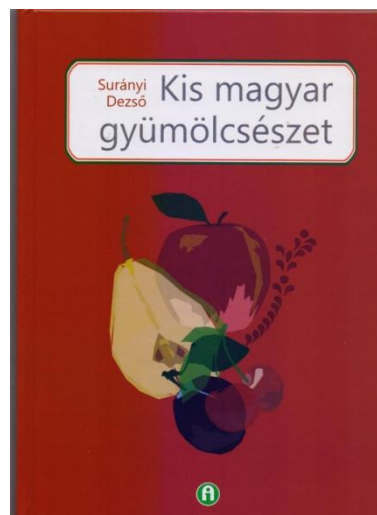


Book review

Little Hungarian Fruit Growing (Kis magyar gyümölcsészet)

edited by Dezső Surányi

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Historical fruit growing in Hungary

There is a part in the history of agriculture that deals with all the past issues of fruit growing, which also deals with the material and intellectual values of fruit species. Just as history is a science, so historical fruit-growing works in so many ways, so does frontier science...

Presumably, different issues are important to today's fruit growers than those dealing with the past and historicity of fruit growing. The distinction between historical fruit production and the history of fruit production is justified because of differences in aims and methods. However, examining and explaining certain issues can yield economically useful results.

The three series of articles published in 'Kertészet és Szőlészet' (Horticulture and Viticulture) (1984, 1985-1986, and 1988) have become part of this summary, even if the Forgotten Fruit Series (1984) or 'A szenvedelmes kertész rácsodálkozásai' (The Passionate Gardener's Wonders) (Magvető Kiadó, 1982) were tune-ups, problem-raisers, rather than exhaustive.

One of the greatest values of the past that should be protected in justified cases is the variety. Some of the old orchard varieties could be used in the reconstruction of production areas and districts if they were taken seriously. The effects of economic life, changes in taste, new demands, cultivation imperatives (not blindly adapted to the past, but based on the past) are the basis for future renewal.

Areas with historically long history must be protected, but not in their conservative sense. For example, in the Hungarian Great Plain, sand appreciated after grapefruit and fruit production, after the phylloxera plague. For centuries it has abandoned dominant sheep keeping and grazing livestock. The result is known: the image of the Danube-Tisza interchange changed and new plantings started to flourish in the vineyard and fruit-growing of the people.

Another example is the Danube Bend, where a rich berry landscape developed after the phylloxera was destroyed. Some of the gentle chestnuts (at least in Sopron, near Kőszeg) remained as intermediate trees of the former vine-growing, as did the walnut trees, plums and sour cherries that adorn the vineyards in the Great Hungarian Plain. Following the death of the Buda vineyard, peaches broke out, just as in the area of Gyöngyös before the spread of direct-growing grapes, but due

to the phylloxera plague. So our experience is that traditional production areas are easier to regenerate than any other area.

Fruit gathering is the most archaic part of our fruit production, which continues to this day in the form of forest by-products. From this developed the practice of leaving good trees (these legacy trees, and not one of them served as a border tree), but also their offspring or artificial reproductive material (seedlings, sets, hides) in grasslands, enclosed forests and pastures, pasture forests brought up.

The plums and walnut groves of 'Tiszahát', the chestnuts of Sopron, Baranya and Vas, as well as the myrobalanes of the Drava Valley, the 'Cigánymeggy' sour cherries of the Great Plain are the cultivation (or extinction?) method of practice. In the floodplain orchards, where the trees were cultivated for the sake of temporary water cover and repeated fertile sludge deposition, there was only work to be done to harvest and ripen at harvest. It is as if the reflexes of our centuries-old existence are still alive. The floodplain fruit groves were an important source of consumption as they increased the market's commodity mass and provided a livelihood for the inhabitants. The Danube orchards remained the longest; the regulation of the Tisza, and the course of the rest of our rivers (Dráva, Maros, Körös, Zagyva, Torna, Rába, Bodrog) were the last hours of the floodplain orchards.

Refugium are still present in other areas of the country, such as cemetery fruit trees, gardens, and head-valuable living trees in graves. Intercultivating method also represents the past. Its role is indisputable, and even its preservation is recommended for home garden and small farmer practices for climatic reasons. The idea of intermediate growing has come up again, caused by climate change. But the harsh periods of recent times can serve as a warning example of what can be found in most of the cordon vineyards in the Great Plain, which in fact is excellent for other varieties in the lakeside environment (Lake Balaton, Lake Neusiedl, Lake Bodon).

Our old fruit growing has left us with much to explore, and the sickle has long been used to shape vines and trees. The scissors are a later invention, now our exclusive tool, along with the ratchet (today's saw). In the oldest times, grape shoots were used to tie grape shoots, which were used in the 17th and 18th centuries. Starting in the 20th century, the corn chuh (hair)

was replaced. Raffia and espionage (bast) are artificial lace dressing materials, a new element in cultivation.

Ladders, picking or tilting sticks, and their associated shields all belong to the old toolbox. It is also a stage of development that the grape vineyard has been replaced by a smooth-backed row, which has been disadvantageous due to the demand for dew rooting. Due to the difficulty of manual labor, the cultivation of backwaters is disappearing even on the sand. Essential elements include the development of breeding methods. The breeding of „scion seedlings” and sprouting species, varieties and forms did not cause much trouble.

The tasks of selecting the soil-adapted rootstock, the root-noble coexistence, and the choice of inoculation methods were already known at the time of the use of floodplain, forest (wild) fruits and thistle fruit trees. From the Middle Ages, the grafting people pursued a lifestyle that was perhaps most akin to that of a pond, thus spreading horticulture and varieties among the serfs. The varieties, clones and forms were and continue to be decisive. Initially, only fruit trees were planted systematically on the less valuable soils of landowners' estates, in the castle gardens, in the cemeteries, and in the university orchards (pomology). The early germination of today's gene bank plantations was already in the Anjou era. The monks (Benedictines, Cistercians, Premontrians, Paulians and Franciscans) played an important role in this regard.

Both the relatively rapid population growth and the increase in knowledge have placed the emphasis on the nutritional values of the fruit. Wars have usually caused destruction, waste, and over-consumption on the winner's side. As a result, orchards were also being planted on ever larger areas. The fruits of the castle gardens from vegetables, herbs, and all other crops served to improve supply in the Anjou era, but also in the following centuries (cf. the border wars of Hungary).

In more peaceful times, many prominent representatives of the Hungarian nobility established serious horticulture. After the expulsion of the sample gardens, especially after the Turks, the varieties were the basis for plant material. The horticultural production of the Nádasdy family, Ilona Zrínyi, the Esterházy persons or Prince Mihály Apafi, as well as the farms of the

Archbishop of Esztergom and the estates of the Order were of no less importance.

The local, regional and international markets also helped to increase the variety knowledge, and the genetic material of botanical gardens also played a significant role in the 18th-19th centuries. Mass production of fruits increasingly demanded the development of processing. Dehydration was the most obvious and oldest method of preservation, compared to which the preparation of sweet (stored in honey) and salted salt was a more advanced method of preservation. Storage is a completely separate method, which seems to be the same as making a drought, and can even be considered as evidence of our Iranian relationship. All of these are components of today's cultivation and can also expand the potential range of current, slightly colorless home garden fruit production.

From the point of view of the production of commodity fruits, the knowledge of the (folk) place of production, as well as the reintroduction of certain varieties into public production, would also benefit the large-scale fruit production. Historical fruit growing knowledges, as part of agricultural history, can thus become a „means of production”.

Consistent with the series of articles already mentioned and with the major achievements of Hungarian cultural history, the volume seeks to illustrate the past and possible future of Hungarian fruit, not forgetting the work of such great ancestors as Rapaics Raymund. Of course, both scientific knowledge and research methods have evolved considerably since then, but this author has not been denied.

The „Kis magyar gyümölcsészet” (Little Hungarian Fruit Orchard) was published by Agroinform Publishing, and each chapter introduces new knowledge, helping to regain the rank of fruit orchard. Earlier ecological plantings did not prove to be appropriate through tenders, which threatened the preservation of our historic cultivated landscapes and the conservation of our “Hungaricum's” historical and landscape varieties. The numerous illustrations in the volume also served to illustrate the fruit as a cultural phenomenon. The book can be recommended to any gardening reader or curious owner because it is a help for Hungarian fruit growing and a tribute to the diligent gardeners of our past.