

# History of Horticulture

## History of Horticulture – Study Notes

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### 1. Definition & Scope

- **Horticulture** = the science and art of cultivating fruits, vegetables, flowers, and ornamental plants.
  - Distinct from **agriculture** (large-scale grain production) and **forestry** (tree-focused).
  - Involves: plant breeding, soil management, pest control, post-harvest handling, and landscape design.
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### 2. Early Beginnings (Pre-4000 BCE)

| Period                | Region                               | Key Developments                                                                                 |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Neolithic Revolution  | Fertile Crescent, China, Mesoamerica | First intentional planting of wild greens; domestication of wild figs, olives, and early gourds. |
| Proto-horticulture    | Egypt, Indus Valley                  | Garden plots beside settlements for medicinal and culinary herbs (e.g., garlic, coriander).      |
| Evidence of Selection | South America (Andean highlands)     | Early selection of tuberous roots (e.g., oca, mashua) for better taste and yield.                |

*Why it matters:* Early humans recognized the value of managing plant traits—the conceptual seed of horticulture.

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### 3. Classical Antiquity (4000 BCE – 500 CE)

| Civilization  | Contributions                                                                                                |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mesopotamia   | Formal garden layouts (e.g., “hanging gardens” of Babylon); irrigation canals for orchards.                  |
| Ancient Egypt | Systematic cultivation of fruit trees (dates, figs) and ornamental lilies; papyrus records of garden design. |

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| Civilization         | Contributions                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Greek & Roman Worlds | <i>De Re Rustica</i> (Cato, Varro, Columella) – treatises on fruit tree grafting, pruning, and vineyard management.<br>Use of <b>raised beds</b> , <b>trellising</b> , and <b>companion planting</b> . |
| China (Han Dynasty)  | Development of <b>mulberry</b> for silkworms, early seedling nurseries, and the concept of “garden as a micro-cosm.”                                                                                   |
| Mesoamerica          | Intensive chinampas (floating gardens) for vegetables and flowers; early selection of <b>tomato</b> and <b>chili</b> .                                                                                 |

*Key Takeaway:* Horticultural knowledge became codified in texts and spread through trade, establishing many techniques still used today.

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## 4. Medieval & Early Islamic Period (500?–?1500?CE)

| Region        | Innovations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Islamic World | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Al-Muwatta</i> and <i>Kitab al-Filaha</i> – manuals on orchard management, grafting, and irrigation.</li><li>• Introduction of <b>citrus grafting</b>, <b>saffron cultivation</b>, and sophisticated <b>water-wheel (noria)</b> systems.</li></ul> |
| Europe        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monastic gardens: medicinal herb beds, vegetable plots, and experimental breeding.</li><li>• Emergence of <b>hortus conclusus</b> (enclosed garden) as a design model.</li></ul>                                                                      |
| Japan         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of <b>karesansui</b> (dry rock gardens) and <b>kaiko</b> (flower arranging) influencing ornamental horticulture.</li></ul>                                                                                                                |
| India         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Texts like <i>Krishi Pariksha</i> (12th?c.) describe vegetable cropping cycles and inter-cropping with legumes.</li></ul>                                                                                                                             |

*Impact:* Knowledge transfer via the Silk Road, Arab-Spanish exchanges, and Crusader contacts broadened plant palettes and refined techniques (e.g., grafting, pruning).

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## 5. Age of Exploration & Colonial Expansion (1500?–?1800?CE)

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