



Historic Gardens

The ICOMOS-IFLA International Committee for Historic Gardens, meeting in Florence on 21 May 1981, decided to draw up a charter on the preservation of historic gardens which would bear the name of that town. The present Florence Charter was drafted by the Committee and registered by ICOMOS on 15 December 1982 as an addendum to the Venice Charter covering the specific field concerned.

DEFINITIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Art. 1. "An historic garden is an architectural and horticultural composition of interest to the public from the historical or artistic point of view". As such, it is to be considered as a monument.

Art. 2. "The historic garden is an architectural composition whose constituents are primarily vegetal and therefore living, which means that they are perishable and renewable." Thus its appearance reflects the perpetual balance between the cycle of the seasons, the growth and decay of nature and the desire of the artist and craftsman to keep it permanently unchanged.

Art. 3. As a monument, the historic garden must be preserved in accordance with the spirit of the Venice Charter. However, since it is a living monument, its preservation must be governed by specific rules which are the subject of the Present charter.

Art. 4. The architectural composition of the historic garden includes:

- Its plan and its topography.
- Its vegetation, including its species, proportions, colour schemes, spacing and respective heights.
- Its structural and decorative features.
- Its water, running or still, reflecting the sky.

Art. 5. As the expression of the direct affinity between civilization and nature, and as a place of enjoyment suited to meditation or repose, the garden thus acquires the cosmic significance of an idealized image of the world, a "paradise" in the etymological sense of the term, and yet a testimony to a culture, a style, an age, and often to the originality of a creative artist.

Art. 6. The term, "historic garden", is equally applicable to small gardens and to large parks, whether formal or "landscape".

Art. 7. Whether or not it is associated with a building in which case it is an inseparable complement, the historic garden cannot be isolated from its own particular environment, whether urban or rural, artificial or natural.

Art. 8. An historic site is a specific landscape associated with a memorable act, as, for example, a major historic event; a well-known myth; an epic combat; or the subject of a famous picture.

Art. 9. The preservation of historic gardens depends on their identification and listing. They require several kinds of action, namely maintenance, conservation and restoration. In certain cases, reconstruction may be recommended. The authenticity of an historic garden depends as much on the design and scale of its various parts as on its decorative features and on the choice of plant or inorganic materials adopted for each of its parts.

MAINTENANCE, CONSERVATION, RESTORATION, RECONSTRUCTION

Art. 10. In any work of maintenance, conservation, restoration or reconstruction of an historic garden, or of any part of it, all its constituent features must be dealt with simultaneously. To isolate the various operations would damage the unity of the whole.

MAINTENANCE AND CONSERVATION

Art. 11. Continuous maintenance of historic gardens is of paramount importance. Since the principal material is vegetal, the preservation of the garden in an unchanged condition requires both prompt replacements when required and a long-term programme of periodic renewal (clear felling and replanting with mature specimens).

Art. 12. Those species of trees, shrubs, plants and flowers to be replaced periodically must be selected with regard for established and recognized practice in each botanical and horticultural region, and with the aim to determine the species initially grown and to preserve them.

Art. 13. The permanent or movable architectural, sculptural or decorative features which form an integral part of the historic garden must be removed or displaced only insofar as this is essential for their conservation or restoration. The replacement or restoration of any such

jeopardized features must be effected in accordance with the principles of the Venice Charter, and the date of any complete replacement must be indicated.

Art. 14. The historic garden must be preserved in appropriate surroundings. Any alteration to the physical environment which will endanger the ecological equilibrium must be prohibited. These applications are applicable to all aspects of the infrastructure, whether internal or external (drainage works, irrigation systems, roads, car parks, fences, caretaking facilities, visitors' amenities, etc.).

RESTORATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Art. 15. No restoration work and, above all, no reconstruction work on an historic garden shall be undertaken without thorough prior research to ensure that such work is scientifically executed and which will involve everything from excavation to the assembling of records relating to the garden in question and to similar gardens. Before any practical work starts, a project must be prepared on the basis of said research and must be submitted to a group of experts for joint examination and approval.

Art. 16. Restoration work must respect the successive stages of evolution of the garden concerned. In principle, no one period should be given precedence over any other, except in exceptional cases where the degree of damage or destruction affecting certain parts of a garden may be such that it is decided to reconstruct it on the basis of the traces that survive or of unimpeachable documentary evidence. Such reconstruction work might be undertaken more particularly on the parts of the garden nearest to the building it contains in order to bring out their significance in the design.

Art. 17. Where a garden has completely disappeared or there exists no more than conjectural evidence of its successive stages a reconstruction could not be considered an historic garden.

USE

Art. 18. While any historic garden is designed to be seen and walked about in, access to it must be restricted to the extent demanded by its size and vulnerability, so that its physical fabric and cultural message may be preserved.

Art. 19. By reason of its nature and purpose, an historic garden is a peaceful place conducive to human contacts, silence and awareness of nature. This conception of its everyday use must contrast with its role on those rare occasions when it accomodates a festivity. Thus, the conditions of such occasional use of an historic garden should be clearly defined, in order that any such festivity may itself serve to enhance the visual effect of the garden instead of perverting or damaging it.

Art. 20. While historic gardens may be suitable for quiet games as a daily occurrence, separate areas appropriate for active and lively games and sports should also be laid out adjacent to the historic garden, so that the needs of the public may be satisfied in this respect without prejudice to the conservation of the gardens and landscapes.

Art. 21. The work of maintenance and conservation, the timing of which is determined by season and brief operations which serve to restore the garden's authenticity, must always take precedence over the requirements of public use. All arrangements for visits to historic gardens must be subjected to regulations that ensure the spirit of the place is preserved.

Art. 22. If a garden is walled, its walls may not be removed without prior examination of all the possible consequences liable to lead to changes in its atmosphere and to affect its preservation.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROTECTION

Art. 23. It is the task of the responsible authorities to adopt, on the advice of qualified experts, the appropriate legal and administrative measures for the identification, listing and protection of historic gardens. The preservation of such gardens must be provided for within the framework of land-use plans and such provision must be duly mentioned in documents relating to regional and local planning. It is also the task of the responsible authorities to adopt, with the advice of qualified experts, the financial measures which will facilitate the maintenance, conservation and restoration, and, where necessary, the reconstruction of historic gardens.

Art. 24. The historic garden is one of the features of the patrimony whose survival, by reason of its nature, requires intensive, continuous care by trained experts. Suitable provision should therefore be made for the training of such persons, whether historians, architects, landscape architects, gardeners or botanists. Care should also be taken to ensure that there is regular propagation of the plant varieties necessary for maintenance or restoration.

Art. 25. Interest in historic gardens should be stimulated by every kind of activity capable of emphasizing their true value as Part of the patrimony and making for improved knowledge and appreciation of them: promotion of scientific research; international exchange and circulation of information; publications, including works designed for the general public; the encouragement of public access under suitable control and use of the media to develop awareness of the need for due respect for nature and the historic heritage. The most outstanding of the historic gardens shall be proposed for inclusion in the World Heritage List.

NOTA BENE

The above recommendations are applicable to all the historic gardens in the world.

Additional clauses applicable to specific types of gardens may be subsequently appended to the present Charter with brief descriptions of the said types.