

Specifics of the Search for Traditional Varieties in South Bohemia

1. History of the area in relation to the settlement of the agricultural landscape

From the Middle Ages, there were large numbers of freeholders independent of the ruling nobility in the territory of South Bohemia, the so-called, free people (persons with personal and property rights and freedoms subordinate directly to the Bohemian King). At the same time, large dominions of old noble families also existed here.

Freeholder status was characterised by strict upholding of traditions, which had been handed down for many generations, but also by creativity and enterprise. In difficult times, they were capable of finding solutions which would help them to survive. From the period of famine at the beginning of the 1870s, tradition holds that the freeholders were the first to start growing potatoes in the Tábor region and during the Napoleonic wars, they started large-scale trading in geese.

As a group of the freeholder population, they were oppressed and suppressed by the nobility who owned the surrounding land, but they never lost their character and identity over the centuries and were always capable of defending their status even if they were begrudged.

Thanks to this, many trees of old varieties have survived on their ancestral land, especially in rural gardens.

2. Investigation in ancestral gardens

Often, varieties are maintained for many generations here in gardens, and it is possible to find real jewels, especially in the table varieties category.

Some owners have varieties in their gardens that have been precisely defined ever since they were planted and are taking good care of these trees.

A further group of owners knows which varieties are in their orchards, but many a time they are incapable of identifying the trees and tend to confuse them.

A further group of historical owners does not know the content of their orchards, but in spite of this, they maintain the old trees for several generations. Many a time, they have given the varieties their own names based on their close relationship to the trees in the garden or the history of their acquisition, for example, Ukradené jablko (Stolen apple - Šálové), Zelené (Boikovo obrovské), Eman (Gascoigneho šarlatové)

In many estates, their original owners have maintained their ownership and continue to keep the chronicles of their families.



České růžové jablko

Over the last two years, the following have been found in the ancestral gardens:

Summer apples: České růžové, Hedvábné červené letní, Opat Bruno.

Autumn apples: Dr. Karel Kramář, Malinové Vrchlického, Cellini.

Winter apples: Daňkovo, Oberdieckovo, Cornwallské hřebíčkové.

Pears: Světélka, Šídlenka.

Plums: Mirabelka Flotowa.

Sour cherries: Dobřinovská sladkovišeň.

2. Estates, the nobility, and parish gardens

These gardens often rank among the oldest local plantations, which include common varieties that were modern at the time of planting. The surviving records are often incomplete, and most of the plantations are already only fractions of their initial size thanks to interventions in the era when their ownership changed (sale in the period prior to 1948 when the owner was a private individual and after nationalisation in 1948). They mostly contain a rich assortment of varieties, which include both economic and table varieties that are usually not planted in the open landscape.

Information can be obtained from witnesses in the case of the period after 1948, and for gardens of the aristocracy, especially from the written records.



Syreček úřetický

Varieties, which have been found on estates and in noble and parish gardens in the South Bohemian Region:

Winter apples: Košíkové, Woltmannův řehtáč, Syreček úřetický.

Pears: Kozačka šuttgardská

Cherries: Pivovka, Srdcovka přeúrodná, Ladeho pozdní.

3. General plantations and alleys

The condition of municipal alleys and orchards is highly variegated, some are well-maintained and renewed continuously, while some of them have only received attention in recent years.

The most valuable are plantations established before 1948.

The assortment of varieties, especially the apple assortment, is often reduced only to economic varieties typical at the time of planting.

The number of valuable trees is quickly declining due to the felling of old tree alleys, regardless of their importance in the landscape and historical significance.



Kandil Kitajka

Varieties found in municipal orchards and alleys:

Winter apples: Kandil kitajka.

Pears: Jakubka česká, Ananas du Perche.

Plums: Zelená renklóda, Černošická švestka.

Sour cherries: Královna Hortensie, Vackova višeň

Summary of Content

The search for historical varieties in the South Bohemia Region has its specifics. Many generations of freeholders lived in the territory, the ancestors of mostly German settlers who probably settled in the region in the era of Přemysl Otakar II. In their gardens, just like in the gardens of aristocratic settlements, estates, public orchards and alleys, researchers have found varieties from the first half of the 20th century and older, some originating in Bohemia, but also varieties historically corroborated and grown throughout Europe. An integral part of their contribution is also their enumeration.

The author about himself

Upon completion of my studies I worked as a breeder of field crops. Traditional fruit growing and gardening were thus only my leisure time hobbies. Since 2014, I have been working on the creation of my own fruit nursery producing traditional varieties. I am currently providing services in the area of pruning fruit trees and shrubs, and I am also involved in saving and identifying old fruit varieties and resolving problems of garden pests.

