

# Management of orangery plants in Historic Gardens



**Webinar:** 7th of November 2023

**Practical Workshop:** 10th – 11th of September 2024,  
at Het Loo in The Netherlands

Supported by



**Travel grant recipient: Rehana Jawadwala (Merlin 850)**

**for the practical workshop at Het Loo**

**Acknowledgements:**

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My personal thanks to Kate Nicoll, coordinator of this programme, regional manager for my area for WFGA and now my mentor and friend for encouraging me across my entire training programme and sharing her wide knowledge and passion for heritage gardening.

Last but certainly not least, a big thank you to Merlin Trust for allowing me the opportunity to attend this workshop. Without its financial support I would not have been able to afford to go on this eye-opening trip.

**Purpose:**

- To deepen my understanding and skills in selecting, growing and managing citrus plants in UK domestic gardens.
- To make relevant contacts regarding specialist citrus knowledge bearers to whom I can call upon for further guidance.
- To meet like-minded people and learn from in the broader space of historical garden conservation such as historians, landscape architects and growers of citrus in the European countries.

## **Narrative:**

The popularity of Orangeries gained momentum in Britain towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century to house citrus and other exotic plants. Even to this day their historical significance, perception of a complex management of both plants and building remain an attractive challenge to the broader public and to me in particular.

I have developed a great interest in fruit cultivation during my training as a gardener with the Working For Gardener's Association (WFGA) within their WRAGs traineeship. As part of my skills acquisition within this area, I attended the online webinar and then the practical, on-site workshop by European Garden Heritage Network (EGHN), Schloss Dyck Foundation and Paleis Het Loo.

This two-day workshop was created to share knowledge of the care and maintenance of the plant stocks in orangeries, the preservation and development of the orangery buildings and related outdoor spaces and the practical horticultural expertise required.

The itinerary was as follows -

### **Day 1 Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> of September 2024**

#### **Het Loo in Apeldoorn (The Netherlands), Koninklijk Park 16.**

We started with various presentations on the history of Het Loo and its role in the conservation of historic citrus plant collection and then moved to more horticultural talks on soil mixtures, feeding, biological disease control, identification.

Speakers included - Renske Ek (Het Loo), Willem Zieleman (Het Loo), Stefan Vidts (Kasteel Freÿr and own citrus collection), Rick Mensink (Kasteel Twickel), Thies Koggel (Kasteel Rosendael).



Willem and Renske from the Het Loo team gave an overview of the significance of the citrus collection at Het Loo and its connection with William of Orange and Mary Stuart II. I was

impressed with the conservation work required to maintain citrus plants as old as 330 years.



Along with Het Loo, Twickel and Rosendael Castles are custodians of the genus citrus within the Dutch National plant collections. This conservation work brings great responsibilities to the gardeners of these estates. Their skills and knowledge regarding

all aspects of maintaining the collections were shared liberally throughout the workshop.



I particularly enjoyed the talk by Stefan Vidts from Belgium who also oversees the citrus collection at Frey Castle.

He had brought in samples of soil mixtures to compare garden soil with a more aerated mixture

consisting of pine bark and beech leaf mould in equal proportion to the soil. This created a loose and well-draining media suitable for most citrus plants. Stefan had also brought samples of citrus grown on *C. trifoliata* and *C. aurantium* rootstock to show the difference in nutrient uptake in the two very similarly grafted plants.



He explained that despite most commercial grafts are on *C. Trifoliata*, it does seem to have problems with some nutrient uptake by the scion and potentially he would treat his *C. Trifoliata* grafted plants with a weak dose of foliar liquid iron to get them to be able to photosynthesise more chlorophyll and thus improve their general health and nutrient uptake from the soil.



On the other hand, the more compatible *C. Aurantium* is susceptible to Citrus Tristeza Virus (CTV) so both these rootstock have to be managed for the scion to be able to thrive.

Above all there are also differences in yield depending on the rootstock used.

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After lunch we walked through the formal gardens to the Floris Greenhouse for some practical work on grafting.



Here as we walked through the gardens, we were able to see many citrus plants in their summer positions outdoors which was very informative. In the queen's garden there were some lovely specimens.



Our grafting workshop was very good in that we all had plenty of material (pear branches!) to make mistakes and many of the expert grafters (some part of the delegate) gave each other their own techniques and tricks. I found that the more I listened to different perspectives the more I gained confidence to play with the techniques and came away thinking it was an art and science in equal measure.



One of my attempts!





Once grafted, the graft is covered in a plastic bag surrounding a wire “balloon” to protect it.



We also saw some grafted specimens that were great to study.



After the sessions we were given a tour of the palace. Here I enjoyed the historical context of our workshop and learnt about the citrus collection as a part of the whole story of William of Orange and his English wife, Mary Stuart.

As you see the queen's garden from the inside you get a perspective on the positioning of the citrus plants within the gardens.



We saw some great artefacts and learnt that Mary had a great interest and knowledge on plants and was a good botanist, which was evident from some of her books and her love for cut flowers! She is purported to have started the trend of cut flowers for inside the house. We were treated to some stunning displays.



**Day 2 Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September:**

**Study trip to see different forms of orangeries and glasshouses at Huis**

**Landfort, Megchelen, NL.**



**On arrival**

We were given an Introduction by René Dessing, Director of Stichting Erfgoed

Landfort and Jan de Boer



After which we made a tour of the vegetable garden, park and their greenhouses



After lunch we toured the manor house with its orangery



## Conclusion:



I thoroughly enjoyed my trip and made great friends. Everyone was easy to speak with and were keen to share their expertise and knowledge. The breath of expertise from horticultural historians

who knew about the many historical citrus cultivars of the palaces of Europe was enlightening. I also enjoyed speaking with the art historians who filled in the contextual gaps in my understanding of the cultural, political and architectural importance of citrus plants in historic gardens. I now have a deeper relationship with the symbolism of cultivating and maintaining historic citrus plant collections. I was impressed by the breath of the workshop.



Some of the sour oranges were very interesting to taste. They introduced my palette to a new sensation, quite unlike the one I had tried on a Seville pavement!

From a practical perspective, I have learnt how to prepare growing media for potted citrus plants, grafting principles, rootstock considerations and a clearer understanding of the environmental considerations that will need attention when growing citrus plants in the UK.



I am keen to develop my career in designing, maintaining, restoring and promoting fruit production areas in domestic garden settings. This workshop has increased my confidence to include citrus plants as part of a domestic garden in the UK.