

GARDEN ORNAMENTATION

The western part of the garden effectively extended the living space of the castle and was built with those considerations in mind. However, besides its residential and decorative purposes, it also acted as a collection of plants, exotic animals, and birds. It was a stage for many tales of ancient heroes, functioning as both a sculptural gallery and a lapidarium. The garden sprawled over an area of three hectares, making it the largest garden of its type in Bohemia. It consists of 5 km of walls and terraces, some reaching heights of up to six metres. A significant amount of locally sourced marlstone was used in its construction. The grandeur of the garden's establishment, the high-quality artistic embellishments in both the exterior and interior of the castle, and the building efforts in the village and surrounding landscape all attest to the estate's wealth, greatly influenced by hop cultivation and the hop trade.

From preserved artefacts, particularly vases, historical photographs, and postcards, we can assume that various parts of the staircases and walls were adorned with intricate sculptural decorations. The entire garden featured a thematic programme inspired by ancient mythology, as evidenced by the preserved statue of Neptune, the torso of Hercules battling the lion, and a sledge from the main axis of the western garden, alongside the statues of Samson and Delilah from the gable of the castle's main façade. An integral part of the garden's conceptual narrative was the iconographic decoration of the *sala terrena* (located on the ground floor of the castle), where the god Apollo is depicted surrounded by nine Muses, alongside the goddess Aphrodite and the god Ares.



THE GARDEN IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD (1950S AND 1960S)



Photographs from the 1950s, a period when the estate was managed by the Žatec Hop Research Institute, reveal rich ornamentation featuring approximately 50 decorative sculptures and vases. These adorned not only the garden staircase, but also the surrounding boundary walls. Unfortunately, only a few types of decorative sandstone vases have survived (in particular, around 10 pieces from the upper terrace). Remnants of terracotta sculptures from the upper parts of the staircase and a statue of Saint Florian from a niche in its upper section have also been preserved. Thanks to historical photographs and some of the remaining decoration, it will be possible in the future to “rehabilitate” the embellishments of the castle gardens and restore their original conceptual content. Interestingly, the garden consists of about 5 km of terrace walls and boundary walls, some of which are more than six metres tall. At the time of its creation in the mid-18th century, it was likely plastered, enhancing the view of the castle from a distance. The garden covers an area of three hectares, making it the largest preserved historical terraced garden in Bohemia.