



Resource 4: Background information on the Islamic and Christian (cloistered) gardens

Islamic gardens

As Islam was spread to the Persians the Muslims adopted the Persian style of garden and the main Islamic garden's features came to include:

- walls or screens that make the garden an enclosed rectangle, mysterious and private. This enclosure of the cultivated, tended, watered area excludes the harshness of the surrounding landscape within which the Islamic gardens are usually found.
- water in fountains, pools, and flowing watercourses which are nice to look at and listen to their sound. Water is important for sustaining the garden, and represents purity and knowledge. Water usually moves towards the centre in an Islamic garden representing the journey of a person's soul towards God.
- vegetation and the shade this produces.
- a lay-out in symmetry, using geometric shapes for pools, paths, pavilions or flowerbeds. This symmetry symbolizes harmony and order in Islam.

Islamic gardens' features are used to evoke feelings of peace, harmony and happiness. Moreover, it is not surprising that water and shade are important elements of an Islamic garden since Islam came from and generally spread in a hot and arid climate. Taking into account that the environment was harsh, a Paradise garden was its opposite.

One of the most commonly used Islamic Garden designs is the 'Chahar Bagh' which includes a fountain at the centre of the garden which flows into four water channels. These water channels are often associated with the four rivers of Paradise, described in the Q'uran, which flow to the four quarters of Heaven filled with milk, honey, wine and water. Thus, Islamic gardens can be regarded as an earthly representation of the Paradise. In Q'uran Paradise is often described as "Gardens under which rivers flow" and many Islamic gardens give this feeling strongly. It is interesting to note the similarity between the 'Chahar bagh' garden divided by water channels symbolising the four rivers of Heaven and the of Heaven in the Bible according to which "a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads". Sometimes where there is insufficient water, the 'Chahar Bagh' design is achieved by using paths instead of water channels.



Christian - Cloistered gardens

The Cloister garden (or Cloister-garth) is a type of a Christian garden found in many monasteries and churches and was used for retreat and contemplation. The word cloister means closed and was originally used for the part of a monastery which was closed to public access and formed an architectural barrier that separated the world of the monks from the outside world. Cloisters can be described as beautiful, calm, perfectly proportioned, sheltered places that are able to provide seating that is warm in winter and cool in summer. Cloisters were supposed to be a replica of the Garden of Eden and they also resemble the peace and order found in Islamic gardens.

Main features of the Cloister gardens are:

- a rectangular open space surrounded by covered walks or open galleries with open arcades on the inner side, running along the walls of buildings. The square cloister plot was meant to represent the four points of the compass, and so the universe as a whole. The arcades were used for teaching, sitting and meditating, or for exercise in inclement weather. Walking around the Cloister while meditating was a way of devoting oneself to the "path of life".
- vegetation which was usually only a level field of lawn and less often shrubs and flowers. The simplicity, as well the green colour, helped the monks or nuns in their daily spiritual contemplations. The plain green lawn symbolized renewal and everlasting life. The rectangular plot of grass was often divided into four parts by paths.
- a fountain at the center or side of the garden that served as a primary source for wash water and for irrigation. Some Cloister gardens contained small fish ponds as well. Water was an important feature in the Cloister not only for practical reasons but also because it sustains life, purifies and cleanses everything and symbolises the "wellspring" of God's love. The fountain in the centre of the Cloister evokes the original Eden.



Resource 5: Images of gardens



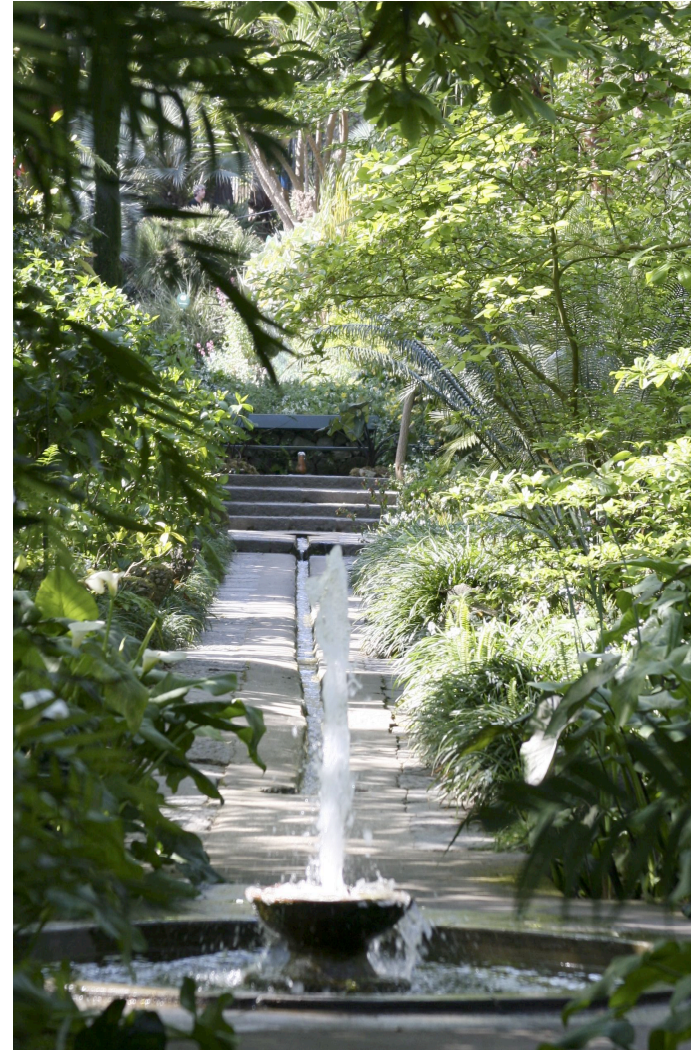
Padua Botanic Garden, Italy (1545) *Courtesy of the University of Padua*



Aberglasney
Cloister
garden, near
Llandeilo, West
Wales
By Ganders



Hampton
Court formal
garden

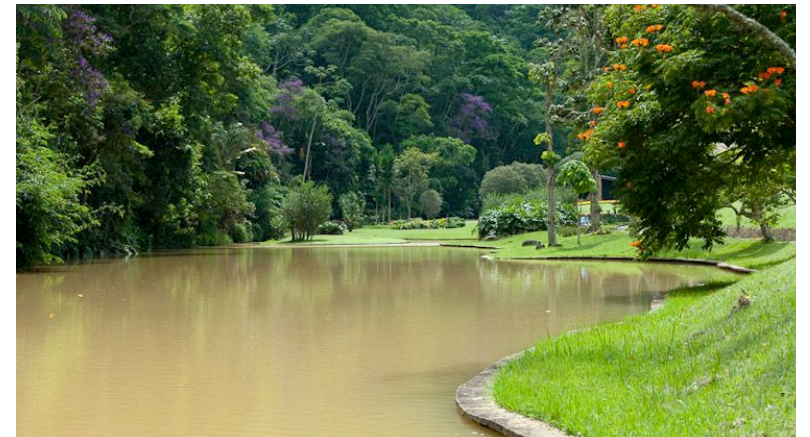


La Mortella gardens Ischia, Italy *By Miles Berry*



Gardens of Roberto Burle Marx, Ministry of Health and Education roof garden, Rio de Janeiro (1938) *By Malcolm Raggett*

Gardens of Roberto Burle Marx, Edmundo Cavanellas Residence, near Petropolis, Brazil (1954)
By Malcolm Raggett





Web links to download the pictures included in 'Cultivating peace' lesson resources:

Symbol of Christianity

<http://www.clker.com/clipart-black-cross.html>

Symbol of Islam

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/09/Star_and_Crescent.svg/2000px-Star_and_Crescent.svg.png

Toilet sign

<http://www.clker.com/clipart-men-women-bathroom1.html>

Drinking water sign

http://www.clker.com/cliparts/b/5/1/5/11949891051225593179aiga_drinking_fountain_.svg.hi.png

Paradise by Jan Bruegel (1620)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jan_Bruegel_d._%C3%84._003.jpg

The Gardens of Generalife in the Alhambra, Spain

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Alha_Generalife1.jpg#filehistory

Taj Mahal, Agra, India

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Taj_Mahal_art.jpg

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/funtastica/2732929352/sizes/o/in/photostream/>

Sezincote House and Gardens, Gloucestershire

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/pradeepjeanette/3609609791/sizes/o/in/photostream/>

Monreale Cathedral Cloisters in Palermo

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/travfotos/5809876165/sizes/l/in/photostream/>

Basilica di San Lorenzo fuori le Mura, Rome, Italy

http://www.flickr.com/photos/sacred_destinations/3380993391/sizes/o/in/photostream/

Padua Botanic Garden, Italy

<http://www.ortobotanico.unipd.it/en/index.html>

Aberglasney Cloister Garden, Llandeilo, West Wales

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ganders/3324809483/sizes/o/in/photostream/>

Hampton Court formal garden

http://www.bgci.org/files/Worldwide/Education/Seeds_of_Unity/Hampton%20Court.JPG

La Mortella gardens Ischia, Italy

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mberry/466875859/sizes/o/in/photostream/>

Gardens of Roberto Burle Marx, Ministry of Health and Education roof garden, Rio de Janeiro

http://www.mraggett.co.uk/rbm/MinistryEd/content/MinistryEd_4990_large.html

Gardens of Roberto Burle Marx, Edmundo Cavanellas Residence, near Petropolis, Brazil

http://www.mraggett.co.uk/rbm/Cavanellas/content/Cavanellas_5810_large.html

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