Garden do not appear to have been made during Edmonds's time. The first edition 6th Ordnance Survey, published in 1870-1, shows the layout of the beds in a simplified form, since it would have been difficult to provide detail at this scale, but it confirms that the general layout had been maintained (Fig. 16). It confirms the position of ornaments in the northern half of the parterres; the positions at the bottom of the central steps are highlighted also, suggesting the

presence of a feature, but the four on either side of the semi-circular protrusion from the terrace are not indicated. Instead it appears that there are additional features at the edge of the semi circular perimeter path, and another one along the approach from the east. Although it shows the flight of steps to the east, which were not

shown by M'Intosh, it shows no steps to west.

There appears to have been a tradition in the 1870s to plant summer bedding plants





Fig. 18. Undated proposal for the Italian Garden, probably by Michael May, c.1880. Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth.



Fig. 19. The Italian Garden, Chiswick in 1898, showing two Coade stone urns at the bottom of the central flight of steps; the herms that in 1853 stood close by have been repositioned around the perimeter, in between the Kentian flask type urns. (Country Life, 1898, Swindon). English Heritage. National Monuments Record.

early in the season in order to achieve an unseasonally early display. The Garden of 24 May 1873 reported that

At Chiswick House, notwithstanding the coldness of the season, the beds in the flower garden were furnished with their summer occupants some three weeks ago. Owing to the beds being narrow, they have been well protected with evergreen branches, so that injury from frost and cold winds has been avoided, and the plants are now starting freely into growth. Such early planting, however, cannot be universally recommended; but at Chiswick House circumstances require the gardens to be at their best in June and July, consequently early



Fig. 20. Bowl shaped flowerpot at bottom of flight of steps to eastern entrance to conservatory. Jan Woudstra, 2009.

planting must be resorted to, and the uncertainty of the weather guarded against. 34

In the spring of 1874 The Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardener described camellias from end to end of the conservatory, and 'in autumn Fuchsias trained on the rafters', as well as flowering plants on 'the front stage'. The small orchid house at the end had few orchids, mainly containing crinums and 'some fine-foliaged plants'. The bed along the front of the conservatory now contained 'an excellent show of pansies'. Unfortunately there is no description of the flower garden, since that was in the process of being planted up: 'the elegantlydesigned flower garden was only in the course of preparation for the reception of the 13,000 bedding plants which are required to render it gay during the summer months'.35 This suggests that the garden continued to be planted in masses.

THE MARQUESS OF BUTE'S TENANCY The Marquess of Bute tenanted Chiswick House from 1877 to 1892, although he took a lease on a house in St John's Wood from 1888, and probably spent little time at Chiswick thereafter. 36 Edmonds's successor as gardener, Michael T. May, 'rearranged' the flower garden in about 1880.³⁷ Undated survey and proposal plans may be attributed to May (Figs 17 and 18).³⁸ The Italian Garden had formerly 'presented in its season a blaze of colour from the then popular style of massing of colours of scarlet Pelargonium, yellow Calceolarias, and crimson and purple Verbenas'. After May's rearrangement it was 'comparatively, somewhat sombre in appearance, and perhaps more in keeping with the general character of the place.' The beds were then planted 'chiefly with a good selection of hardy herbaceous plants and annuals in their season'. This suggests a more traditional management and maintenance of the planting, confirmed by another observer in The Gardening World, who noted in front of the conservatory 'a fine collection of herbaceous plants in beds on the grass, and a much more pleasing feature than the same extent of bedding plants.' $^{\rm 39}$ In 1887 a horticultural observer noted a well-shaped 'Salisburia adiantifolia' to be 'standing just within the precinct of the flower garden', just beyond the arcade area.⁴⁰

May's reasons for changing the layout were practical, related to the shape and size of the beds and economy of maintenance. He suggested that parts of the beds were too narrow for large perennials, and that it was difficult to maintain the



Fig. 21. The original greenhouse projected further into the garden than the present one; conservatory seen from the Italian Garden, c.1900. English Heritage. National Monuments Record, BB78/ 10116.

odd shapes of lawn with the recently invented mowing machine, which required straight lines. Weeds grew in the narrow gravel walks, and the box edging which surrounded the flowerbeds was in poor condition. In introducing his proposals May had acknowledged that on plan they did not look as attractive as the existing design, but suggested that larger beds of a simpler form on grass, rather than half on gravel, would appear more 'refreshing' and benefit the plants. May proposed to arrange the plants in the beds be according to size, with larger plants intended for the central and largest beds, and smaller ones for the outer and smaller beds. While the perennials were getting established annuals and biennials were to be used to fill in the gaps. The beds in front of the conservatory, on either side of the central walk and the S-shaped beds, might continue to be massed with plants such as geraniums and lobelias. Otherwise the garden was to be planted with a mixture of larger size perennials and selected shrubs specified in an appended plant list, and with a range of smaller growing species. How these were to be disposed within the beds is not suggested, but it is clear from the context that this must have been done in the traditional fashion of mixing or mingling. 41 Contemporary reviews, together with surviving and archaeological evidence reveal that the May proposals were implemented soon afterwards.42

THE SURVIVAL OF THE BUTE LAYOUT From 1892 until 1929 Chiswick House was let as a private lunatic asylum. Late 19th and early 20th century Country Life photographs suggest that May's alterations were maintained. The 1894 OS map indicates the central ornaments at the top of the central stairway; this is likely to be an aberration. An 1898 Country Life photograph shows the two Coadestone vases which are still at the bottom of the central steps (Fig. 19). Around the perimeter are what appear to be alternately Kentian finial-shaped urns, alternating with herms. The position of the urns appears to coincide with that indicated by M'Intosh, suggesting that the herms were later additions, and were probably those initially positioned near the Coade stone vases. None of the photographs appear to show the 'small sculptures figures, on pedestals' and the 'plain vases' mentioned by Kemp, although these may be the '6 Cement vases' listed in 1910. A bowl-shaped vase at the flight of steps from the eastern entrance to the conservatory might date from the 1920s, but its origin has not been established (Fig. 20).

It seems that the grounds continued to be appreciated, with the 'camellia house' being described as 'unique', and with a 'splendid collection, the trees being planted out in beds and borders, with fuchsias trained up to the roof of the building.'43 Christopher Hussey

Fig. 22. In 1993 some of the beds in the Italian Garden were planted with contemporary 19th century plants in the so-called test bed, but it became clear that these required considerable skill to maintain them. Jan Woudstra, 1995.



confirmed that this was still the case in 1929: 'So far the gardens are admirably kept up. The walled [sic] flower garden in front of the prim greenhouse is full of colour.'44

In 1929 the 9th Duke sold the estate to Middlesex County Council, which in turn leased it to the Brentford and Chiswick Urban District Council for use as a public park. While many of the sculptures had been moved to the Duke's other properties, a significant number were included in the sale. The conservatory was reconstructed according to 'the general outline of the existing structure' (Fig. 21). The successful design and tender were submitted by Messenger and Co from Loughborough, who completed it in 1933. This generally simplified the design in all its detail, including the central rotunda, which was rebuilt as a dome raised on a faceted drum.45

The Gardeners' Chronicle of 9 May 1936 reported that, viewed from the terrace, the Italian Garden presented 'a very attractive picture', recording that 'the fine Italian Garden has been preserved' within public ownership. The planting scheme that year was as follows:

The serpentine beds are filled with bright yellow Van der Hoef Tulip, while the big beds behind contain large numbers of De Wet and Prince of Austria, respectively. The big central beds in each half of the Italian garden are filled with the variety Chrysolora, while the narrow beds on either side of the dividing walk contain a display of Rose Luisante. Corner beds display a giant strain of double Daisies, while crimson Wallflowers occupy the furthermost beds and golden Wallflowers fill the borders close to the Camellia House. On the far side of the garden is a very fine example of Ginkgo biloba, and close are two examples of Trachycarpus. Behind these again are masses of Rhododendrons, and farther still,

many fine trees, so that the Italian garden has a fine setting and a delightful background. 46

Remarkably, none of the descriptions refer to the wisterias that were planted against the camellia house, but these are clearly shown on photographs as early as 1900.47 It is also unclear when the surrounding yew hedge was planted, but from photographic evidence this appears to be after 1953. This substantially altered the perception of the setting as described above. Probably at the same time the historic gravel walks were tarmaced, giving a more municipal character. While some historic mop-headed robinias appear to survive, others were at some stage replaced with incorrect faster growing varieties.

RESTORATION PROPOSALS

As part of the proposals of the 1987 Master Plan for Chiswick the Italian Garden was to be reinstated according to the Kennedy layout, with a mixed or mingled planting scheme.⁴⁸ In order to prepare for this a trial was recommended within the existing beds. The London Borough of Hounslow, successors in title to Brentford and Chiswick Urban District Council from 1974, prepared a scheme, based on research produced by Travers Morgan in 1988. However, in 1993 this was rationalised by EDA Environmental Design Associates, who produced new proposals.⁴⁹ Hounslow were only allowed to order from a limited number of suppliers, and thus found it difficult to obtain some of the plants. The beds could only be planted with what the suppliers provided and some substitutes. The trial thus did not have a promising start, and ran over a number of years with diminishing success, as labour in the gardens was further reduced (Fig. 22).

In 1996 a new Landscape Restoration Plan was commissioned by Lorna McRobie at English Heritage on behalf of the English Heritage-Hounslow Joint Working Party. It was prepared by David Jacques, who had also been responsible for the 1987 restoration plan whilst working for Travers Morgan, and was submitted in December 1997 as part of a Stage 1 bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), prepared by the landscape architect Gillian Mobbs, employed by English Heritage, but based at Hounslow. The bid was successful, but by the time of its acceptance Gillian Mobbs had left her employment, and it was some time before a successor was appointed to take things forward.

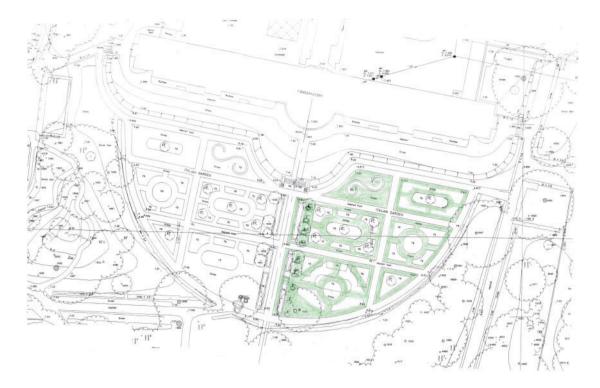


Fig. 23. Overlay of the proposal for the Italian Garden c.1880 on modern survey by Ploughman Craven, showing that this layout has largely survived into the 21st century. The green areas mark the grassed areas of the 1880s proposal. The major differences occur in the central southern beds, which have been reshaped (or were never laid out as proposed) possibly to accommodate the growing trees in these areas. The original proposal has been drawn on a slightly inexact base; this has been corrected in this plan.

In 2004 a new partnership was formed between Hounslow and English Heritage to develop a completely new bid to take to the HLF. This new partnership led to the foundation by English Heritage and Hounslow of the Chiswick House and Gardens Trust in 2005, with the Stage 1 plan prepared by Landscape Design Associates. In

January 2006 this led to a successful HLF bid, awarding £7.9M of a total of £12.5M for a restoration to be concluded by 2010. The shortfall excluded the restoration of the Italian Garden. However, a legacy in 2009 from the late Miss Phyllis Bishop was made available to restore the Italian Garden. English Heritage had already



Fig. 24. The newly restored Italian Garden in 2010; the perimeter of the garden has been restored to its mid-19th-century scheme, while the layout of the beds has been repaired according to the 1880 layout. Jan Woudstra, 2010.



Fig. 25. The central avenue of the Italian Garden; as there were no resources available in the first year to replant the garden, the planting in this area was retained for the time being. Jan Woudstra, 2010.

commissioned historical research from the present writer to enable the first phase to be completed. Scott Wilson were the landscape architects for this part of the scheme, with John Watkins acting as the English Heritage representative and Martin Clayton as its site manager.

The limited budget and time available for this part of the restoration meant that it was necessary to concentrate on providing the right framework

for the Italian Garden, with some detail left to be resolved at some later stage. While it was recognized that the Lewis Kennedy design was the most important phase of this garden, it was also acknowledged that more time, knowledge and maintenance were required to reproduce this to a satisfactory standard. The simplified layout of the beds by Michael May of about 1880, however, had survived with minor modifications, and could



Fig. 26. The newly restored conservatory in the Italian Garden. Jan Woudstra, 2010.



Fig. 27. The original Coade stone urns have been repositioned from their prominent position in the Italian Garden to the inside of the restored conservatory. Jan Woudstra, 2010.

easily be reinstated (Fig. 23). From the current constraints it was therefore decided that this layout should be continued for the time being. The main issue relating to the restoration of the garden to its 19th-century condition was the reinstatement of the encompassing shrubbery. It was proposed to restore this according to the sequence of gradated

layers shown in the survey of 1853, which involved the removal of the mid-20th-century yew hedge. All this was completed in time for the opening of the restored gardens in June 2010. No resources were available to replant the flowerbeds, which were left empty, but replanting may be possible in subsequent years (Figs 24-28).



Fig. 28. The beds immediately outside the conservatory were historically lined with tufa; at some time this has been replaced with broken concrete. The existing wisterias in the bed were carefully preserved during the restoration scheme. Jan Woudstra, 2010.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX I

PROPOSALS FOR 'FLOWER GARDEN, CHISWICK HOUSE', C.1880 [CHATSWORTH, DEVONSHIRE MSS, 'CHISWICK GARDENS AND MORETON HALL GARDENS, C.18TH-19TH', UNDATED, UNSIGNED MS, ATTRIBUTED TO MICHAEL T MAY, ABOUT 1880, ASSOCIATED WITH TWO DRAWINGS, ONE SURVEY AND ONE PROPOSAL.]

Flower Garden. Chiswick House

In planting the garden with hardy perennial plants the largest growing varieties as selected would be the best for the central and largest beds leaving the smaller sorts for the outer & less sized beds. In addition to the perennials, annuals and biennials might be planted in the spring, such as Asters, Antirrhinums, Calceolarias, Gladiolas, Honesty, Musk Mignonette, Marigold, Myosotis, Pansies, Stocks, Sweet Williams, Silene, Verbascums, Violas; &c. less of these being required as the perennials get established and fresh varieties are added. Where the small beds are in sets to plant five or six varieties of perennials and to fill up with one sort of annual for all to correspond in one set, using other varieties of perennials and annuals for another set.

The borders at the back of the conservatory could be planted with roses and carnations, the latter being less likely to be destroyed by rabbits than if brought into the front garden. The borders under the conservatory also by the sides of the central walk and the S. beds on grass might be reserved for the usual style of planting with geraniums, lobelias &c.

The present pattern of the garden I do not think favourable for perennial plants, the shapes of the beds in many parts being too narrow, and so unsuitable for large growers. The annexed plan, which perhaps does not appear so nice when compared together on paper has I think a few advantages, the beds being larger & of simpler form, and are designed on grass this I think being more suitable to the plants the grass also more pleasant to walk on among the beds; there still remaining sufficient gravel walks to enable anyone to pass about the garden in damp weather. The grass being generally in straight lines would not cause much difficulty in mowing with the machine. The present box edging is now much broken and defective, and the small gravel walks between are constantly very troublesome with weeds, thus taking as much time to keep in order as the grass would do to keep mown, while the grass would give a refreshing appearance to the garden when many of the plants were faded or not in flower.

Hardy perennial plants at Chiswick.

Large growing

Arum Dracunculus

Aster Tradescanti

Betonia hirsuta

Campanula persicifolia

Convallaria polygonatum

Daphne mezereon

Delphinium formosum

Genista tinctoria

Helianthus multiflorus

Hemerocallis caerulea

Hydrangea hortensis

Iris germanica

Lupinus perennis

Paeony humulis

Papaver orientales

Phlox paniculata

Spiraea aruncus

Tritoma uvaria

Smaller growing

Ajuga reptans purpurea

Alyssum saxatile

Antennaria tomentosum

Aquilegia vulgaris

Arabis albida

Aubretia delteidea

Bambusa Zutunei variegata

Betonica incana

Convallaria majalis

Cerastium tomentosum

Dactylus glomerata variegate

Erythronium Dens canis

Smaller growing continued

Gladiolus byzantinus

Hemerocallis flava

Iberis sempervirens

Lysimachia nummularia

Mentha pulegium

Mentha rotundifulia variegata

Mimulus luteus

Narcissus (several varieties)

Nepeta angustifolia

Omphalodes verna

Ornithogalum umbellatum

Orobus vernus

Phlox prostratum

Santolina incana

Saxifraga hypnoides

" sarmentosa

" longifolia (&c.)

Schilla peruviana

Sedum acre

,, spurium

" glaucum

Sempervivum tectorum

" californica

" montana

arachnoidea

sobiliferum

Spiraea pubescens

Trollius asiaticus

Veratrum nigrum

Veronica saxatilis

,, incana

APPENDIX II

MODERN BOTANICAL NAMES OF THE PLANTS PROPOSED FOR THE ITALIAN GARDEN, C.1880

Tall perennials and shrubs (the latter are indented in the right hand column) Modern botanical name Historic name Arum Dracunculus Dracunculus vulgaris Schott. Aster Tradescanti Aster laterifolius (L.) Britt. Betonia hirsuta Betonica hirsuta L. Campanula persicifolia Campanula persicifolia L.

Convallaria polygonatum Polygonatum odoratum (Mill.) Druce

Daphne mezereon Daphne mezereum L.

Delphinium formosum Delphinium formosum Boiss. & Huet.

Genista tinctoria Genista tinctoria L. Helianthus multiflorus Helianthus multiflorus L. Hemerocallis caerulea Hemerocallis caerulea Andrews Hydrangea macrophylla (Thbg) Ser. Hydrangea hortensis

Iris germanica Iris germanica L. Lupinus perennis Lupinus perennis L.

Paeony humulis Paeonia officinalis L. ssp. humilis (Retz.) Cullen & Heyw.

Papaver orientales Papaver orientale L. Phlox paniculata Phlox paniculata L.

Spiraea aruncus Aruncus dioicus (Walter) Fern. Tritoma uvaria Kniphofia uvaria (L.) Oken.

Small perennials

Ajuga reptans purpurea Ajuga reptans L. 'Atropurpurea' Alyssum saxatile Aurinia saxatilis (L.) Desv. Antennaria tomentosum Antennaria dioica (L.) Gaertn.

Aquilegia vulgaris Aquilegia vulgaris L. Arabis albida Arabis caucasica Schldl. Aubretia delteidea Aubrieta deltoidea (L.) DC. Bambusa Zutunei variegata Sasa variegata (Miq.) Camus Betonica incana Betonica incana Mill. Convallaria majalis Convallaria majalis L. Cerastium tomentosum Cerastium tomentosum L. Dactylus glomerata variegate Dactylus glomerata L. 'Variegata'

Erythronium Dens canis Erythronium dens-canis L.

Gladiolus byzantinus Gladiolus communis L. ssp. byzantinus (Mill.) A.Hamilt.

Hemerocallis flava Hemerocallis lilio-asphodelus L.

Iberis sempervirens Iberis sempervirens L. Lysimachia nummularia Lysimachia nummularia L. Mentha pulegium Mentha pulegium L.

Mentha rotundifulia variegata Mentha x villosa Huds. 'Variegata'

Mimulus luteus Mimulus luteus L. Narcissus (several varieties) Narcissus spp.

Nepeta angustifolia Nepeta angustifolia Mill. Omphalodes verna Omphalodes verna Moench. Ornithogalum umbellatum Ornithogalum umbellatum L. Orobus vernus Lathyrus vernus (L.) Bernh.

Phlox prostratum Phlox reptans Michx.

Santolina incana Santolina chamaecyparissus L. Saxifraga hypnoides Saxifraga hypnoides L. ,, sarmentosa Saxifraga stolonifera Meerb.

" longifolia (&c.) Saxifraga longifolia Lapeyr.

Schilla peruviana Scilla peruviana L. Sedum acre Sedum acre L. " spurium Sedum spurium Bieb. Sedum reflexum L. 'Minus' ,, glaucum Sempervivum tectorum Sempervivum tectorum L. " californica Sempervivum calcareum Jord. ,, montana Sempervivum montanum L. " arachnoidea Sempervivum arachnoideum L. " sobiliferum Jovibarba sobolifera (Sims) Opiz.

Spiraea pubescens Spiraea pubescens Turcz. Trollius asiaticus Trollius asiaticus L. Veratrum nigrum Veratrum nigrum L. Veronica saxatilis Veronica fruticans Jacq. ,, incana Veronica incana L.

Jan Woudstra is Reader in Landscape History and Theory in the Department of Landscape at the University of Sheffield. He was employed as researcher on the Chiswick House Gardens restoration master plan by the landscape consultants Travers Morgan from 1987 to 1993, and by EDA Environmental Design Associates from 1993 to 2000.