



Universität
Basel

Research Project

Von Pflanzen und Menschen. Pflanzenwissen, Botanisieren und die Domestizierung der Pflanze um 1800. Nature in the House: Early Botany and Bourgeois Home Horticulture in the 18th and Early 19th Centuries

Project funded by own resources

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Principal Investigator(s) [Ruppel, Sophie](#) ;

Organisation / Research unit

Departement Geschichte

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Project Website <https://dg.philhist.unibas.ch/departement/personen/person-details/profil/person/ruppel/>

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Early botany has been examined within the history of science for many years; however the focus has always been on discoveries and outstanding scholars. Widely spread practices of knowledge within this field have rarely been taken into account yet. This project seeks to shed light on processes of knowledge circulation between households and broader communication networks of urban societies in the 18th and early 19th centuries, dealing with early botanical knowledge and practices inside and outside houses and households.

Bourgeois concepts and practices of plant use were noticeably different from those held by farmers or the nobility. While the rural population focused mainly on agricultural plant use, within court society the sophisticated integration of plants for purposes of representing status and power was foregrounded.

Bourgeois practices of plant use, however, involved the enthusiasm for the developing interest in natural sciences and the participation in groups that produced and circulated this knowledge. Via botany urban elites took part in the general knowledge production of the enlightenment.

On the one hand, practices like botanizing as a part of the widespread trend of collecting emerged and became popular. On the other hand the domestication of plants in the so-called *ärtneri* came up, taking nature into the household. In that respect plants do not only become objects of study, but also a part of daily life and daily routines within these houses and households. These practices foster the integration of plant-knowledge and plant-rearing into bourgeois sets of value, bourgeois life style and the way urban elites saw themselves.

While popular forms of knowledge practices declined when botany was shifted into science with its institutionalization in university teaching and scientific research in the mid-19th century, the within survived, but lost their function as status symbols. Whether this coincided with the polarization of gender roles in the 19th century, defining domestic horticulture as a genuine "field of activity, still has to be discussed.

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