

ZMATH 06186483

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“Il faut être un peu géometre”. Mathematical sciences in the art of gardening in the 17th and 18th century. (“Il faut être un peu géometre”. Die mathematischen Wissenschaften in der Gartenkunst des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts.)

Mitt. Dtsch. Math.-Ver. 21, No. 1, 23-31 (2013).

The present article appeared first in the catalogue [Wunder und Wissenschaft. Salomon de Caus und die Automatenkunst in Gärten um 1600. Düsseldorf: Grupello Verlag (2008), pp. 51–58]. It surveys the interactions between mathematics and the art of gardening in 1600–1740, when mathematics became the leading science of the day. The (occasional) interest of mathematicians in gardening at the time is connected to their general belief that nature can be described mathematically. This led to new fields of study like hydrodynamics, which was applied to fountain technology. Treatises in practical geometry made extensive use of examples from architecture and gardening. On the other hand, authors of treatises in gardening aimed to enhance their field to a science by employing mathematics and even requiring mathematics in the training of gardeners. Thus, mathematics played an important role in the process of professionalisation of gardening in the beginning of the 18th century. The author points out that in the course of the 18th century, when the use of mathematics for the description of nature was doubted among philosophers, mathematics also lost its attraction for the art of gardening.

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Classification: M90 A30

doi:10.1515/dmvm-2013-0012