

Arboretums: Parks for Sustainability

The word “arboretum” is a Latin word describing an area where different types of trees, shrubs, or vines are planted. Typically these arboretums are created to either be used by the public for viewing leisure or for scientific study.

Though the word “arboretum” was coined in the mid-19th century, the creation of the first arboretums date far back to the ancient Egyptian pharaohs. Some of these rulers would import trees from distant lands such as the Sudan, Syria, or across the Mediterranean Sea to be planted in royal gardens. Even though the Egyptians imported a wide variety of trees and plants, they were still limited to what they trees that were small enough to relocate and were within their reach.

Thousands of years later, countries in Europe began creating their own arboretums by planting a variety of trees from places in Asia and the Middle East. Just like the Egyptians these tree gardens were intended for viewing, but instead of being limited to the royals they were open to the public. Many people were amazed by the bizarre and different looking trees that existed all around the world.

It wasn't until the late 19th century that arboretums became very common around cities and landmarks. With a better understanding of plant science, the arboretums gained another purpose. Not only were they viewed by the public but they also became places to study these unique plants.

During the late 20th century people began realizing that more and more forests were being lost each year because of humans. For the most part, people were cutting trees down much faster than they were replanting them. With such a threat to the trees that are so important to humans and animals alike, arboretums also became a place to preserve trees from human harm.

Today, many arboretums have been created for both public enjoyment and scientific study. If you have never been to one, they are worth a visit.

Interesting link to the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanical Garden

http://www.arboretum.org/index.php/explore/our_history/

What is an Arboretum?

<http://www.arboretum.psu.edu/faq/what.html>

Find an Arboretum near you

<http://find.mapmuse.com/interest/gardens>