

# History of Prague Parks and gardens

Parks and gardens form integral features of the image of the capital of the Czech Republic. A search in history reveals that the oldest still existing garden formed part of a bishop's mansion founded in the Lesser Town in 1248. At present we know its many times changed fragment as Vojanovy Sady. The Old Town had mostly minor gardens of individual citizens. Of major significance were the monastery gardens. Generally speaking, however, the gardens played an insignificant role in the picture of the medieval city. The situation changed in the reign of Emperor Charles IV. When founding the New Town of Prague, this in many respects enlightened ruler did not forget green areas and in 1358 he issued an ordinance on the establishment of vineyards and orchards "... on all hills within three miles of the city ...". The vineyard founder was exempted from taxes for twelve years. The Emperor's name appears once again in relation to gardens. The first separate apothecary garden covering approximately one hectare originated in the second half of the 14th century approximately on the site of the present Main Post Office in Jindřišská Street. It was called "Angel Garden" after Angelo, the apothecary particularly favoured by the Emperor in 1360.

The same period saw the origin of the gardens of six monasteries in the New Town of Prague and on many other sites. It is interesting to note that the Royal Garden with the Belvedere summer house did not originate until 1535. Also the Royal Game Preserve on the White Mountain dates from the Renaissance, when it originated in connection with the construction of the Hvězda (Star) summer house. The Wallenstein Garden dates from the turn of the Renaissance and the Baroque. It is one of the most important Prague gardens because of its location in the historical centre. The garden of the Troja Castle is purely Baroque, similarly as the Vrtba Garden, considered the most beautiful of Prague gardens.

Another development phase was characterized by the return to nature resulting in the origin of the so-called English parks represented in Prague e.g. by Kinský Garden, and the so-called decorative estate, characterized by the composition of the Cibulka park in Košíře. At that time the status of the bourgeoisie as a significant economic element of society improved which gave rise to the origin of publically accessible parks and gardens. The oldest facility of this type in Prague is the Chotkovy Sady park, established and developed in 1833 on the site of the former timber storage area and made accessible to the public in 1841.

The second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century represent the brightest period of the history of Prague park development. It was the period of modification of older parks and gardens and of frequent magnificent composition of new parks, such as Riegrový Sady on the outskirts of Vinohrady, laid out in 1904 - 1908. After the origin of independent Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 the establishment of new parks and gardens was exceptional and their areas were small. The only exception is [the Zoological Garden](#) and later on [the Botanical Garden in Troja](#).

## Present time

At present hundreds of historical as well as modern parks are registered in the territory of Prague. Most Prague parks and gardens are not significant for their size. Often they form almost intimate spaces. However, due to their great diversity and distribution in all parts of Prague they contribute greatly to the typical picture of the city.