

Flitwick botanic plant house, c.1838 (LL17/284)

If you are interested in researching the history of a Bedfordshire garden the Archive Service may be able to help. Maps and other documents held there can assist in the study of garden layout and planning, whilst bills, receipts, letters, illustrations and other documents may hint at the planting of a garden over time.

The amount of material we have for a particular garden will vary from nothing at all to a great deal. This may be an accident of survival or of deposit, either records no longer exist for the property or rather than having been deposited with Bedfordshire archive service they are still held by the owners of the garden, relatives/descendants of the creators of the garden or in archive collections elsewhere in the world. For example the records for the Jekyll garden at The Old House, Ickwell are held be at University of California, Berkerley. http://www.ced.berkeley.edu/cedarchives/profiles/jekyll/ickwell.htm

Where houses and gardens were occupied by tenants it is the tenants who would have kept records rather than the owners of the property and these records are less likely to survive.

Before coming to the Archives Service

- Walk the area if possible. Note bumps/depressions in lawns etc that might indicate previous features, such as flowerbeds and garden buildings that have been destroyed. Note also any mature planting and their species. The same planting patterns in different parts of an estate for example, may give a clue as to the dates the trees were put in. Note the rings on the stump of any felled mature tree, as that can help in dating. Note formal features of the design. Talk to anyone with special knowledge of the garden in the past. Try and map what you have found.
- Check any research that has been published.
- You may wish to use the Archive Service online catalogue to check references to the area you are interested in. Remember that not all our catalogues are currently available online; you are likely to find far more references when you visit us.
- Decide what you wish to tackle during your visit. Using archives, particularly things such as bills and correspondence, can take longer than you think so don't be too ambitious; if you manage to achieve more than one thing on your list think of it as bonus.

Once at the Archive Service

- Discuss your requirements with the searchroom staff. They will guide you through the indexes and catalogues.
- Most work is likely to start by using maps, we have separate card indexes for maps for each parish, some maps are reproduced as photographs in the self-service map tank in the searchroom.
- Use the card subject indexes and the on-line catalogue to check for other references.
- Please check the catalogue for more details before ordering documents from the stacks.
- Remember to make accurate notes of the reference numbers of any document you look at.
- If you wish to photograph any item please ask searchroom staff for permission as the copying of some documents is restricted by copyright or other intellectual property rights.

SOURCES

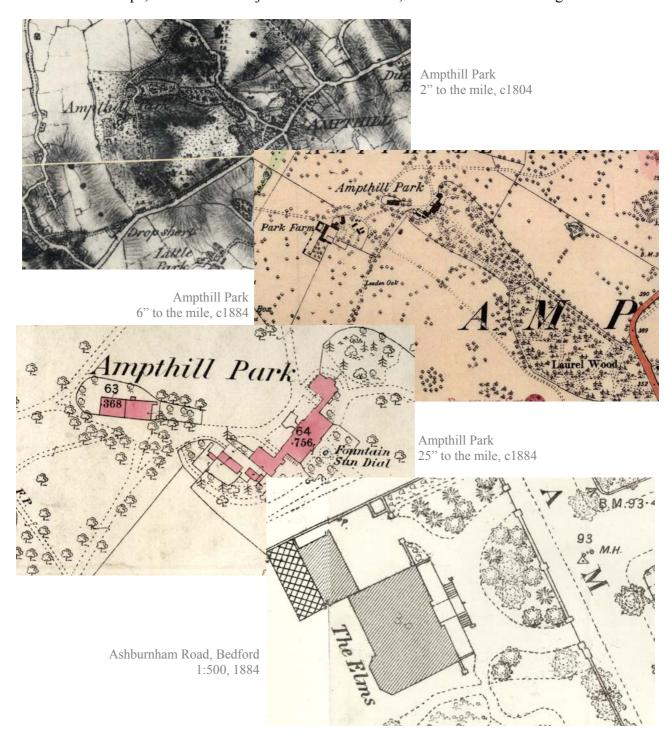
MAPS

As a general rule the larger the scale and the more detailed the map the better. Always bear in mind the reason why the map was created as this can influence the amount of detail that is shown.

Ordnance Survey Maps

BLARS holds:

- Smaller scale maps such as the 2" to the mile and the 6" to the mile.
- 25" to the mile OS maps from the 1880's-1970's. Those for the 1880s are the most accurate in relation to individual trees. Later maps give a more generalised depiction of woodland and omit the detail of paths etc within a property.
- 1:500 maps, available for major towns in the 1880s, are excellent for urban gardens



Earlier Printed Maps

John Speed, 1612, scale one inch to eight miles.



Marks settlements, hills and 13 parks. Four major landscapes, known to have had parks at this date, Bletsoe, Luton Hoo, Woburn and Wrest, are not marked.

William Gordon, 1736, scale one inch to the mile.

Gordon obtained sponsorship from local landowners. In return he made tiny drawings of local churches and the coats of arms and houses of his sponsors. Comparison with contemporary pictures shows that the depiction of the houses is reasonably accurate if crude (see photographic enlargements of these at Z50/143/180-260). For some of the houses the layout of the landscape is included in the picture of the house. These vary in quality with Luton Hoo and Ampthill being shown as generally wooded and surrounded by a pale fence. Parks that did not include a seat such as



Bletsoe, Dungee and Higham are depicted in a similar way. Melchbourne and Chicksands are shown as well wooded but not enclosed. Hinwick House is shown with a small wall in front of it. This feature appears in a contemporary painting of the house, (reproduced in Country Life for 22 September 1960 page 618 see CRTPodington3).

Much more information is given for a few of the larger estates: **Old Warden, Woburn Park.** The best plan is of **Wrest** with an accurate if tiny mapping of the Great Garden to the south of the old house. He included little drawings of Cain Hill House (demolished 1820s), The Pavilion and a Viewing House, called 'The Stand' on the east drive. A more accurate drawing of this is in the Bodleian Library (ref Gough Maps 1 Loc. 17 Top; copy at our reference CRT130Silsoe32.)

Thomas Jefferys, geographer to the King, 1765, scale two inches to the mile.



The degree of accuracy and the amount of information given surpasses anything that had appeared before on a county scale for Bedfordshire however, the depictions of country houses have become formalised. Although many roads, extent of settlements, names of hamlets, windmills and hatched contours are shown, the detail given on garden & park landscape is very patchy and there is nothing on town gardens.

Andrew Bryant, 1826, scale 1:41400 on four sheets.

Like Jefferys, he gives as much detail as possible, especially roads, names of lanes and lines of bridle ways. He does include a symbol for Nursery Grounds and Gardens. He does not neglect the sportsman, showing Fox Coverts, especially in Langford/Broom Arlesey/Stotfold and in the east and Shelton Furze [Gorse in the north]!

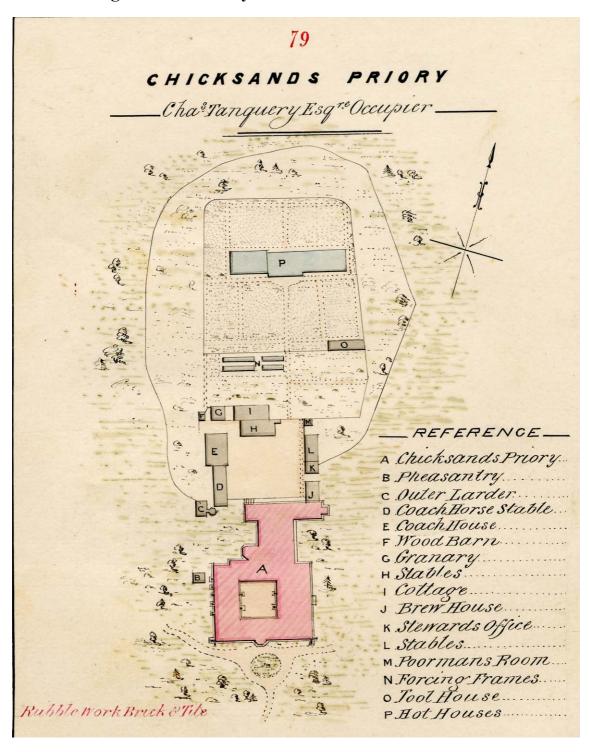
However the main use of Bryant's Map is for accurate mapping of the extent of woodland.



Estate Maps/Surveys

Like other maps these vary in the detail that they give. They may however give an indication of paths, ponds etc. Some surveys are more detailed but still only give a limited picture. Surveys may show what property is in hand or let to tenants.





Page 79 of the very beautiful survey of the estate of Chicksands (O163)

RATING VALUATIONS

1910 Domesday Rating Valuation

The only information that the **1910 Domesday valuation** (References DBV1-2) give is the owner, occupier and size. They are therefore not useful for garden history, although they can indicate whether the owner changed between 1910 and the 1925 Valuation. The more detailed survey books are held at The National Archives, Kew.

1925 Rating Valuation

Under the 1925 Rating Valuation Act J. R. Eve & Son of Bedford undertook a detailed survey for most Bedfordshire property for rating purposes. While mainly concentrating on houses, factories etc Eve's manuscript valuers books (DV1) can be useful to the garden historian.

The standard survey books have a reference 'C'. The information they give on gardens is of limited value. The comments being confined to *good*, *nice*, *small* & *no* garden. Very occasionally they give more. Of the house of J E Prince Evans, schoolmaster, in Sharnbrook the valuer wrote: *Recently converted* (1922) from range of Farm buildings-Spare buildings are used for poultry; cattle yard is now garden. Elsewhere he comments Extraordinary garden in old farmyard....good garden. Occasionally the 'C' books refer to garden buildings. Prince Evans, for example, had a 15' x 12' greenhouse for plants (DV1/C/39 page 125).

For more complex properties more detailed reports needed to be made. The 'R' books describe a whole miscellany of properties from Factory sites to Harpur Trust School Boarding Houses. They include country houses and significant detail on the landscape surrounding the house is often given. The surveys were mainly made in 1927.

To find the relevant book and page reference first look at the relevant map on which the numbers are marked (references begin DV2 see catalogue for details).

Milton Ernest Hall has a: potting shed, Vinery and Greenhouse (heated); lean to glasshouse; boiler house, another heated green house. There was an asphalt hard tennis court (cracked and bad) but there was a good grass court. There was a very fine avenue of limes, opposite south front of the house. The garden & grounds, the valuer considered, were small & poorish for the size of the house. The river runs at the side. In summing up his detailed survey of the house, as well as the garden, the valuer commented A well-built & well planned House, spoilt by being in poor grounds. (DV1/R49 pages 3-6)

However even the Report Books do not always give details on Country House gardens. There is no mention of the Repton landscape at **Moggerhanger Park**.

SUrS.	Potting shed.
	Greents heated 15 x10: 1501
	" " 142×10 = 145
	" 20 × 12 240
	5.35) ty. K
	Sumon Bela / le
	Beautifully laid out grounds
	Ten aced Lawns with
	With square cut Yew hedges.
	2 Tennis Cunts. (Gran)
House.	N. Elevation delightful.
	Ot boho tenaced garden
	and rives and Park like
	gramland.
	The state of the s

SALE CATALOGUES

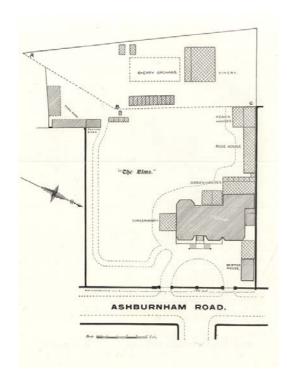
Sale Catalogues can give good detail on ground layout, garden buildings and sometimes are illustrated. They are a major source for country houses and more modest middle/upper class houses in both towns & villages.

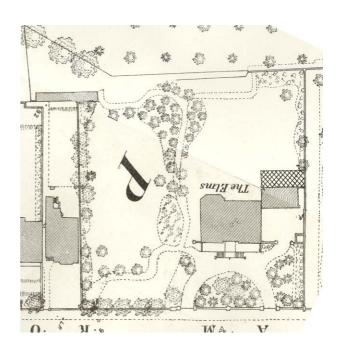
A good example of the use of these records for the garden historian is provided by the 1909-1910

Sale Catalogue of the Elms, No 30 Ashburnham Road, Bedford, (X67/321). On the front cover is a photograph of the entrance front with the garden in full flower with wisteria on the walls, mature roses screening the front door and an herbaceous border along the drive. On the inside is a detailed plan of the site showing a Vinery, a Cherry Orchard (both on land rented from Midland Railway), Peach Houses, Rose House, Greenhouses and Conservatory. The grounds totalled 32,000 square feet.

ASHBURNHAM BEDFORD Particulars, with Plan and Conditions of Sale EXCEPTIONALLY VALUABLE Freehold Residential Property Known as "The Elms," SURNHAM ROAD, BEDFORD, The Elms, DETACHED MOTOR HOUSE. AM ROAD, BEDFORD. stra Garden renued from the Midlan a Vinery, and Hot at TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY G. C. WALKER At the Swan Botel, Bedford ON THESDAY, OCTOBER 12th, CONQUEST & CLARE, Mill Street, Bedford

Bedford Station now occupies this site.





Left: plan from sale catalogue, 1909.

Above: the same property in 1884 as shown on the 1:500 scale Ordnance Survey map.

An earlier Sale Catalogue deals with the sale of The Abbey, Potter Street [Cardington Road], Bedford (WG2297), dated 28 April 1871. The main property had a large and well stocked fruit and vegetable garden, walled in with back entrance from Mill Lane. The Fruit Garden is in the occupation of a tenant, who is under notice to quit. The garden to the east is well wooded with a walk going round the perimeter.

The modern and well-built brick residence next door had a capital wall garden in the rear, communicating with the River Ouse and back entrance to the same.

The Toft is the centre of a small Estate in Sharnbrook, which is described in a Sale Catalogue of 6 July 1876 (X65/38), as *situate in rich, undulating pasture of 25 Acres*. *Timbered with fine Oak and other trees, and some very large and beautiful Hawthorns. At the lower end of the Park is a quick-running stream, and the whole estate is enclosed by the beautifully timbered estate adjoining it [Colworth]. There are good Pleasure and Kitchen Gardens., in the former some fine young Cedars*. The plan shows an avenue of trees leading from the house half way to the stream.

Kempston Grange and its park etc was sold in 1886 (X65/63). This is the site of the present Addison Park, Hillgrounds and the low-lying pasture including present football pitches between Hillgrounds and the River. The lawn and Pleasure Grounds *on the south east of the residence, with Conservatory approached from Drawing Room by Verandah, contain Fine Specimens of Cedars, Shrubs and ornamental trees of good growth; there is a Private Walk from Grounds through the Plantation of fine evergreens and shrubs leading to the entrance near Bedford, of nearly three-quarter's of a mile, enclosing the Estate from the high road.*

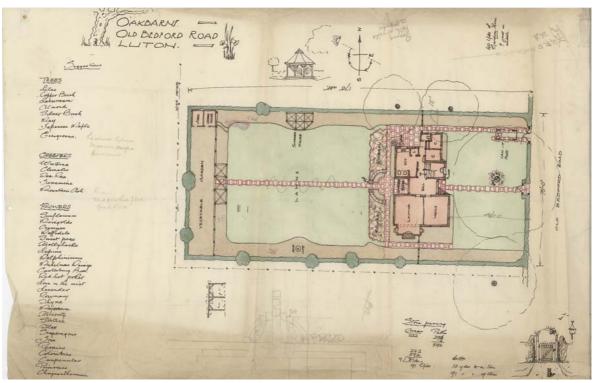
The Kitchen Gardens, which are walled-in, are very productive and well stocked with choice varieties of wall and other Fruit Trees. There is a Stove House heated with hot water, a 9 light Forcing Pit heated with hot water; a Vinery in the Frame Yard, Potting Shed, Tool House, pump with good water and a 4-light cold frame. It also had a Boat House, marked on the accompanying plan, which is *approached by a gravel path under a fine row of elms*. There is a good engraving of the house from the park to the south.

The Luton Hoo Sale Catalogue of 1847 (LHE43) shows the Park as it was after at the end of the Bute ownership and after Capability Brown's improvements. Near these buildings are the capital and extensive Gardens, inclosed and sub-divided by Lofty Walls, clothed with choice fruit trees of various kinds with Gardener's House, outer slips, Orchards etc; the Pleasure Grounds are of considerable extent, of great beauty, and finely disposed in Lawns and Parterres, with masses of shrubs, American beds and clumps and intersected and skirted by a great variety of walks and drives. The Park is in itself a Grand, Magnificent Domain, most superbly Timbered, and its surface boldly and pleasingly undulated, with a delightful breadth of the finest Pasture, sloping with East and South aspects towards the beautiful River, which flows for about a mile and a half through the Eastward or lower side of the Park, expanding in its course so as to appear, in some of the views like a splendid Lake; It comprises about 50 acres, and abounds with Trout and other fish and wild fowl in great variety.

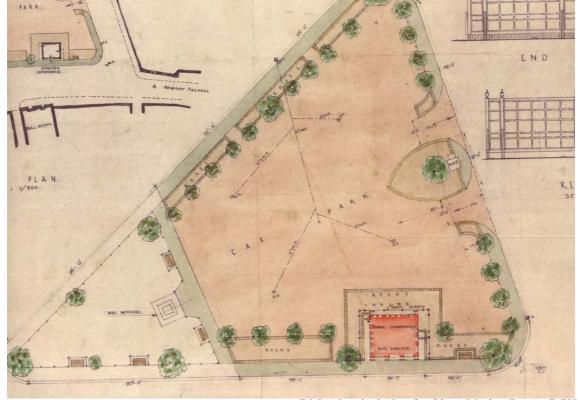
Were the Auctioneers, Daniel Smith and Son gilding the Lily a bit? In 1854 John Shaw Leigh, the new owner, started a legal action against the local Board for allowing sewage to be discharged into his lake. Within a very few years deposit has accumulated in the ornamental water to such an extent as will in 3 or 4 years time convert into dry land. In 1856 it was said that fish died 15 years ago i.e. well before the Butes sold. (LHE142-143). The lay out of the Park is shown on a detailed plan.

Researching Garden History at Bedfordshire & Luton Archives Service ARCHITECT'S DRAWINGS

Some architect's drawings may give an indication of existing trees and proposed hard landscaping and planting.



Manning & Steel collection Z558/6/110/35



Richardson's design for Olney Market Square RGH6/229

DRAWINGS, PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Apart from the illustrations of gardens on maps and plans you may be lucky enough to find drawings, paintings (probably watercolours or washes) or photographs.

Drawings, paintings and prints are likely to be $18^{th} - 20^{th}$ century. They may be professional works or amateur. Artistic licence and the skill of the artist may mean that these need to be taken with a pinch of salt.

above, Tingrith House

1882 [X254/88/239]



A visit to Wrest Park, c1905 [X291/77/26]

Wrest Park, by Peter Tillemans (1684-1734) [L33/129]

Photographs can be particularly useful for smaller gardens, especially by the time we enter the amateur and snapshot age at the turn of the 19th-20th century. Larger gardens may also appear as garden visiting and photography combine.

Although nearly all images will be in black and white the individual flowers can often be identified, even if the colours of the flowers cannot.





Girl with display of geraniums, sedums and ferns c 1905 [X291/77/67]

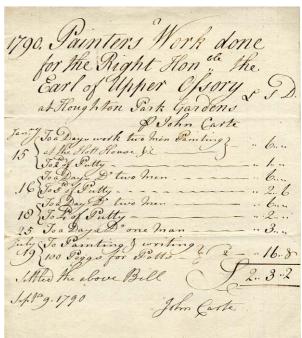
In the rose garden, Bromham House, 1903 [Z50/21/37]

ACCOUNTS

Accounts may hint at work done in the garden as well as the purchase of plants. There are particularly good examples of accounts for Wrest Park and in the Russell vouchers.



Bills for plants and work done in the gardens and Hot House of the Earl of Upper Ossory, Z355/23 and 58



LETTERS

Personal letters can give useful glimpses of garden projects, harvests etc, however they can be time consuming to read for the amount of information they give. Letters between owners and designers and suppliers can be more helpful but rarely survive.

HG12/4/1 Letter from Robert Adams to Higgins of Turvey Abbey giving details of grafts of apples that he would like Higgins to distribute to his neighbours for all of them to grow, 1814

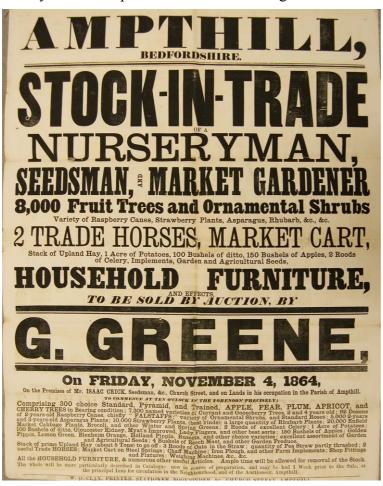
April 11 th 1814

April 11 th 1814

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PLANT SALE CATALOGUES & SEEDSMAN'S CATALOGUES

These can be useful for showing what plants were available and popular in the area and may tie in with plant labels found in the garden itself.



LOI	
39	Twelve Common Laurels, 5ft. to 6ft.
	Ditto
	Ditto
42	Two Irish Yews, 6ft. to 7ft.
	Ditto
	Ditto
45	Ditto
46	Twelve Variegated Hollies, 18in., and 6 Portugal
	Laurels, 2ft. to 3ft.
The same of the same of	Ditto
	Ditto
49	Six Rhododendrons and 6 Tree Box, 3ft. to 4ft.
124 6	Ditto
	Ditto
	Ditto
53	Two Thuja Gigantea, 5ft., & 3 Picea Nordmaniana,
	$2\frac{1}{2}$ ft.
54	Two Aucuba Japonica, 2ft., 2 Variegated Hollies,
	2½ft., and 2 Thuja Aurea
10000000	Ditto
	Ditto
57	Four Aucuba Japonica, 2 Retinospora Obtusa, 2ft.
=0	to 3ft., and 2 Ligustrum Japonica Ditto
	Ditto
61	Two Wellingtonea Gigantea, 2ft.
01	Five Cryptomeria Elegans, 2ft. to 3ft., and 5 Mahonia Japonica
69	Two Cupressus Lawsoniana Erecta, 2 Maiden Hair
02	Trees, and 2 Sweet Bays, 5ft. to 6ft.
63	Ditto
THE RESERVE	Ditto
1000 Sept.	Four Syringoe, 3 Spirea Argentea, and 3
30	Cotoneaster Microphylla
66	Six Laurestinus, 6 Aucaba Japonica, and 6 Box
00	Trees, 2ft. to 2½ft.
67	Ditto

TURNIP.	
Sow a little at intervals of two or three weeks from March until the end of July. A breadth she sown for winter use.	uld the
	Per o
Dobbie's Model White, fine for exhibition Extra Early Milan, First Class Certificate, Royal Horticultural Society. A remarkably early and distinct strap-leaved variety, coming into use before	3
any other sort	. 0
Early Snowball, extra fine, flesh sweet and tender. Early White Stone, good early	0
Raply Red Ton Stone	. 0
Early Six Weeks, green top, excellent for second crop	. 0
Harrison's Marble, a wonderfully nice shape and good colour	
Munich Purple Top, a very quick growing variety	
Orange Jelly, fine for late sowing	. 0
Bush, does not spread	e week
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SELECT LIST OF SEED POTATOES Prices vary during the Season.	packe

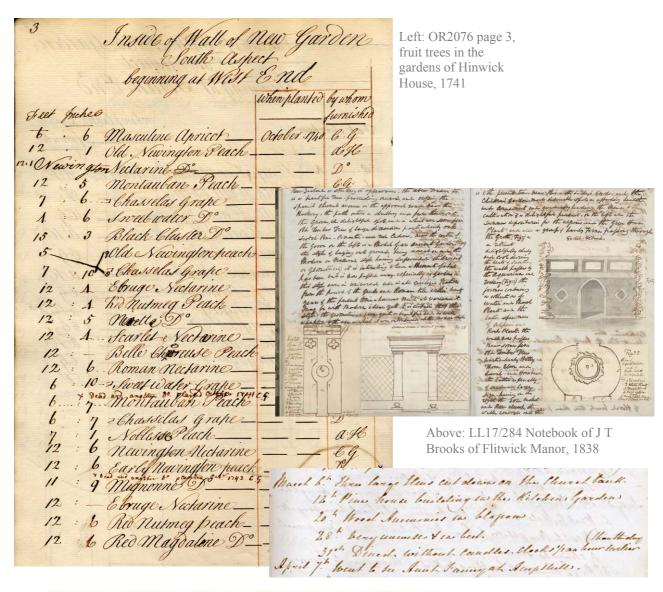
Above left: SF1/78/1 sale poster

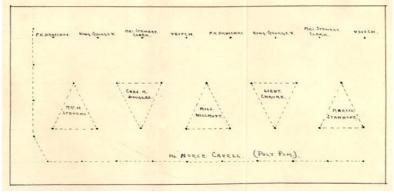
Above right: SF39/85/2 part of the catalogue for the sale of surplus nursery stock, Maulden, 1881

Left: Z840/2/2 Laxton's Seed catalogue, 1893

NOTES, NOTEBOOKS, DIARIES ETC

If you are very lucky notebooks, diaries, planting schemes, and other material will add to the picture.





Above: LL19/2 Diary of Mary Ann Brooks, 1840

Left: PM1/66/4 part of plan of rose beds at Hasells, 1927