

# Fertőd-Eszterháza Palace Gardens

Die großen Gärten  
Park Network



„All people visiting the Princely buildings, stately gardens and diverse artefacts of this palace, laid out with superior taste and talent, are praising it with awe for its sublimity, justly calling it the Paradise or Versailles of Hungary.”

András Vályi: Description of Hungary. Vol. I. Buda, 1796, 620

## HISTORY

The golden age of the palace of the Esterházy family at the present-day Fertőd was during the time of Duke Miklós Esterházy I, who was also known as 'Nicholas the Magnificent'. He succeeded to the title and its estates in 1762 and died in 1790. In 1762, there was only a small country house that had been built by **Anton Erhard Martinelli** in 1720 and a Baroque garden that had been designed by **Anton Zinner**. The Duke replaced these with one of Central Europe's most significant residences. The new ensemble was constructed in several stages, and was mainly to the designs of **Nicolaus Jacoby**. It holds an important place in the history of architecture and garden design in Central Europe, but the thing that brought it world renown was the long residence of **Joseph Haydn**, as composer to the Esterházy court.

The park, which is made up of gardens, pleasure grounds and woods, is today some 500 acres (about 200 hectares) in extent. Its layout is determined by a 'goosefoot' of 3 vistas that radiate out from the central balcony of the palace. Cutting across the parterre and then the ancient woods (called '**Lés' Forest**'), they take the eye out into the countryside beyond. Zinner's elaborate parterre was simplified, in about 1775, into one of plain grass compartments decorated with statues, vases, fountains, orange trees and some **60,000 flowers**. At the southern end of the parterre, on either side of the central vista, two cascades were constructed in 1784-85. In the '**Lés' Forest**', which was incorporated into the Baroque layout by being



Duke Miklós Esterházy I  
"The Magnificent"



The palace around 1760



The palace from the parterre in 1780

The cascades in 1784



The Parterre in 1910

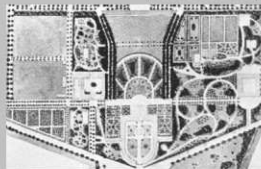


## REVITALISATION

Duchess Margit Esterházy



The palace and its surroundings  
from a 1910 map



The Palace around 1910



turned into formal groves (bosquets), there were two pairs of temples; one pair was dedicated to Apollo and Diana; the other to Fortune and Venus. There were also fountains, a rose-garden, a hermitage and the '**Bagatelle**' which took the form of a Chinese-style pavilion.

Following the death of Duke Miklós Esterházy I, in 1790, the ducal court left the palace and it was then abandoned for the space of a century. The famous opera house, a number of other buildings and a large part of the gardens disappeared. Then around 1900 Duke Miklós Esterházy IV and his Duchess Margit (born as Countess Cziráky) renovated the palace and moved back into it.

It was thanks to the Duchess that between 1902 and 1908, the gardens and grounds were reconstructed according to plans of **Anton Umlauf**, the Director of the Imperial Gardens at Schönbrunn, Vienna. The work on the ground included a new, fan-shaped formal parterre with thousands of flowers and yew-cones (now overgrown). There were also the formal Privy Gardens on both sides of the palace, and a naturalistic area called 'The English Garden', full of exotic trees. The alterations were directed by **Károly Hulesch**, the Chief Gardener to the Duke, who was also responsible for the design of the Northern Park and 'Paul's Farm'. (The latter garden housed domestic animals for the ducal children.) A spectacular rose garden with more than 10,000 roses, long pergolas and a 'Chinese' metal pavilion was also created for the duchess. The basic structure of the 18th Century Baroque layout (the 3 main radiating vistas of the 'goosefoot' and the avenues around the parterre) was kept. For the most part, this early 20th Century composition, despite the neglect of the last decades, remains more or less intact today.

Behind the rose garden and the stable-block, a large and renowned plant nursery was established.

It was famous for its achievements in the improvement of fruit during the early 20th century. Based on these traditions, the last ducal head gardener, **Aladár Porpáczy**, who himself was a specialist in fruit improvement, helped the whole ensemble to survive the post-war decades by establishing a gardening school and a state fruit improvement station in the palace and the grounds in 1946. Later on, in the 1950s, he lobbied for the foundation of the museum in the empty and dilapidated central part of the palace as well. Today the major part of the palace, the gardens, and the immediate grounds are managed and maintained by **MÁG** (The Hungarian National Agency for the Management of State-Owned Historic Properties) while the ornamental woods are kept by the local forestry office. MÁG has recently begun a programme of step-by-step conservation work and improvement of the gardens and grounds, based on careful research.

In '**Lés' Forest**, some typical wildlife survives. In Spring, the whole ground is covered with a carpet of colourful and scented bulbous flowers. Near the **Forester's House**, there is a large pen with some tame deer and wild boar. Two specimens of Weeping Sophora can be seen in the garden of '**Paul's Farm**'. These trees, with their bizarrely winding branches, were planted in the early 19th century. The '**English Garden**' retains much of its original form and also many of its rare botanical specimens, planted a century ago (1906). Amongst these are Ginkgos, and a large specimen of Californian redwood. There are also notable specimens of Calocedrus decurrens of similar age. In the Northern Park, behind the car park and surrounded by old planes, can be seen a large weeping beech.

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The Rose Garden around 1910

## WILDLIFE & NOTEABLE TREES

Tame deer in 'Lés' Forest'



Californian Redwood

