

## Rural front gardens in Podlasie (Hajnówka county)

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**Abstract:** *Rural front gardens of Podlasie (Hajnówka county).* Studies of rural front gardens were carried out in 9 districts in Hajnówka county. Number of different garden types (rural, contemporary, neglected) was estimated. Detailed inventory of traditional front gardens was carried out. Strong predominance of traditional rural gardens over the contemporary ones was observed. The highest number of traditional gardens was observed in Białowieża and Narewka districts. In the front gardens of Hajnówka county ornamental plants were in predominance (94.3%). In the few cases (5.8%) they were accompanied by fruit plants, but no vegetables nor herbs were found. Ornamental perennials and annuals were the predominating groups in the gardens studied (34% and 26.8%, respectively). Coniferous trees and shrubs were popular only in the contemporary gardens.

*Key words:* ornamental plants, species composition, traditional garden.

### INTRODUCTION

Polish rural gardens originated from the peasant usable gardens that came into existence in the 13th century (Baranowski, 1964). They appeared out in Podlasie region in the 15th century (Bończak-Kucharczyk et al., 2000). For many years peasant gardens served as sources of usable plants: vegetables, grains, fruit trees, herbs. Ornamental plants were introduced into rural gardens at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th

century, owing to the development of gardens at magnate residences, manor houses and church properties. Ornamentals were often accompanied by herbs (Zątek, 2003). According to Jankowski (“Dzieje ogrodnictwa w Polsce” from 1938), at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the most popular ornamental plants in rural front gardens were annuals (*Calendula officinalis*, *Tagetes* sp., *Reseda odorata*, *Lathyrus odoratus*, *Matthiola incana annua*, *Antirrhinum majus*, *Papaver* sp.) and some biennials (*Alcea rosea*) (Zątek, 2003).

Podlasie is one of the few regions in Poland with well preserved traditional rural architecture and traditional colourful front gardens, which are an important part of local culture and tradition and attract many tourists from Poland as well as from abroad. To protect the cultural landscape of Podlasie villages with their traditional gardens, one has to know their plant composition in order to promote preservation of local horticultural traditions.

The aim of this study was to recognise plant composition and forms of plant application in rural front gardens in Hajnówka county, as well as to analyse the changes of their appearance observed in the last years.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

Studies were carried out in the years 2004 and 2005 in the territory of 9 districts of Hajnówka county (Hajnówka, Kleszczele, Białowieża, Narew, Narewka, Dubicze Cerkiewne, Hajnówka, Czyże, Czeremcha) (Fig. 1). Number of different garden types (traditional-rural, contemporary, neglected) was estimated. In the high vegetation season, ie. since the end of May till the middle of September, inventory of traditional front gardens (gardens with the domination of herbaceous plants) was carried out. In total 236 gardens were included into the study. Study included estimation of percentage of different plant groups (ornamental and fruit plants) and number of ornamental plant species, as

well as the selection of the most popular ornamental plant species grown in the rural gardens of 9 districts of Hajnówka county. Results (mean values, percentage) are presented in tables (Tables 1, 2, 3, 4).

In Hajnówka district observations were made in 50 front gardens in the following villages: Bielszczyzna, Borysówka, Dubiny, Łozice, Nowoberezowo, Orzeszkowo, Puciska and Hajnówka. In the territory of Narew and Czyże 69 gardens from Kutowa, Łosinka, Kamień, Kuraszewo, Podrzeczany, Narew and Czyże were studied. In Białowieża and Narewka districts inventory was carried out in 57 gardens located in Budy, Pogorzelce, Teremiski, Stare Lewkowo, Świnoroje, Białowieża and Narewka. Seventy gardens



FIGURE 1. Hajnówka county – study area

were studied in the area of the districts Kleszczele, Dubicze Cerkiewne and Czeremcha (Kośna, Toporki, Zaleszany, Jagodniki, Grabowiec, Kleszczele, Dubicze Cerkiewne and Czeremcha).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Garden types.** Three types of the front gardens were observed in Hajnówka county: **traditional rural gardens** – with various herbaceous species of ornamental plants and rich colour scheme, **contemporary gardens** – with cropped lawn surrounded by trees and shrubs, mostly coniferous, often with plant borders and/or rock garden, and **neglected gardens** – without any plant arrangements.

In the districts studied evident predominance of traditional rural gardens over the contemporary ones was observed (Table 1), whereas in the villages of the northern Mazowsze region only 26 gardens out of a few hundreds studied in 2003 had the traditional design and species composition (Kołodziejska-Degórska and Kukier-Wyrwicka, 2008). The highest number of traditional front gardens was found in the districts Białowieża and Narewka (85%). Also in the districts Narew and Czyże, as well as in Hajnówka rural gardens made over the half of all gardens. Only in Dubicze Cerkiewne, Kleszczele

and Czeremcha districts traditional rural gardens made less than 50% of all garden types, but also there they dominated over the contemporary ones (Table 1). The highest number of contemporary gardens was observed in Hajnówka district (25%) – close to the town, but also here rural gardens dominated (60%) (Table 1). Similar results were obtained for Zamojszczyzna, where the biggest changes in the rural gardens were observed in the districts located close to the towns (Onuch-Amborska, 2004), and for Łódź province (Olszewska-Kaczyńska and Korwin-Kochanowska, 2004).

In Hajnówka county one can still find many traditional wooden dwelling houses with characteristic decorative elements (traditionally carved gable terminations, top and bottom window frames, porches) accompanied by rural front gardens (Fig. 2). These gardens match very well traditional rural housing. They increase the attraction of the region for the tourists visiting it frequently. Unfortunately, in the last years unfavourable changes in the appearance of the villages in Hajnówka county can be observed. Old houses are very often covered with siding, new houses, although made of wood, are built in the style that is unfamiliar to the local one. Transformation of the dwelling houses is accompanied by the changes

TABLE 1. Percentage of different garden types in the Hajnówka county

Districts	Rural gardens	Contemporary gardens	Neglected gardens or lack of garden
Hajnówka	60%	25%	15%
Narew and Czyże	75%	10%	15%
Białowieża and Narewka	85%	5%	10%
Dubicze Cerkiewne, Kleszczele, Czeremcha	35%	15%	50%
<b>Hajnówka country</b>	<b>63.75%</b>	<b>13.75%</b>	<b>22.5%</b>



FIGURE 2. Wooden house with decorated window frames in Nowoberezowo (photo M. Latkowska)

occurring in the gardens, which often lose their traditional character and become clichéd layouts with a lawn and groups of coniferous trees and shrubs. Cultivation of herbaceous ornamental plants, inseparably connected to the landscape of Podlasie villages, is often completely abandoned. Changes in the garden appearance are connected with the generation change. In the villages studied cultivation is mainly a job of women, many of which are of advanced age. Young generation, having different interests and less time to take care of the gardens, follows the examples of the city gardens. Similar tendencies have been observed in the area of Mazowsze (Kaja, 2001; Olszewska-Kaczyńska and Korwin-Kochanowska, 2004; Kołodziejaska-Degórska and Kukier-Wyrwicka, 2008) and Podhale (Bach and Bałdysiak, 2008), where contemporary gardens replace the traditional ones. Changes in the garden appearance

usually result in application of a lawn surrounded by the ornamental trees and shrubs, independently of the local tradition (Olszewska-Kaczyńska and Korwin-Kochanowska, 2004; Onuch-Amborska, 2004; Kołodziejaska-Degórska and Kukier-Wyrwicka, 2008).

Increasing number of the contemporary gardens leads to the degradation of cultural landscape of the villages in Podlasie region. It is necessary to undertake several activities to protect and preserve traditional rural gardens in Hajnówka county. They influence the touristic attraction of this region, play an important role in the biodiversity protection, cultural and natural identity of Podlasie which is a part of „Zielone Płuca Polski” region, belonging to the Natura 2000 network.

**Species composition.** Hardy ornamental perennial plants were the dominating group in the gardens studied (34%)

(Table 2) and this tendency was evident in all districts. This group was characterized by the diversity of species. Hardy perennials were represented by 45 species in Hajnówka district, 37 in districts Białowieża and Narewka, 26 in districts Narew and Czyże, and 24 in districts Dubicze Cerkiewne, Kleszczele and Czeremcha (Table 3). The most popular garden perennials were: *Tulipa* sp., *Iris hybrida*, *Rudbeckia laciniata*, *Paeonia lactiflora*, *Phlox paniculata* and *Aster* sp. (Table 4). *Paeonia lactiflora*, *Iris hybrida* and *Phlox paniculata* were also often

found in the front gardens in Zamojszczyzna (Onuch-Amborska, 2004). Wide application of the hardy perennials can be explained by their longevity and relatively easy propagation that creates the possibility of neighbourly exchange. These plants have been grown in the rural gardens for many years. According to Traczyński (1995), *Aster* sp., *Rudbeckia* sp. and *Paeonia* sp. were often grown in the villages of Kieleckie region in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, whereas *Phlox* sp. and *Iris* sp. became popular there in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

TABLE 2. Percentage of different plant groups in the rural gardens in the Hajnówka county

Plant groups	Hajnówka	Narew and Czyże	Białowieża and Narewka	Dubicze Cerkiewne, Kleszczele, Czeremcha	Hajnówka county
<b>Ornamental plants</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>94.3</b>
Annual plants	28	27	28	24	<b>26.8</b>
Biennial plants	6	5	6	6	<b>5.8</b>
Tender perennials	6	9	6	7	<b>7</b>
Hardy perennials	34	35	33	34	<b>34</b>
Leafy trees, shrubs and climbers	15	14	19	14	<b>15.5</b>
Coniferous trees and shrubs	6	5	4	6	<b>5.3</b>
<b>Fruit plants</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5.8</b>

TABLE 3. Number of ornamental plant species in the rural gardens of the Hajnówka county

Districts	Hajnówka	Narew and Czyże	Białowieża and Narewka	Dubicze Cerk., Kleszczele, Czeremcha
<b>Ornamental plants</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>64</b>
Annual plants	36	20	31	17
Biennial plants	7	4	6	4
Tender perennials	7	7	6	5
Hardy perennials	45	26	37	24
Leafy trees, shrubs and climbers	19	11	21	10
Coniferous trees and shrubs	7	4	4	4

TABLE 4. The most popular ornamental plants species grown in the rural gardens of the Hajnówka county

Number	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
<b>Annual plants</b>	<i>Tagetes patula</i>	<i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i>	<i>Zinnia elegans</i>	<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>	<i>Calendula officinalis</i>
Garden number	98	91	42	38	35
<b>Biennial plants</b>	<i>Viola x wittrockiana</i>	<i>Alcea rosea</i>	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	<i>Dianthus barbatus</i>	<i>Campanula medium</i>
Garden number	92	56	51	26	9
<b>Tender perennials</b>	<i>Dahlia variabilis</i>	<i>Gladiolus hybridus</i>	<i>Pelargonium</i> sp.	<i>Petunia</i> sp.	<i>Begonia x tuberhybrida</i>
Garden number	101	64	17	15	14
<b>Hardy perennials</b>	<i>Tulipa</i> sp.	<i>Iris hybrida</i>	<i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i>	<i>Phlox paniculata</i>	<i>Paeonia lactiflora</i>
Garden number	118	86	79	67	71
<b>Leafy trees, shrubs and climbers</b>	<i>Rosa</i> sp.	<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>	<i>Clematis</i> sp.	<i>Philadelphus coronarius</i>	<i>Chaenomeles japonica</i>
Liczba ogrodów	46	31	20	19	18
<b>Coniferous trees and shrubs</b>	<i>Juniperus communis</i>	<i>Thuja occidentalis</i>	<i>Picea abies</i>	<i>Picea pungens</i>	<i>Abies koreana</i>
Garden number	21	20	19	5	4
<b>Fruit plants</b>	<i>Malus domestica</i>	<i>Ribes</i>	<i>Fragaria ananassa</i>	<i>Prunus cerasus</i>	<i>Pyrus communis</i>
Garden number	21	11	7	6	4

Second group of plants with regard to their popularity were annual ornamental plants (26.8%) (Table 2). They were represented by 36 species in district Hajnówka, 31 in districts Białowieża and Narewka, 20 in districts Narew and Czyże, and 17 in districts Dubicze Cerkiewne, Kleszczelze and Czeremcha (Table 3). The most common species of annuals were: *Tagetes patula*, *Cosmos bipinnatus*, *Zinnia elegans*, *Impatiens glandulifera* and *Calendula officinalis* (Table 4). Popularity of annual plants can result from the easiness and low costs of their propagation (seeds can be obtained from own garden), wealth of their flower colours and long flowering period. They were the most popular ornamental plants in rural front gardens at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of

the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with *Calendula officinalis* and *Tagetes* sp. among the others, as stated in "Dzieje ogrodnictwa w Polsce" from 1938 by Jankowski (Zątek, 2003). *Tagetes patula*, *Zinnia elegans* and *Calendula officinalis* were very often grown in the gardens of Krasnobród, Skierbieszów and Ulhówek districts in Zamojszczyzna (Onuch-Amborska, 2004).

Leafy trees, shrubs and climbers (15.5%) were more often grown in the gardens of Hajnówka county than coniferous trees and shrubs (5.3%) (Table 2). Flowering shrubs were in predominance: *Rosa* sp., *Syringa vulgaris*, *Philadelphus coronarius*, *Chaenomeles japonica*. Similarly, in the rural gardens of Zamojszczyzna *Syringa vulgaris* and *Rosa* sp. were ones of the most often grown shrubs (Onuch-

-Amborska, 2004). They were also very popular in the front gardens of Łowicz and Wieluń region (Olszewska-Kaczyńska and Korwin-Kochanowska, 2004). The most popular climber was *Clematis* sp. (Table 4). Coniferous plants were represented mainly by *Juniperus communis* and *Thuja occidentalis*, applied mostly as hedge plants. Other coniferous plants were the trees: *Picea abies*, *Picea pungens* and *Abies koreana*. Similar results were obtained for the 3 districts of Zamojszczyzna (Onuch-Amborska, 2004) and Łódź region (Olszewska-Kaczyńska and Korwin-Kochanowska, 2004). Ornamental shrubs, like *Syringa vulgaris*, *Philadelphus* sp., *Viburnum opulus*, became popular in the rural gardens at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Trees were planted at the edge of the garden or at the house. It was not popular to use coniferous trees in the rural gardens as they were thought to be forest not garden plants (Zątek, 2003).

The most often occurring in the gardens of Hajnówka county ornamental biennial plants were: *Viola x wittrockiana*, *Alcea rosea*, *Bellis perennis* and *Dianthus barbatus* (Table 4). *Alcea rosea* is inseparably connected with the landscape of Polish villages since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Zątek, 2003). Similarly as annual ornamental plants, biennials can be easily and cheaply propagated by the amateurs.

Tender perennials were grown in the garden of Hajnówka county on the beds and in the containers. The most popular species were: *Dahlia variabilis*, *Gladiolus hybridus*, *Pelargonium* sp., *Begonia tuberhybrida* and perennial cultivars of *Petunia* sp. (Table 4). *Dahlia variabilis*, *Gladiolus hybridus* and *Begonia*

*tuberhybrida* were usually used as bedding plants, whereas *Pelargonium* sp. and *Petunia* sp. – as pot plants grown in the garden or at the windowsills. *Dahlia variabilis* and *Gladiolus hybridus* are tender perennials popular also in the rural gardens of Kieleckie (Traczyński, 1995) and Zamojszczyzna (Onuch-Amborska, 2004). Perennial cultivars of *Petunia* sp. are new plants that became popular in the districts of Hajnówka county in the last few years.

Ornamental plants dominated in the front gardens of Hajnówka county (94.3%) (Table 2). In a few cases (5.8%) (Table 2) they were accompanied by fruit plants: *Malus domestica*, *Pyrus communis*, *Prunus cerasus*, *Ribes* sp., *Fragaria ananassa* (Table 4). *Vitis vinifera* was often applied as an ornamental plant grown at the house walls and porches. No vegetables nor herbs were grown in the gardens studied, although they were typical for the rural gardens in the past (Priwiezienczew and Sieniarska, 2005; Zątek, 2003). Nowadays vegetables and herbs are usually grown in the selected part of the back garden.

The highest number of ornamental plants (121) was observed in the front gardens of Hajnówka district (Table 3). This is the biggest and the best developed district with some garden shops. Numerous species of ornamental plants were also grown in Białowieża and Narewka districts (105). These districts are characterised by the very well organised tourist base and high number of farmhouses with traditional front gardens.

**Plant application.** Ornamental plants were grown in the front gardens of Hajnówka county in groups or on beds. They were placed between the fence and



FIGURE 3. Traditional rural front garden in Białowieża (photo M. Dzięciółowska)

house and also along the house wall (Fig. 3). Gardens had rich colour schemes and similarly as in Mazowsze region (Kołodziejaska-Degórska and Kukier-Wyrwicka, 2008) and in Kurpie (Zątek, 2003). Plants were also grown outside the fence in Hajnówka county. In the districts Narew and Czyże there was usually a lawn, but sometimes there were simple beds with the annual plants (*Tagetes patula*, *Tagetes tenuifolia*, *Cosmos bipinnatus*, among others) or perennials (usually *Solidago hybrida*, *Cerastium tomentosum*, *Leucanthemum maximum*) located outside the gardens. Annual plants were very often grown outside the fences in Białowieża and Narewka districts (usually it was *Kochia scoparia* and *Cosmos bipinnatus*). Ornamental plants were also grown in the containers: pots, baskets, small wooden tubs, wooden cart

wheels, wheelbarrows, tires, and wicker decorative elements.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. In the territory of Hajnówka county traditional rural front gardens with the plenty of various herbaceous ornamental plants are still in predominance.

2. Gardens studied in the 9 districts of Hajnówka county had several common features, that are characteristic for the region (species composition and application), but are also typical for the Polish traditional rural gardens in general.

3. Front gardens lost their usable character; ornamental plants are only sometimes accompanied by a few fruit plants.

4. Contemporary gardens are characterized by very limited species composition, totally strange to the local tradition.

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**Streszczenie:** *Wiejskie przedogródki na Podlasiu (powiat hajnowski).* Badania inwentaryzacyjne ogrodów wiejskich przeprowadzono na terenie 9 gmin powiatu hajnowskiego. Określono liczebność poszczególnych typów ogrodów (tradycyjnie-wiejskie, współczesne, zaniedbane), przeprowadzono szczegółową inwentaryzację tradycyjnych ogrodów frontowych, w których dominowały rośliny zielne. Odnotowano zdecydowaną przewagę tradycyjnych wiejskich ogrodów nad współczesnymi założeniami ogrodowymi. Najliczniej tradycyjne przedogródki występowały w gminach Białowieża i Narewka. W przedogródkach powiatu hajnowskiego dominowały rośliny ozdobne (94,3%). W nielicznych przypadkach (5,8%) towarzyszyły im rośliny sadownicze. Nie odnotowano obecności roślin warzywnych ani ziół. W badanych ogrodach dominującą grupę stanowiły zimujące w gruncie byliny ozdobne (34%). Drugą pod względem częstotliwości występowania grupą okazały się rośliny jednoroczne (26,8%). W ogrodach o charakterze współczesnym występowały głównie drzewa i krzewy iglaste, obce lokalnej tradycji.

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