

## FESTOONS – SMALL FLOWER FORMS IN LANDSCAPE GARDENS

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**Summary.** Festoon was a decorative motif in a park, in the form of a ribbon of climbing plants, (suspended between the crowns and trunks of trees), rambling plants (eg. *Rosa* L., *Fuchsia* L., *Heliotropium* L.) or stretched between small objects of landscape architecture. Festoons were spread on the ropes hooked to the stakes supporting rambling plants. To form festoons such plants as *Hedera helix* L., *Vitis* L., *Clematis* L., *Lonicera* L. and *Ipomoea* L. were used. Festoons were known in Antiquity, in Greek and Roman architecture. They were also used as a decorative motif in the Renaissance, Classicism, Empire and Art Nouveau. Festoons were used to surround eg. terraces, they were also placed along the sides of parterre carpets, on driveways in front of mansions and palaces, or along walking alleys. Festoons belonged to the elements frequently used in landscape parks.

**Key words:** festoon, small floral form, landscape park

### INTRODUCTION

The state of research on the historical gardens in Poland is still unsatisfactory. Park features such as flower forms, statues and gazebos, are among the least durable components of the composition. Difficulty of this research is connected with the destruction caused by two world wars and long-term lack of protection in the second half of the twentieth century [Bogdanowski 2000]. As a result, preserved to present days, historical gardens require constant specialised studies to enable understanding of the compositional principles used in them and highlighting their artistic and natural values [Mitkowska 2008].

Festoons and garlands are historical forms of plant decoration. Festoons were the picturesque hanging branches, flowers, or leave growing naturally or plaited eg. festoons of wild wine. However, „a garland” was a suspended at both ends the scroll of leaves or flowers, attached with ribbons or bows eg. garlands of flowers, garlands of roses or columns entwined with garlands of greenery

[Szymczak 1978]. Garland for festoon, constitutes a closed circle (often mistaken). Festoons were already used by ancient Greeks and Romans and placed above the door during holidays or hanging around the altar. They were also used as a decorative motif in the Renaissance, Classicism, Empire and Art Nouveau [Szolginia 1992]. They also belonged to the elements frequently used in landscape parks.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study procedure was performed on the basis of iconography – drawings, prints, paintings, photographs, archival photos and literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The following study is a kind of review. Particularly valuable items of literature used in the study are „Album für Teppichgärtnererei und Gruppenbepflanzung” by Karl Götze (1910), „Geschichte der Gartenkunst” Marie Luise Gotheim (1914) and „Gardens form and design” by Viscountess Wolseley (1919). The study concerns the area of Poland and Western Europe – Germany, France and England.

## RESULTS

Drawings and descriptions of garden compositions were posted by Izabela Czartoryska in a treatise on the art of gardening called „Different ideas of designing a garden” (1805). Duchess proposes that „while planting flowerbeds, it is a good idea to edge them in climbing plants, which well maintained entwine ornamental garlands and tie the trees up, hanging from their branches. Purple Caprifolium, snowy Klematydy and amazing festoons are attached to flowerbeds from one bush to another” [Czartoryska 1805]. „Caprifolium” is the former name of *Lonicera* and „Klematydy” are the *Clematis*.

Rambling plants, which were a significant element of the nineteenth-century gardens, covered old trees, gazebos, ruins, verandas, porches and fences. The trees were connected with ropes of rambling plants which created the scenic effects [Zachariasz 2002]. Jasieński [1897] writes that „climbing plants play an important role in decorating the garden, they are used in ornamenting the gazebos (...) columns, fences, trees and festoons” and lists the most commonly used: *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* L., *Aristolochia* L., *Lonicera*, *Menispermum canadense* L., *Hedera* and others.

Festoons were spread between rambling plants such as *Rosa*, *Fuchsia*, *Heliotropium*. To form festoons common *Hedera helix*, *Vitis*, *Clematis*, *Lonicera* and *Ipomoea* were used [Majdecki 1993]. *Lonicera* attracts mainly by its fragrance and blooms profusely throughout the summer. *Ipomoea* is an annual climbing plant blooming in varieties of colours ranging from white through pink, purple, purple violet, blue to purple.

Hetzschold [1855] writes that „climbing plants make an incredible effect when they entwine uncontrollably around the stem of a tree (...) or in irregular garlands move from one tree to another”. To make festoons woody vines resistant to frost, eg. *Aristolochia* L., *Akebia* L., *Clematis*, *Campsis* Lour., *Lonicera*, *Ampelopsis* Michaux., *Bryonia alba* L., *Menispermum canadense*, *Periploca gracea* L., *Hedera* and *Rosa glauca* L. were recommended. The annual plants used for festoons included yellow blooming *Thunbergia alata* Bojer ex Sims and *Lathyrus odoratus* L. Nineteenth-century literature also mentions gardening clematises that were spread on the wires among the lilac bushes and roses. The ivy garlands and festoons were created by tying together the trees or inanimate objects, such as poles and columns [Jankowski 1900]. Jankowski [1900] writes that festoons of *Parthenocissus quinquefolia* looked especially beautiful.

Festoons were among the elements most frequently used in landscape parks. The composition of naturalistic gardens was based largely on plant forms. In the present day, only the compositions of trees and rarely shrubs have survived, while flowers are the most sensitive and ephemeral garden elements. On the basis of iconographic analysis it can be concluded that the richest and the most sophisticated flower forms were positioned on an oval driveway in front of the residence. Festoons were placed on driveways in front of mansions and palaces (Fig. 1) or along walking alleys (Fig. 2). A particularly important role in iconographic studies on small flower forms plays a 16-volume book by Alexander Duncker with its 960 lithographs and text descriptions of the mansions and palaces dating from 1857 to 1883. This publication contains 371 illustrations of residences within the current Polish boundaries and most of all objects from the area of the Lower and Upper Silesia [Duncker 1857–1883].

In Poland, the first flower carpets were founded in the Royal Baths Park and in the Botanical Garden in Warsaw. Originally flowers were formulated in geometric shapes, and later in arabesques, ribbons, stars, letters, full names and coats of arms [Jankowski 1895]. Ideas for sophisticated patterns were taken from the motifs embroidered on the furniture fabric and drawings covering porcelain, glass and metal objects [Pudelska and Rojek 2011]. Flower carpets were made of broadleaved plants characterized by a low, dense growth and long blooming. The leaves of ornamental plants such as *Alternanthera* Forssk., *Antennaria* Gaertn., *Aubrieta* Adans., *Plectranthus* L'Her., *Echeveria* DC., *Festuca glauca* Vill., *Helichrysum* Mill., *Irezine* P.Browne, *Santolina* L., *Saxifraga* L., *Sedum* L., *Sempervivum* L., clover with maroon leaves and thyme were used in flower carpets. These plants were the main background of the carpet. *Ageratum* L., *Begonia ×tuberhybrida*, *Fuchsia*, *Pelargonium* L'Hér., *Plumbago* L. and *Veronica* L. were used for ornamental flower carpets, formed in arabesques and other figures. To the plants used as decoration of the composition and as the centre of the flower carpet belonged: *Abutilon* Mill., *Agave* L., *Aralia* L., *Cassia* L., *Datura* L., *Erythrina* L., *Musa* L., palms and dracaena, *Solanum* L., climbing roses, ornamental grasses and even corn [Jankowski 1900].



Fig. 1. Festoons hanging between the trees in the driveway of the mansion in Tolcz (formerly Tolz) [Duncker 1857–1883]



Fig. 2. Festoons hanging between trees along the avenue at the Lobkowitz Palace in Sagan (formerly Schloss Sagan) [Duncker 1857–1883]

Festoons were placed along the sides of parterre carpets. Flower carpets were organised in a rectangular, circular or the oval shape. Sometimes they were formed on the slope to bring out a flower pattern. Festoons are among the most common flower forms made together with flower carpets. Rambling plants forms – roses, heliotropes, fuchsias and other plants were supported with the stakes.

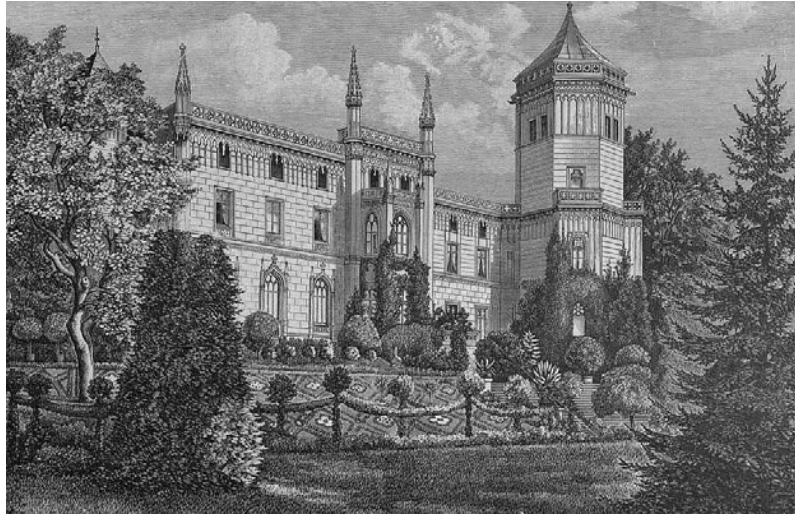


Fig. 3. Terraces in front of Donner castle in Neumühlen, Germany [Götze 1910]

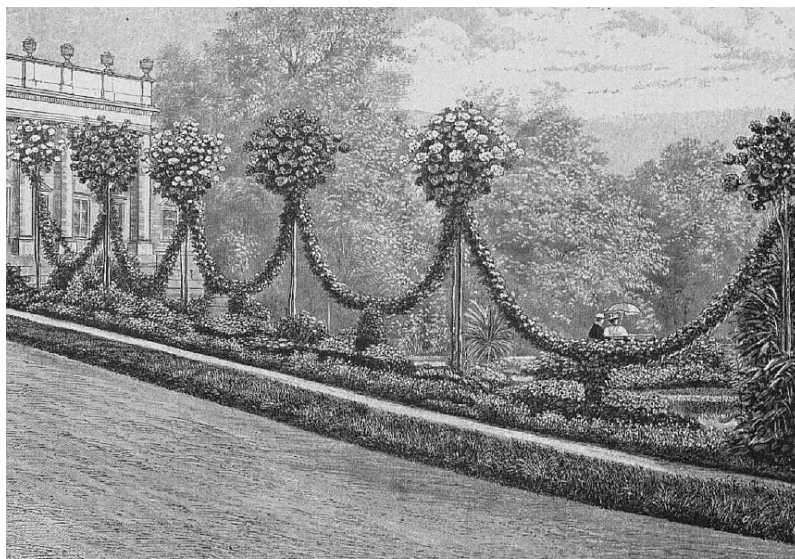


Fig. 4. Use of climbing geraniums in the park at Wilhelmshöhe castle, Germany [Götze 1910]

Stems were covered with smaller flowers and supporting poles were used for hanging festoons. Climbing plants were planted alternately with flowers on stakes, spread in both directions on the ropes and needed to be kept short cut eg. vines [Majdecki 1993]. Extremely valuable iconographic study was the position „Album für Teppichgärtnerei und Gruppenbepflanzung” from 1910 by Karl Götze. It contains excellent examples of flower carpets, many of which were edged in festoons. Festoons were made on the sides of carpets, whether oval or rectangular in shape, in flowerbeds decorating the slopes and the ribbons



of vines marked the other terraces (Fig. 3 and 4). Vines also decorated the middle ornaments of flowerbed carpets – pots, statues or fountains created complex central green, where vines mimic the cascades of water (Fig. 5).

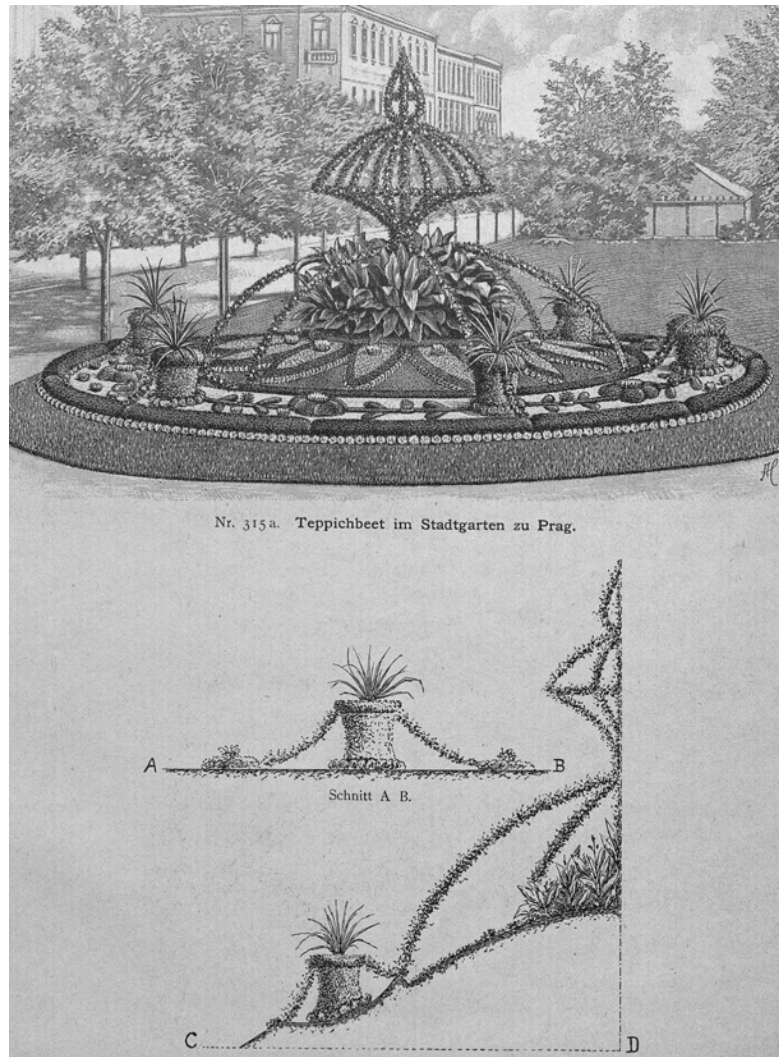


Fig. 5. Flower-carpet at the Garden City of Prague [Götze 1910]

Festoons were hung between small objects of landscape architecture, or were one-day garden ornament at Christmas [Jankowski 1900, Siewniak and Mitkowska 1998]. Decoration of a city with festoons is shown in a canvas „Piazza Navona in Rome” by Giovanni Paolo Pannini (1729 with a set of wooden poles in the main square, decorated with flower webs (Fig. 6). The French painter Paua Serusier 1898 (Fig. 7) also depicts Christmas decorations of webs of roses.



Fig. 6. Image „Piazza Navona in Rome” 1729, Giovanni Paolo Pannini (1691–1765)

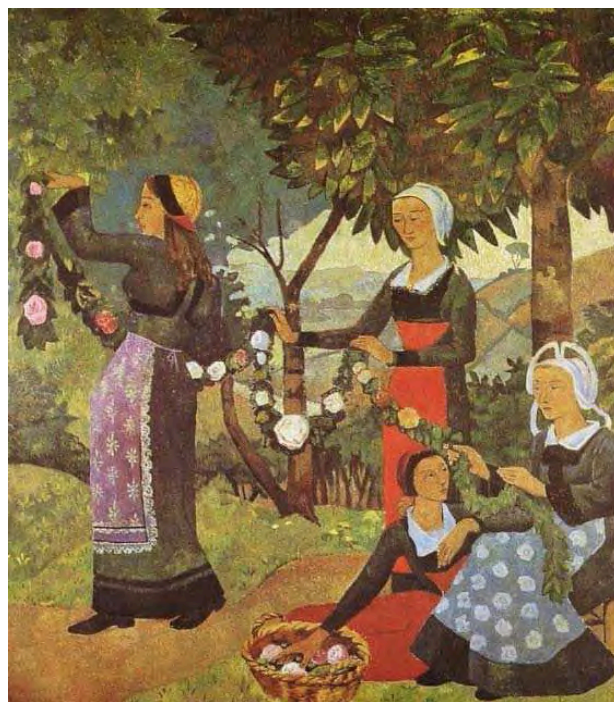


Fig. 7. Image „La Guirlande de roses” 1898, Paul Serusier (1863–1927)



Festoons of the ribbon of *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*, have been hanging between the trunks of plane trees in the Park of Luxembourg in front of the Medici Fountain since the early twentieth century to the present day (Fig. 8)



Fig. 8. Festoons stretched between the trunks of trees in the gardens of Luxembourg. The beginning of the twentieth century [Gothein 1914]



Photo 1. Festoons stretched between the trunks of plane trees in Luxembourg Gardens, Paris 2013 (Photo by M. Dudkiewicz)



Valuable position in the iconographic study was a book „Gardens form and design” by Viscountess Wolseley [1919]. Sometimes, even double festoons were hung between the apple trees or climbing rose shrubs (Fig. 9)

Wolseley [1919] also writes about the original garden ornaments of the vine (Fig. 10). According to him, the vines reaching 5–6 m of height can be used as a festoon planted next to chestnut tree, mulberry tree, willow and apple tree.

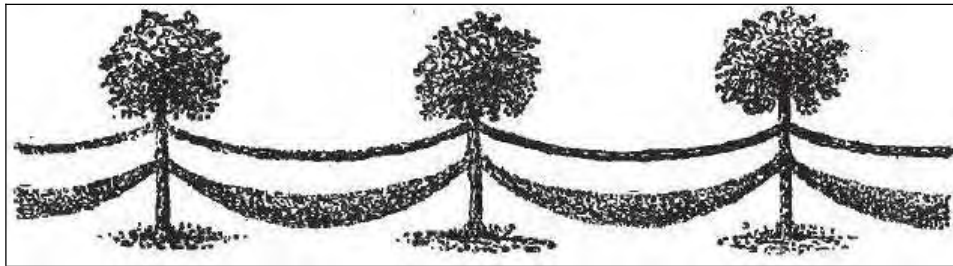


Fig. 9. Double ribbon festoons between the rose bushes or apple trees [Wolseley 1919]

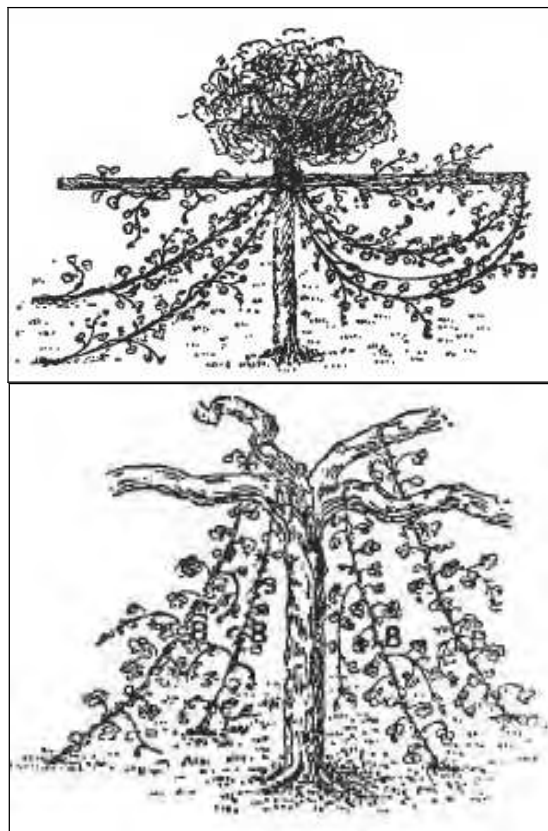


Fig. 10. Different ways of planting vines on trees [Wolseley 1919]

Some examples of interesting European festoon designs were selected. Great festoons of roses decorate the eighteenth-century Parisian Bagatelle Park, where they are spread in thick ropes stretched between wooden poles (Photo 2). Rose bushes in a similar way decorate private rose garden in the suburb town of Val-de-Marne, with the plants placed on the metal curves (Photo 3). However, today vine is spread on metal short poles and chains at the palace of Sans-Souci (Germany) as a low margin of the view terrace (Photos 4 and 5).



Photo 2. Festoons in Bagatelle Park, Paris 2013 (Photo by M. Dudkiewicz)



Photo 3. Festoons of roses in Val-de-Marne, 2013 (Photo by M. Dudkiewicz)



Photo 4 and 5. Vines at the palace of Sans-Souci (Germany), April 2011 and June 2012  
(Photo by M. Dudkiewicz)

### CONCLUSIONS

The above study covers only a few of the most interesting horticultural treaties and selected litographs depicting festoons as a small flower form in the gardens of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This initial query can be significantly increased by more items of literature in future. As original features of flower gardens of noble and aristocratic mansions are in residual state of preservation, the search in literature and iconography are an important complement to the studies in the history of the art of gardening.

Small flower forms are a necessary complement to the green zone of the historical object. Blooming plants offer the richness of color, smell and changing images of flower carpets during the whole season.

Festoons were stretched between rambling plants attached to stakes such as roses, fuchsias or heliotropes. Species of plants such as *Hedera*, *Vitis*, *Clematis*, *Lonicera*, *Ipomoea* and *Thunbergia* were used to the formation of festoons. Ribbons of plants highlighted the driveways at the main entrance to the residence or they were planted around the flower carpets. Complex structures of plants were also placed as an accent in the centre of a flowerbed, and then they were like the bells and whistles, in which festoons replaced jets of water.

Festoons in landscape parks should be more widely used because it is a beautiful, but forgotten solution in the formation of groups of plants in the compositions of gardens and parks. In modern gardens, festoon as a form of decoration is rarely used. However, when it is used, it is extremely picturesque, and it well allows for placement of flowers eg. climbing roses in rosaries. Ribbons of climbing plants can be used to highlight the important places in the garden or as a decoration of a wedding ceremony in an outdoor setting.



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## FESTONY – MAŁE FORMY KWIATOWE W OGRODACH KRAJOBRAZOWYCH

**Streszczenie.** Feston był to ozdobny motyw dekoracyjny w parku, w postaci wstęgi z roślin pnących zawieszanej pomiędzy koronami lub pniami drzew, roślinami piennymi (np. róże, fuksje, heliotropy) lub rozpiętej pomiędzy małymi obiektami architektury ogrodowej. Festony rozpinano na linkach zaczepionych do palików podtrzymujących formy pienne. Do formowania festonów używano takich roślin, jak: bluszcz pospolity, winorośl, powojnik, wiciokrzew lub wilec. Festony znane były w starożytności, w architekturze greckiej i rzymskiej. Stosowano je również jako motyw dekoracyjny w okresie renesansu, klasycyzmu, empire i secesji. Festonami otaczano np. tarasy widokowe, umieszczano je wzdłuż boków parterów kobiercowych, na podjazdach przed dworami i pałacami lub wzdłuż alei spacerowych. Należały do elementów szczególnie często stosowanych w parkach krajobrazowych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** feston, mała forma kwiatowa, park krajobrazowy