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## Garden Heritage – new perspectives in Hungarian Tourism Strategy

Albert Fekete PhD, DLA

*Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Institute of Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning and Garden Art, feketek.albert@uni-mate.hu*

Ágnes Herczeg

*Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Institute of Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning and Garden Art*

László Kollányi

*Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Institute of Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning and Garden Art*

Máté Sárospataki

*Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Institute of Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning and Garden Art*

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## Garden Heritage – new perspectives in Hungarian Tourism Strategy

Albert Fekete<sup>1,2</sup>, Ágnes Herczeg<sup>1,2</sup>, László Kollányi<sup>1</sup>, Máté Sárospataki<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Institute of Landscape Architecture,  
Urban Planning and Garden Art*

<sup>2</sup>*Hungarian Garden Heritage Foundation*

### 1. Abstract

Visiting gardens has been a motivation for tourism for many years worldwide, and can now be enjoyed in many different forms. According to international research, garden tourism is the second largest tourism sector after food tourism, with a third of tourists globally including at least one garden visit in their travel itinerary. Garden tourism encompasses botanical gardens, arboretas, zoological gardens, city parks, flower shows, garden centres and increasingly tours of historic gardens and estates. Garden tourists to these types of attractions and events significantly give local economies a boost in many ways. Beside its economic and health benefits, garden tourism contributes to the environmental and cultural education of visitors, increasing the importance of gardens in everyday life. In this context historic gardens, and especially castle gardens, play a leading role.

The study shows the possible role of the Hungarian castle gardens in national tourism development strategies. The high number of heritage castle gardens, their compositional diversity and geographical location makes them to be the main target for garden tourism. The study provides an overview of a comprehensive garden inventory methodology – with historic research, survey of current conditions, analysis of garden features and attractions and formulation of strategic proposals.

The conclusions drawn from the historical review and survey provide a good basis for the protection and the dissemination of this complex heritage and for using it as a cultural resource and background for future tourism development, with an emphasis on their current and future educational role.

### 2. Introduction

Research on the Hungarian garden heritage goes back a long way (Csemez et al 2017, Fekete 2007, Sárospataki, 2014). Despite this, there is no comprehensive database of our gardens of historical value. The main reason for this is that during the 20th century, the mapping and conservation of garden heritage was not a prominent part of Hungarian heritage conservation. In the course of the development of Hungarian heritage conservation, the National Inspectorate of Monuments and its successor organisations, the National Office for Monument Conservation, the State Monument Conservation and Restoration Centre, the State Care of National Monuments, the Cultural Heritage Conservation Office etc., have not been able to give the importance and attention that garden heritage deserves and to establish an independent department for its care. A comprehensive inventory of Hungarian gardens of historical value, including the research on the history and current situation of castle gardens from the aspect of garden design, is an ongoing process today. Within the framework of the Hungarian Garden Heritage Foundation, the work is being carried out by the Institute of Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning and Garden Art at the Hungarian

University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, which started the work in the early 2000s under the leadership of Ilona Baloghné Ormos. The aim of this complex research, which integrates previously discovered materials, data sources and existing research, is to create a unified, national database of castle gardens, which will provide data for heritage conservation and tourism strategies and development.

The Institute, in cooperation with the Hungarian Garden Heritage Foundation, will establish the complex database in five successive steps:

- Compiling a comprehensive list of castle gardens of historical value in Hungary
- Identification of sites of special interest from the point of view of garden history and tourism, collection of historical material
- Development of a garden survey methodology, compiling survey sheets
- Conducting and documenting historical research and site surveys
- Outlining the main possible directions for the tourism use of the Hungarian garden heritage

The present study discusses the development potential of garden tourism, which plays a major role in the sustainability of Hungarian castle gardens, emphasising that the historical, cultural and ecological values of castle gardens form the basis of garden tourism. It is on the basis of these essential values of gardens that the role of castle gardens in tourism can be enhanced, new tourist destinations can be built and their cultural content can be strengthened.

### **3. Background and Literature Review**

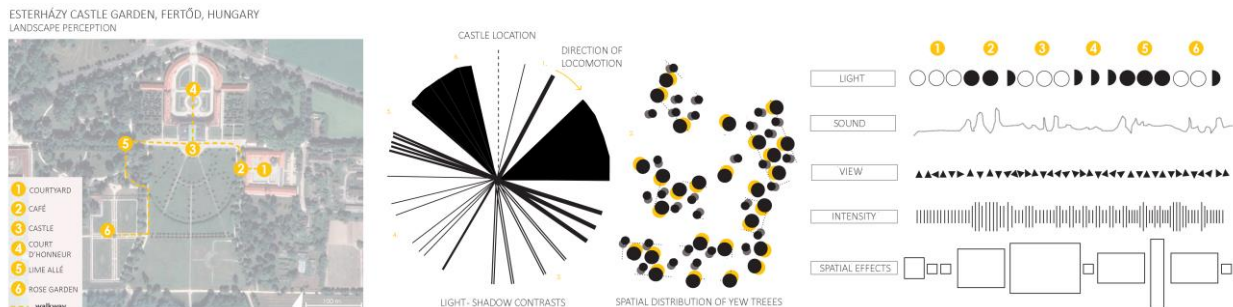
Both foreign and domestic literature draw attention to the boom of cultural tourism after 1990. In the years preceding the COVID-19 epidemic, growth was very intense at international level, some estimates put it at more than 15% per year. Its importance is also indicated by the fact that the motivation of around 40% of recorded travel worldwide is cultural tourism (Cerdeiras et al. 2018). This growth is supported by our 2019 online research, which was conducted from the perspective of travellers and tour operators across a range of age groups. (Herczeg 2019)

Unfortunately, garden tourism is not as prominent as other tourism products in the domestic tourism offer, but it is beginning to be more appreciated. (Guller 2017) The tourism objectives of the castle garden developments carried out on the basis of the government's 2014 decision on the national castle programme already included as a top priority that the developments should maximise the visitor experience by placing an emphasis on the introduction of the garden design (spatial composition, garden furniture and structures) and natural features of the sites. (Virág 2017)

The recognition and exploitation of the development potential of castle gardens for tourism also requires a change in attitude of tourism industry. There is a demand at the societal level that certain heritage elements, such as a castle, a palace or a complex heritage asset, which were previously understood as individual features, should not be considered in isolation from the surrounding landscape in which they are embedded, which is part of the scenery and contributes to its appreciation (Pluskowski 2019). The tourism use of castle gardens in Central and Eastern Europe is not entirely new. An international ICOMOS symposium on "The New Role of Castles and Manor Houses in Society" was organised in Bratislava as early as 1983, at which it was stated, among other things, that "*the advantageous spatial features of castles and manor houses (buildings, parks)*

*should be used in a suitable way for cultural and social purposes, in a way that meets the needs of the population.*" (ref. Herczeg 2019) But it is not simply a question of rethinking functions, but also of activities to achieve them. Festival tourism, for example, can be of particular importance in this respect. Musiaka (2013) has noted that festival tourism, and here he is referring mainly to cultural festivals, tourism related to the arts, has exploded, especially after 1990, and has changed the cultural market. Négrier et al (2021) also added that this change has given more space to outdoor cultural events than before. At the same time, Gustafsson (2009) argues that, in addition to outdoor activities, it should not be allowed to develop commercial activities that are not related to the cultural attractions, historical identity and place in an authentic way. All this indicates that castle gardens as a heritage category have been of concern to tourism professionals for decades and represent a potential attraction and tourism development opportunity.

The castle garden is an artistic composition of dynamic nature, a place programmed for perception: it is revealed to the visitor in a planned way in time and space, and thanks to its plant and other natural components it can be understood as a living system that changes continuously over time. It is an artwork that engages all the senses to discover and explore. A visit to the garden is a complex experience: sounds and noises (leaves rustling, water splashing, birds chirping etc.), scents and smells, weather effects (rain, wind, shade, sunshine, mist, alternating cold and warm effects, light and shade effects as you walk through the sunny and shady areas etc.), kinaesthetic effects (ascending terrain, climbing a ramp or stairs, slope etc.), tactile effects (touching plants, feeling pavements etc.), compositional surprises and the memories and associations evoked by all these. Walking in a garden is therefore a much richer and more complex experience than just seeing a few visual elements: it is an overall perception of various spatial and aesthetic experiences. (*Figure 1.*)

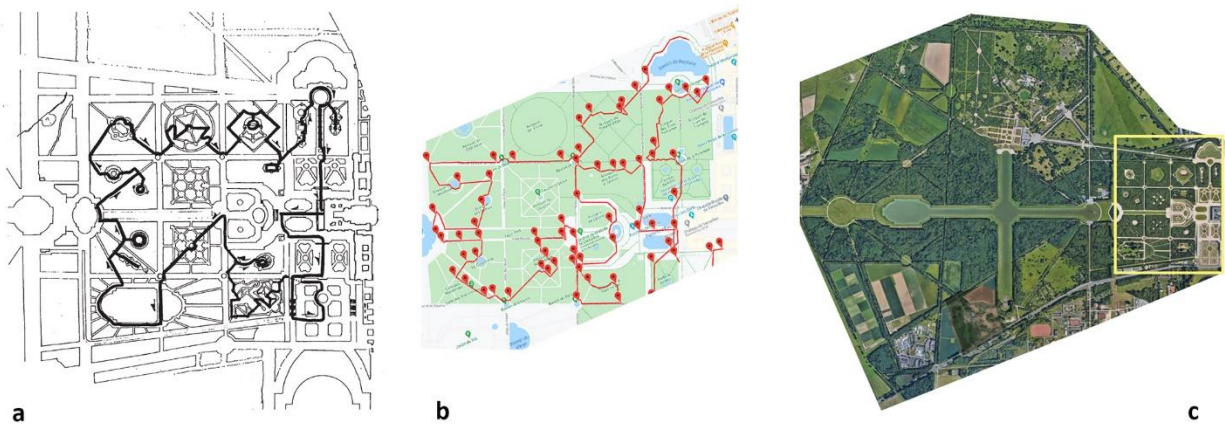


**Figure 1. A perceptual and mental map of the Esterházy Castle Garden in Fertőd, Hungary – a landscape architecture student project** (Source: Zombori 2020.)

It is not surprising, therefore, that we can also find descriptions of exciting castle garden walks, and even descriptions of literary value, in the works of many contemporary authors, both in Hungary (Kazinczy 1880, Dézsi 1916, Toroczka 1917) and abroad (Straus 1935, Hoog 1982, Berthoz 1997).

Among the famous garden walks, the Versailles 'promenade' of Louis XIV, which lasted about one and a half hours to walk, is worthy of special mention. The Sun King invited a number of diplomats and heads of state to walk and talk in the gardens with him, but he also often walked in the gardens 'only' with his own entourage (40-50 people). The royal garden walk, when it took place, always

started at 2 pm sharp, after lunch. In 1664, the gardens of the Versailles Palace were opened to the public. In order to help visitors to get around, the first description of the gardens and its attractions was published in 1668, while the first official 'garden guide' was published in 1674. (Szántó 2010) The gates of the Versailles Gardens have remained open to the public ever since, but in recent years (and especially during the COVID-19 epidemic) a number of virtual tours have been made available on the Internet, most of which show the main attractions of the Louis XIV Walk. (Figure 2.)



**Figure 2 - 2a. The walking route of Louis XIV from 1692 (Source: Szántó 2010); 2b. Today's recommended walking route in the gardens of Versailles Palace (URL7); 2c. The most visited section of the gardens of the Versailles Palace (Source: Google Earth)**

The main attraction of the garden is its well-designed appearance. Landscape gardens, for example, have developed as a form of landscape painting, with the unconcealed intention of creating a pictorial experience for the garden user. The landscape gardens of the 1730s and 40s (Stowe, Rousham, Stourhead) and the surrounding landscape are characterised by a striking visual appearance. The artistic scenery created by garden design was initially inspired by the ideal or classical landscapes of 17th century French painters (Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin), which were mostly depicting nature, free from human intervention, telling ancient bucolic stories. According to the philosopher and aesthete Herman Parret, we are faced with a chain of transpositions: as Lorrain was a great fan of the Renaissance garden, the Italian garden was the main influence on 18th-century French painting, and this painting influenced the appearance of the English garden. (Parret 1988) Naturally, the design of the garden's twisting walkways, rich in strong visual effects, and the deliberate incorporation of sudden sights and surprises into the garden's programme, are an attraction for visitors. In a 2014 survey in England, lay people and landscape architects were asked which they thought is England's most iconic castle garden. After processing the thousands of responses, an interesting result emerged: in both the lay and landscape architecture professional groups, Rousham House Garden, Oxfordshire was the winner. Among the designers of this well-known island garden are some of the great masters of the 18th century, such as Charles Bridgeman and William Kent. The visitor-focused qualities of the Rousham House Garden that made it a winner of the competition were summed up by the contemporary English landscape architect Hal Moggridge: "The garden walks are full of exciting surprises: an unexpected encounter with a dying gladiator, a fleeting image of Apollo, or a long line of sight closed by a Gothic mill building, an ancient stone bridge or a remote group of trees, or a resting place hidden in a secluded nook"

(Everton 2014). Compositional accents, surprising views, artworks and planned visual axes, in a word, artistic shaping, make the castle garden a consumable tourist product.

#### 4. Method, Data and Results

For compiling a comprehensive list of castle gardens in Hungary, it is essential to compile lists of gardens in the individual territorial units (counties) defined in the survey. The task in compiling the county lists was to identify, group/list and map the sites. At the same time as the county lists were being drawn up, a preliminary site-by-site evaluation of the castle gardens was carried out, based on their historical value and tourist offer. When compiling the county lists, different existing Hungarian databases were used as data sources (URL1, URL2, URL3, URL4, URL5, URL6). Accordingly, a national level survey was carried out through internet research - with student cooperation - including:

- The historical significance of the site
- Existing site designations
- Tourist information about the site (search results on the internet, website, information specifically about the garden, description in foreign languages)

The following categories have been established for the significance of the site for garden history:

- (1) A site of minor significance, where there is (and was) no significant garden or garden feature
- (2) Significant site, where there was a significant garden or garden feature but no longer exists, the spatial layout and visual proportions of the garden are vanishing, vegetation is dying, new planting is inappropriate
- (3) Valuable site, where there is a significant garden or garden feature, the garden is an attraction for tourism but professional restoration/management is still to be undertaken
- (4) A site of outstanding value with a garden or garden feature valuable for both garden history and tourism, which has been restored or preserved in good condition and is an attraction for tourism

Table 1 shows the numerical distribution of the castle gardens processed in the study according to the four value categories, broken down by county and aggregated. It can be seen in the aggregation that 15.5% (157) of the 1014 castle gardens processed are of outstanding value, while 28.2% (286) are classified as valuable sites.

County	Total castle gardens identified (according to historicgarden.net)	Of which processed	Value: 1	Value: 2	Value: 3	Value: 4
			Less significant	Significant	Valuable	Outstanding
Borsod-Abaúj_Zemplén	125	73	28	29	12	4
Bács-Kiskun	39	41	4	14	10	13

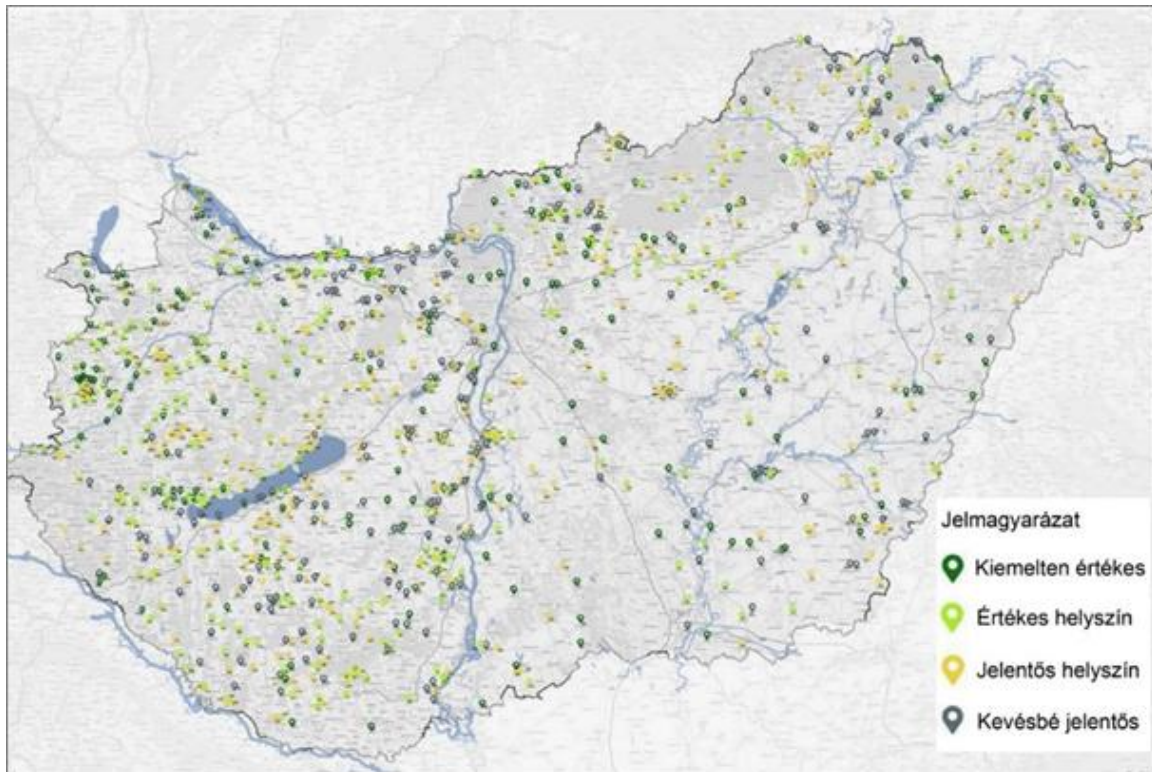
Baranya	58	57	12	20	21	4
Békés	101	36	15	13	3	5
Csongrád	21	18	6	2	6	4
Fejér	155	75	35	26	7	7
Győr-Moson-Sopron	80	49	3	10	17	19
Hajdú-Bihar	34	18	5	6	1	6
Heves	53	45	3	19	18	5
Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok	33	22	6	8	6	2
Komárom-Esztergom	49	67	35	12	13	7
Nógrád	111	50	16	8	18	8
Pest	120	49	4	21	8	16
Somogy	142	105	32	39	29	5
Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg	70	66	10	29	19	8
Tolna	55	52	20	5	18	9
Vas	130	73	1	17	35	20
Veszprém	69	65	4	29	27	5
Zala	76	53	12	13	18	10
<b>Σ:</b>	<b>1293</b>	<b>1014</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>157</b>

**Table 1. The list of Hungarian castle gardens processed, according to their spatial location and heritage value**  
(Source: Prepared by Authors)

The selection of valuable garden heritage sites and sites of outstanding value was based on the assessment of the gardens from historic and heritage conservation aspects, considering the following garden value criterias:

- The historical value of the garden, which is both a setting for a listed building and a site with a conceptual, spiritual significance (e.g. associated with significant historical events, families);
- The age of the garden, or the first date that can be proven to indicate an existing garden that was part of the estate;
- The uniqueness of the garden, which refers to the special artistic value of the garden (e.g., a significant work of the artist or period);
- Typicality of the garden, that is the character of a work to be pattern of a specific type (or, for example, if the garden is the first representative of a type or a form of the type characteristic to the period of its design);
- The geographical context in which the garden is embedded.

The geographical location of each site is also shown on a map. Maps are presented by counties and also at national level (Figure 3). The maps have been colour-coded to indicate the value categories of the sites.



**Figure 3. The location of castle gardens at national level** (Source: Prepared by Authors)  
 (Legend: dark green-site of outstanding values; green-valuable site; yellow-significant site; gray-site of minor significance)

Some indicators of the processed castle gardens, which are based on heritage or tourism aspects, have also been presented in charts for easy reference.

The valuable garden heritage sites and sites of outstanding value (443 castle gardens in Hungary) are of great importance from both the aspects of garden history and tourism. The research, inventory, renovation, maintenance and use of these gardens could be a model for the future conservation and use of the entire Hungarian garden heritage. For these sites, further clarifications can be made as to their importance in garden history and attractiveness, so that castle gardens can be classified into different categories according to their social and economic impact on their broader or narrower surroundings. Thus, the categories of outstanding and valuable castle gardens include sites of international, national, regional or local importance. The characteristics of these four categories are described below.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Conserving, renewing and authentically presenting the castle gardens is becoming an increasingly complex task involving more and more actors. New user needs, sustainability requirements, tourism, social participation, universal design principles and many other social norms are creating a situation in which, in addition to the historical precedents, garden design analogies, renovation and restoration aspects, a creative, abstract, artistic design approach and vision is required. The changing attitudes to the castle garden as a place and the emergence of new functional needs also come to the fore and influence garden renovation and use.



The castle gardens are of particular importance for all types of tourism due to their masters, related historical events, artistic and compositional qualities, natural features, ecology, role in the townscape and landscape and complex nature. Their importance for tourism lies in their complexity. The systematic inventory, conservation and presentation of historic gardens is a consistent, interdisciplinary task at regional level. The value of the historic garden is also highly dependent on the regional context, being organically integrated with traditional land use, the natural and built environment, ethnographic and other cultural values and natural resources. Interdisciplinarity must also be applied to the renovation process of historic gardens, which requires a change of approach and cooperation in the fields of environmental education, presentation and promotion.

The values of the castle garden must be made known and taught. The existing legal framework for the protection of historic gardens and our international commitments in the field of higher education provide a good basis for this.

The garden on its own must also be marketed, communicated and used for tourism. The presentation of the castle garden should be based primarily on the historical monuments and features preserved, but also on the future use and maintenance. The spirit of the place, its characteristics, heritage conservation principles and sustainability needs must be taken into account and harmonised in all uses of the castle garden.

The strategic objective should be a process of survey – conservation – education – introduction – utilisation in the framework of collaborative awareness-raising/education, based on the premise that the real values of the historic garden are mostly known only to those with a university degree in the field. Accordingly, the values of the historic garden should be communicated through educational processes, at different levels and in appropriate educational forms:

- Targeting representatives of related professions and fields through university courses, subjects and modules on garden heritage
- Targeting professionals working in tourism and the development of the country's image (e.g. specialised training as for managers of historic gardens and landscapes, landscape managers) with higher education programmes
- Targeting future users, managers, visitors through awareness-raising in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, environmental education, specialised workshops, scientific and promotional publications, books, films, events, advertising etc.

The teaching of historic gardens can guarantee that our garden heritage can take its rightful place among our cultural assets.

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