

European Garden Award 2022:

Laudatory Speech for Schwetzingen Palace Garden

Winner in the category "Management or development of a historic park or garden"

By: Ronald Clark

I am delighted that the Schwetzingen Palace Garden has won the European Garden Award 2022. And it is also one of my favorite gardens in Germany. A masterpiece of European garden art, created under Elector Karl Theodor from the Palatinate, an enlightened ruler and patron of science and art.

Schwetzingen reflects the rapidly changing garden fashion of the second half of the 18th century. With the special feature, that geometric and landscape style are laid out and preserved in parallel in one garden. It is impossible to explain the many beauties of the garden in a few minutes. You simply have to visit! Started as a late baroque garden around 1750, this area impresses with a circular parterre, half enclosed by side wings of the palace and arcades. Elaborate flower borders, planted according to historical models, water features and hedge zones, the absolute claim of the ruler still unfolds here.

The architect and garden artist Nicolas de Pigage began to expand the complex 10 years later and created a total work of art with numerous sculptures and impressive garden architecture. Three temples are dedicated to the roman gods Mercury, Minerva, and Apollo. According to contemporary critics, the lyre-playing Apollo in a monopteros has "a pathetic butt". Whether a bath house in the style of an Italian, the first and largest mosque in a German park, Roman aqueduct, Palladio bridge, orangery. Everywhere in the park you can discover the garden follies, which are skillfully integrated into the overall design.

One of my favorite scenes in this garden is a perspective showing the "End of the World".

It is amazing that parallel to Pigage, the garden artist Friedrich Ludwig von Sckell, who was trained in England at the expense of Elector Carl Theodor, created one of the first landscape gardens in Germany. Despite minor changes, the Schwetzingen Palace Garden has largely been preserved in its original state and inspires hundreds of thousands of guests from all over the world every year.

In addition to the excellent condition, the jury awarded the European Garden Prize for the decades of garden monument preservation work. As early as the 1980s, the planting of summer flowers based on historical models and the renewal of the central avenues in Schwetzingen were exemplary. The replanting of the elm quincunx and the bosquet using superimposed plans, excavations to determine the course of paths, analysis of stone settings and the use of poplars and spruces at the Temple of Mercury are just a few examples of the garden conservation services.

The lowering of the groundwater level due to the straightening of the Rhine River has been a concern for the garden administration for decades. Beech trees are particularly affected. In the restored nursery numerous beech trees from different provenances are planted to find more robust selections for the park. As a result, Schwetzingen also takes a leading position when it comes to historical gardens in climate change.

I am very pleased that not only does the European Garden Prize go to the Schwetzingen Palace Garden, but also that Dr. Hartmut Troll accepts the award. Dr. Troll is a specialist recognized beyond the borders of Germany for basic scientific research on garden conservation issues. For many years in Schwetzingen he has scientifically derived exemplary garden monument conservation measures.

Dear Hartmut, congratulations to the deserving winner of this year's European Garden Award in the category "Management or Development of a Historic Park or Garden", the Schwetzingen Palace Garden.