

RA

restauro archeologico

Conoscenza, conservazione e valorizzazione
del patrimonio architettonico
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dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze**

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New challenges for historic gardens' restoration: the case study of Ludwig Winter's Hanbury Botanical Gardens in Liguria Region (Italy)

Paola Gullino | paola.gullino@unito.it

Marco Devecchi | marco.devecchi@unito.it

Federica Larcher | federica.larcher@unito.it

Department of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences, University of Turin

Abstract

Historic gardens' restoration is particularly complex and some of them are not recognizable due to the lack of knowledge, low management and the impact of plant pest and diseases over the years. An example is the gardens heritage of Liguria Region (Italy), where several major lethal diseases have attacked palms contributing to change landscape and garden structure. To propose sustainable guidelines for historical garden valorization, a research project was carried out. Between 1868 and 1912 in Liguria Region, Ludwig Winter (1846-1912) designed and realized several acclimatation gardens such as the Hanbury Botanical Gardens, by introducing exotic and ornamental species. The correspondence (1868-1906) between Thomas Hanbury and Ludwig Winter was analyzed. Historical documents related to Winter's projects including plans, designs, notes, seed and plant lists and descriptions were collected and studied. Through the analysis of these historical documents, it was possible to recognize the original garden plans, the compositional features and the botanical species used in Hanbury-projects.

Keywords

Acclimatation garden, historic catalogues, correspondence, landscape architecture, Thomas Hanbury.

Introduction

The European Landscape Convention (ELC, 1980) underlined that all landscapes, including historic gardens, require protection, management and overall planning.¹ Concerning the maintenance and conservation, the Florence Charter (1981) highlighted that «Those species of trees, shrubs, plants and flowers to be replaced periodically must be selected with regard for established and recognized practices in each botanical and horticultural region, and with the aim to determine the species initially grown and to preserve them» (article 12). When some species are infected by phytopathological problems that cause decay and sometimes death of the plant, a conservative and sustainable approach should be adopted. To replace the infected plants, historical and archival study should be the priority while taking into account specific current needs. This is a scientific challenge.

In relationship to this problem, in this paper a case study was explained. Nowadays, several major lethal diseases have attacked palms in Liguria Region (North Italy) contributing to change



Fig. 1
Garden of Tommaso
Reggio (Ventimiglia
Municipality, IM)
designed and realized
by Ludwig Winter (photo
credit: Marco Devecchi).

landscape and garden's structure.² Some exotic palms have been attacked by the red weevil (*Rhynchophorus ferrugineus* Olivier) and by the argentine moth (*Paysandisia archon*, Burmeister). The *Phoenix canariensis* Chabaud palm is the most susceptible to these attacks and at the same time is the most common species in Liguria Region. To counter these attacks, it has recently been necessary to break down the infested specimens present in private and public gardens (Fig. 1). In this context, identifying restoration criteria for historic gardens has become a priority for their preservation.

Research aim

Ludwig Winter (1846-1912) was a German expert gardener, a landscape designer and a nurseryman. During his permanence in Liguria Region between 1868 and 1912, he designed different private and public parks, creating a specific style based on the introduction of new exotic plants.³ The most important garden designed and realized between 1868 and 1875 for Thomas Hanbury (1832–1907) were the Hanbury Botanical Gardens of Palazzo Orenco (La Mortola, Ventimiglia Municipality, Imperia Province). This terraced garden (18 ha) represents a cultural heritage both from a botanical point of view, with the 5.800 of ornamental, medicinal, and fruit species, and from a landscape point of view due to the great composition harmony between buildings, ornamental elements and cultivated terraces (Figg. 2-3).

To propose sustainable guidelines for historical garden restoration and valorization, a research project was recently performed (2016–2019).⁴ In Ludwig Winter's gardens, a historical study was carried out to identify historical permanences. His gardens are characterized by a collection of exotic and rare plants⁵ of which several exotic species and ornamental palms were introduced by Winter himself and propagated and cultivated in his nurseries.



Fig. 2
Palazzo Orengo and Hanbury Botanical Gardens (photo credit: Daniela Guglielmi, Archivio Giardini Botanici Hanbury).

Fig. 3
Collections of succulent and exotic species (photo credit: Daniela Guglielmi, Archivio Giardini Botanici Hanbury).

Material and methods

The research was carried out by analysing documents and references from historical archives and libraries: documents, correspondence and catalogues were collected. Deep bibliographic research was performed and several information were found in ancient documents and catalogues kept in public and private archives: Bordighera Archive (Bordighera), Ventimiglia Archive (Ventimiglia), State Archive of Imperia (Ventimiglia section), International Institute of Ligurian Studies (Bordighera), Sanremo Centre for Studies and Research on Palm Trees (Sanremo) and Private Archive Winter' family (Bordighera).

The correspondence (1868–1906) between Thomas Hanbury and Ludwig Winter, including letters and drawings, has been studied. Related to Hanbury Botanical Gardens realization, Ludwig Winter informed Thomas Hanbury about the development of the works. Seventy-three of his letters include descriptions, plans, designs, notes, seed and plant lists. With the aim to identify the species cultivated by Hanbury and propagated by Winter the catalogues were investigated as historical documents. The catalogue of the plants cultivated in the “Hanbury Botanical Gardens” (1889)⁶ and the first catalogue published by Ludwig Winter (1905)⁷ were analyzed (Fig. 4). Thanks to this, it is possible to recognize the historical features and to compare them with the actual permanences in the gardens.

Results and discussion

When Ludwig Winter arrived at Palazzo Orengo (November 1868) the situation was dramatic: the terraces planted with citrus, olive trees and vineyards were giving way. The first letter received by Thomas Hanbury (8 November 1868) is the *curriculum vitae* of Ludwig Winter (Fig. 5). Regarding the correspondence, we have noted that all the letters reported a list of information: detailed description of the work carried out by Winter, the seeds germinated, the list of seeds exchanged with other private gardens and with other international botanical gardens and the new species planted and propagated. Some letters are illustrated with drawings representing Winter's projects (Fig. 6-7). In Table 1 some letters selected for this research, received by Thomas Hanbury, are reported.

Table 1 List of letters from Ludwig Winter to Thomas Hanbury with their data and main object (International Institute of Ligurian Studies, Bordighera Municipality)



Fig. 4
The first catalogue published by Ludwig Winter (1905) (photo credit: Paola Gullino).

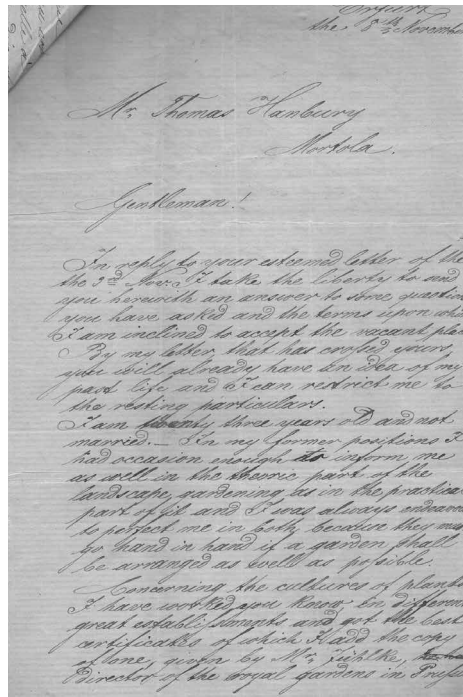


Fig. 5
The curriculum vitae of Ludwig Winter (8 November 1868) (photo credit: Daniela Gandolfi, Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri).

Date	Object
3-11-1868	Curriculum vitae of Ludwig Winter
17-11-1868	Ludwig Winter decided to work for Hanbury family
24-10-1869	First collection of Pelargonium and Rosa genera Kitchen garden's project with wildflowers and vegetables
17-12-1869	Idea to create a sustainable garden with seeds and plants exchanged
11-8-1870	List of "Plants in flowering". Several visitors have visited the garden
15-1-1871	Collections of medicinal plants from South America
10-12-1871	Collection of succulents
24-12-1871	The Savoy Royal family visited Hanbury Garden and congratulate themselves on the collection of roses
5-12-1872	Collection of aromatic plants (Lavandula, Thymus, Salvia)
14-2-1872	First palm tree cultivated
11-8-1872	Collections of exotic palms and bulbous plants
19-8-1872	Extension of the kitchen garden with new vegetable, fruits and wildflowers
18-9-1872	Idea to create a pavilion for the belvedere
23-6-1873	Idea to place a small gate made of olive wood to prevent the entry of unwanted people
14-7-1873	Collection of citrus fruits for a "Orange Garden"
7-12-1873	The Duchess of Aosta will visit the gardens of Palazzo Orengo
13-7-1874	The Hanbury Botanical Garden open to the public. Visiting hours are indicated.
15-8-1874	Several species of exotic plants are propagated
26-4-1875	Several palm species are propagated in other private gardens. Beautiful palm trees have grown in Bordighera Municipality
7-7-1875	Collection of Phoenix spp. The acclimatization garden is completed and finished.

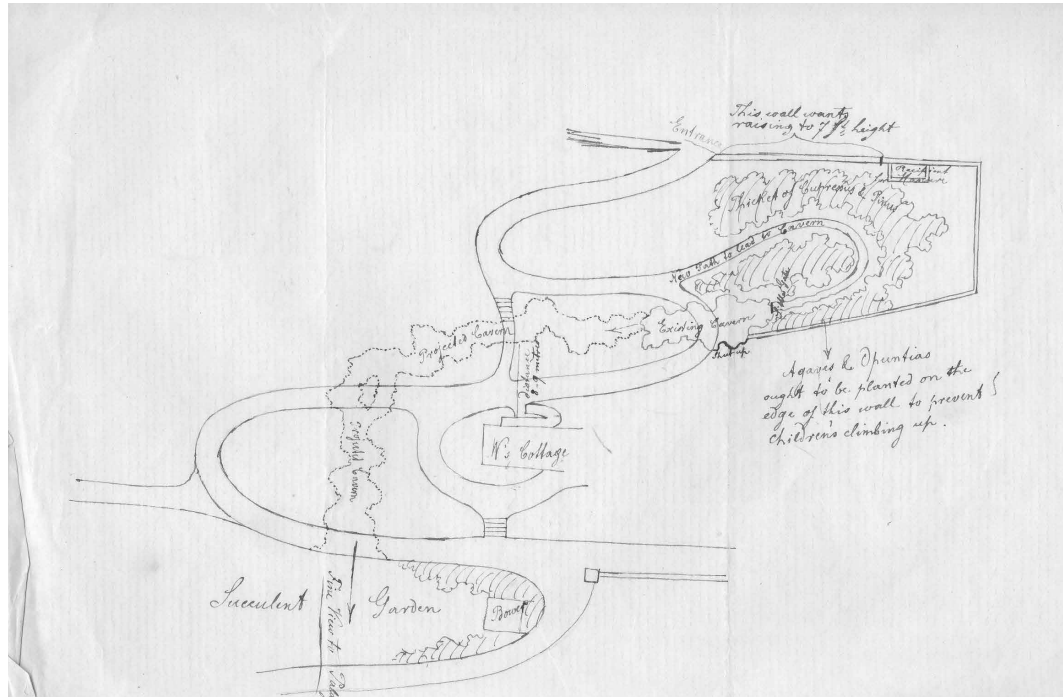


Fig. 6
Detail relating to the design of Hanbury Botanical Gardens (1 December 1873) (photo credit: Daniela Gandolfi, Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri).

The analysis of the correspondence demonstrated that Hanbury Botanical Gardens were a place of innovative experimentation. The idea of Thomas Hanbury was to realize an acclimation garden with rare collections of exotic and autochthonous plants.

The first systematic catalogue of the gardens, published by Gustav Cronmeyer in 1889, reveals about 3600 species cultivated. Hanbury Botanical Gardens are still characterized by a richness of species. Some of the exotic plants introduced in that period in Liguria Region still exist and now represent an important botanical and cultural heritage in Italy.

The Winter's catalogue published in 1905 attests that 471 genera were produced both outdoors and in greenhouses. Among the most representative genera, 92 are succulents, 18 palms and 11 citrus. Moreover, different genera of palms *Brahea* spp., *Chamaedorea* spp., *Phoenix* spp., *Sabal* spp., *Syagrus* spp. and *Washingtonia* spp. were planted by Winter in his gardens and widely cultivated in his nurseries. Winter's catalogue was printed in different languages, Italian, German and English and the prices are indicated in various currencies. All these innovative ideas and novelties contributed to the development of the floricultural industry in Liguria Region as a modern industry on the international level.

Conclusions

Preserving and restoring historical gardens is particularly complex and some of them are not recognizable due to the lack of knowledge, low management and the impact of plant pest and diseases over the previous years. The preservation of a historic garden depends on the combination of several items that characterize its complexity and involves material and immaterial aspects. For this purpose, it is necessary to know in detail the garden components through the identification of attributes, followed by the recognition of heritage values.⁸ In this study, through the analysis of the historical documents, it was possible to recognize the original gardens plans, the compositional features and the botanical species used in his projects. The exotic species cultivated in Ludwig Winter's gardens, the compositional features and Winter's design intentions defined the sustainable guidelines for the valorization of these sites.

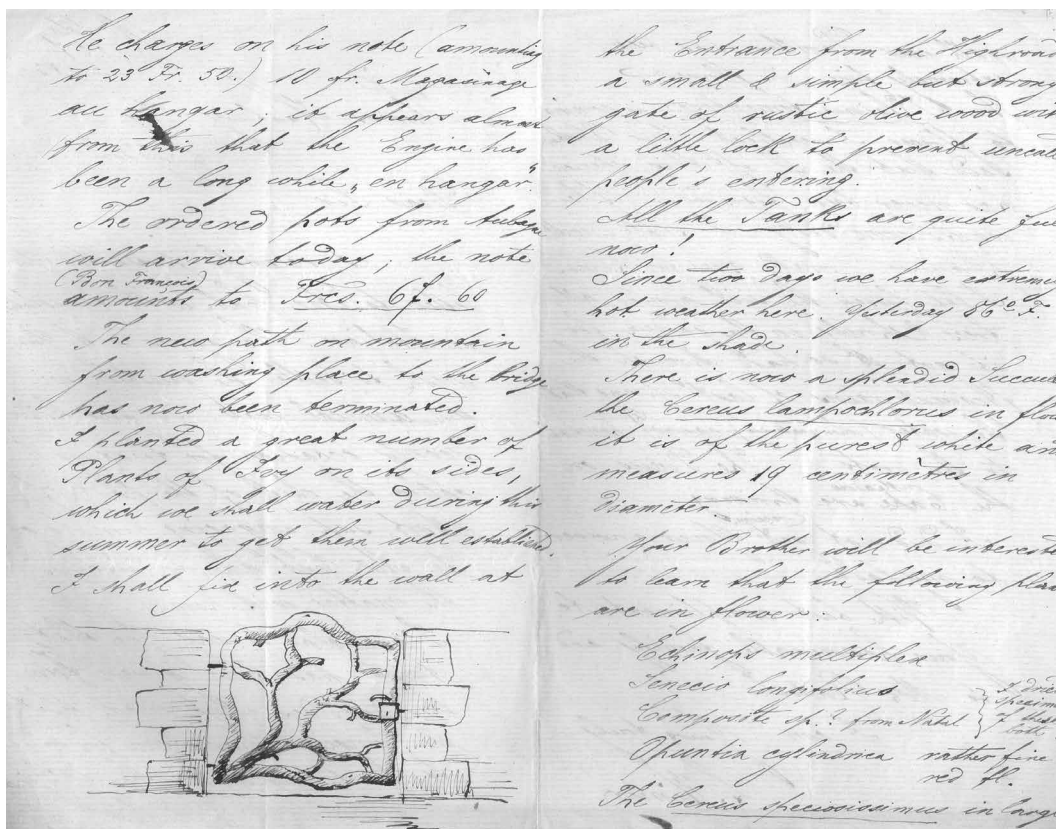


Fig. 7
Letter of Winter to Hanbury (23 June 1873) with the description of the garden and the "opening gate" project represented by a drawing (photo credit: Daniela Gandolfi, Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri).

Acknowledgments

The research was supported by Compagnia di San Paolo 2016 "I Giardini Winter nel Ponente Ligure: valorizzazione e fruizione del patrimonio botanico e florovivistico". We thank the Bordighera and Ventimiglia Municipalities, the International Institute of Ligurian Studies (Bordighera), the Hanbury Botanical Gardens and the Sanremo Centre for Studies and Research on Palm Trees. We particularly thank Dott. Daniela Gandolfi (International Institute of Ligurian Studies, Bordighera), and Dott. Daniela Guglielmi (Hanbury Botanical Gardens).

¹ LIONELLA SCAZZOSI, *Reading and assessing the landscape as cultural and historical heritage* «Landscape Research» 29, 2004, pp. 335-355

² ANNALISA MANIGLIO CALCAGNO, *La cultura inglese nel paesaggio e nei giardini della Riviera ligure*, in *Il giardino italiano dell'Ottocento nelle immagini, nella letteratura, nelle memorie*, a cura di A. Tagliolini Milano, Edizioni Angelo Guerini e Associati, 1990, pp. 37-69.

³ PAOLA GULLINO, *I giardini di Ludwig Winter a Bordighera e Ventimiglia Riflessioni sul ruolo della cultura germanica nel vivaismo e nel paesaggio in Liguria*, Genova, SAGEP Editore, 2020, p. 144.

⁴ PAOLA GULLINO, MARCO DEVECCHI, FEDERICA LARCHER, *New sustainable approach for historical garden*

restoration: the case study of Ludwig Winter's Gardens in Liguria Region «Acta Horticulturae», 1279, 2020, pp. 9-14.

⁵ LUIGI VIACAVA, *Lodovico Winter giardiniere in Bordighera*, Genova, Erga edizioni, 1996, p. 141.

⁶ GUSTAV CRONEMEYER, *Systematic Catalogue of Plants growing in the open air in the garden of Thomas Hanbury F.L.S.* Erfurt, (Germany), Koenig printer, 1889, pp. 98.

⁷ LUDWIG WINTER, *Catalogo Generale delle Palme*, Bordighera, Città di Bordighera, 1905, pp. 105.

⁸ MARIA ADRIANA GIUSTI, *Restauro dei giardini. Teoria e storia*, Firenze, Alinea Editore, 2004, pp. 272



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