

Module 1: Parks & Gardens Definition and Historical Evolution

Definition:

A garden, in amenity horticulture, is defined as an outdoor planned space set aside for the purpose of recreation, aesthetics and sometimes education.

A park is defined as a publicly or privately owned area set aside for recreation, amusement, education or a combination of these.

History:

Garden establishment, either for aesthetics, leisure or production started from pre-historic times as evident from the holy books.

Conscious efforts at garden development in amenity horticulture started in the developed world as early as the 17th century. Documentation is found in the 'American Garden Design' by J.C. Loudon (1834). Explicit historical documentation of the evolution of amenity gardening is found in the 'History of landscape architecture in North America' by Frank Waugh. The 'Yellowstone Park' in America is the oldest park in the world and was designated a national park as far back as 1872

Formal elaborate garden establishment probably started earlier in Britain as the English gardens evolved after the Reformation when land owners began to create homestead parks and some natural landscapes were replaced with designed formal gardens. Italian garden styles were exemplified by the Tudors with the establishment of the historical 'Tudor Knot Garden' in the 20th century.

The French were involved in the early establishment of formal gardens with the establishment of a unique garden design known as *parterres* as early as the 16th century.

The Dutch developed on the French design in the 18th century with more formal designs involving more shrubs, trees and topiaries, giving a more natural appearance as trees were planted in clusters rather than singly on straight lines in a style championed by Kent and improved upon by his son-in-law, Lancelot Brown.

The Japanese had embraced garden design for a very long time with the evolution of special gardens like *Tsukiyama* or 'hill gardens', *Karesansui* or 'dry gardens', and the *Chaniwa* or 'tea gardens'.

The modern day formal park and garden design was advanced through the formation of the British Association of Garden Architects which later became the Institute of Landscape Architects in 1929.

In Africa, the formation of the African Botanic Gardens Network (ABGN) in Cape Town, South Africa in 1998 was probably the first attempt at developing the gardening concept in Africa. The network is not exactly focused on amenity gardening but it is a good background to the advancement of garden design for specific purpose in Africa.

The concept of parks and gardens in Nigeria is relatively new and it is still at a stage of awareness creation.