

FLOWERS IN THE BULGARIAN MONASTERIES

INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR,
TRADITIONS AND FUTURE

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Preface:

The Bulgarian Monasteries are deeply rooted in our past as a part of the most dramatic and hard periods in our history – recognition of the Christianity, keeping of Bulgarian self-awareness and independence. They took and are still are taking a significant part in confirmation not only of the religion, but of the national script and culture as well. Throughout the ages they imposed themselves as independent units – as a *closed* system, kept down under strict rules of living and communicating and at the same time as an *open* system, that links it own inhabitants and visitors with different status and background. In a global view the Monasteries accomplish the relations with a similar institutions in the whole Christian World.

It's beyond doubt that the Mastery Complexes in Bulgaria have become a real treasury of iconographies, relics, genuine chef d'oeuvre of wood carving, mural paintings and literary heritage. At the same time they have preserved a masterpieces of garden and park art, century-old representatives of native and foreign tree and shrub flora.

Rila Monasrety – Rila Mountain



Sokolski Monastery - Gabrovo



Bachkovo Monastery – near Asenovgrad



Discussed in the context of the sustainable development the Monasteries are very important unit, which preservation and function as a whole system is too important. They are human being creation, placed in natural ambient, with different degree of access. They offer tranquility and at the same time are hot spots for visitors, pilgrims and tourists at a high degree of utilization. All this requires a general concept about their planning part of which are the flowers – their use in aesthetic and applied context.

As a complete landscape – architectural complex the Bulgarian monasteries can be overviewed in the following three aspects:

Interior

Exterior

Adjusted areas.

Interior

- **History**

The presence of flowers in the Temple interior is inevitable, no matter of time and place – in the Heathendom, Christian churches, Mosques. In the pagan offerings the flowers served as Gods symbol and their fragrance-as goddess flavor. Images of many pagan Gods are connected with flowers. The word 'bouquet' has French origin, but in the Ancient Egypt 'bunch of flowers' and 'life' were noted in one and just the same way. The symbols of flower are associated with The Creation: the Lotus flower (*Nelumbo*) emerges from the primary water.

- In the Christian practice the semantic and symbolic meaning of flowers remains. Some way of offerings as for example the crown (wreath) also exist, but with new meaning: as an attribute of memory and glory. The thyme, basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), common myrtle (*Myrtus communis*) are widely spread.

Interior

- The bringing of Flowers in the Christian temples is connected with certain habits and interpreting of the Christian texts.
- The way of flower's offering in the Temples in a certain cases has become an art (incense flowers, aromatherapy, civil type of arrangements, Ikebana in the East).

Basic points

- The Orthodox Church is with lavish décor and elaborated patterns. Flowers are used not only for decorate on but as an expression of believing and pray of God, as a feeling of joy and gratitude.

The offering and arrangement of flowers aims to preserve the national tradition, accumulated throughout the centuries and transmit the endless “floral” customs off the Bulgarians to the next generations.

- Committing of the national and religious habits with certain trends in flower utilization is reasonable and proper method of children education. In the very process of the flower arrangement are attracted volunteers that share the holyday atmosphere and life style in the Monasteries.

Interior

Rules:

1. 1. First rule imposes not to use poisonous and prickly flowers. If roses are used, they should be thoroughly cleaned.
1. 2. Flowers, picked up from the Church shouldn't be thrown away. They are supposed to be dried, stored, placed on a certain height and finally burned.
2. 3. Flowers are marking the most important elements of the Churches and the Monasteries – the gate (as an invitation), the icons of the altar, fireplaces and relics feretory.
3. 4. *Flower can be used as follows:*
In it's natural appearance – fresh flowers – as cut flowers; pot-plant as rooted plant for bringing and breeding at home.
 - As arrangements of artificial plants – applied only in badly enlightened interiors.
 - As symbol and stylized ornament in woodcarvings, colonnades, wall paintings. Stylized images of cloves, daisies, sunflowers, and roses are widely spread, combined with pictures of the native fauna.

Interior

Arrangement types



A wreath in front of relics



Garlands in different colors and flowers

- **Wreath (Crown)** - this is the most ancient arrangement for celebration and dedication and is used often in the Church interior.
- **Garlands** - this is an arrangement of invitation, celebration and out featuring. This is also an ancient habit typical for the Slavic ethnic group. This is an emblematic way of offering for some National and Religious Fests as The Day of the Slavic Script and Culture etc.

Interior

Arrangement types



Flat floral panel – Flora 2005 •
Made by “Sneki Ltd.” -Bourgass

Upright arrangement - Russia

Bouquet – about the Church and Monastery’s interior this is quite new arrangement, practiced in the big Churches at an important holidays. The arrangement should be upright, cone-formed, pointing one’s aspiration for the Heaven.

Pot-plants – still scarcely used.

Floral panels

– *flat* – a new trend, just generated in the last few years. It was firstly demonstrated at Flora Bourgass Exhibition 2005 and was generously accepted.

Interior

Arrangement types/traditions and trends



- *spatial* – this trend is widely spread in Orthodox Russia, still not so popular in Bulgaria. This is a synthesized way to include contemporary pattern in Christian themes.



Spatial floral
Panels made by
Russian group
F design –
specialized in
Orthodox church
phytodesign

Traditions and trends in floral use in the Church interior and Monastery Ensembles.

In the Orthodox Christian religion, every day is dedicated to a certain Saint person considered as a holiday. Some days are celebrated too festively and the national tradition ordain that:

Interior

Traditions and trends



Easter – The Church in Elhove –Russia

Bough of willow (Salix) – an traditional offering



- ***On Palm Sunday and Easter:*** an offering of willow (Salix bough) - symbolizing palm branches; minor spring bulbs; geranium, forced to blossom bulbs, branches just with buds. These flowers are brought home, rounded in crown for decoration of the home altar or the icons.

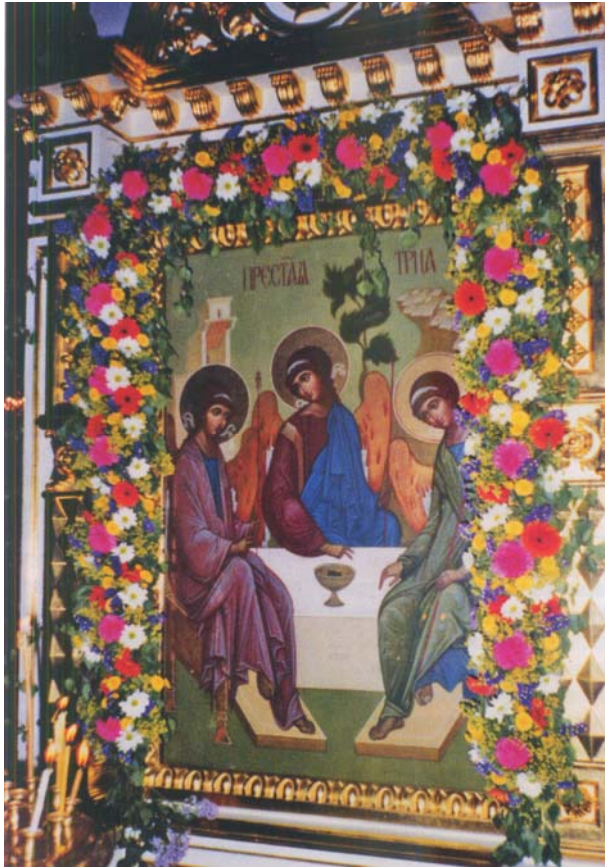
Most popular are prime roses (*Primula*), Lilly of the Valley (*Convallaria*), Roman hyacinth (*Hyacinthus*), garden pansy (*Viola*) etc. It is recommended in the Monastery complexes all these flowers to be propagated in order to cease their unscrupulous gathering from natural habitats.

As far as the variety is concerned the following can be outlined: pot-planted *Phoenix*, *Cycas* – (most similar with the Palms), pinks (*Dianthus*), *Gypsophylla*, *Asparagus*, *Ruscus aculeatus*, ivy (*Hedera*), Ferns, *Thuja* branches, mums (*Chrysanthemum*) and lily – (*Lilium*).

Flowers with certain tropical appearances are not recommended: Orchids, Bromeliads, Anthuriums.

Interior

Traditions and trends



Decorated icon of the Holy Trinity –
Elhove, Russia

- ***The Holly Trinity*** – (50 days after Easter) - is popular as “green” day, as seasonally coincides with the beginning of the summer period. The trend is: a lot of greenery, green carpets included.
- ***Transfiguration***: - August – September - related with abundance of fruits, celery and good yield. Usually more vivid colors are preferred, symbolizing prosperity.



Typical green carpet - The Holly Trinity Day

Interior

Traditions and trends



- **Virgin Mary's Day** – special symbols are used. The offerings are associated with the image of mother and woman with preys and positive thoughts. An obligatory symbol is the Lily flower - *Lilium candidum* (or *L.longiflorum*) that presents often in the Monastery garden. A correlation between flower shape and the old trumpet of the herald is observed.

Dominating colors – white, light blue.
Trend: Cornflower (*Centaurea*), bells (*Campanula*), china aster (*Callistephus*), lavender (*Lavandula*), Cereal plant's inflorescence and *Eucalyptus* are preferred. Deep purple hue is excluded.

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Lilium candidum – Virvin Mary's symbol and arrangement dedicated to Virgin Mary – F -Design

Interior

Traditions and trends



- *Christmas* – the trend is simplicity and evergreen color. Usually fir-tree boughs are used. In the recent years some pot-plants appeared as Poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*), Cyclamen, Azalea. This holiday allows in a great extent to show Christian charity by flowers arrangements, done by children and volunteers. Usually the monasteries are certain generators of the idea for such noble activities.

Christmas Church decoration – simplicity with evergreens . F-Design, Elhowe, Russia

Exterior

History



A Renaissance house – Kordopulova house – Melnik

A Monastery House – Klisura Monastery



- Most of the nowadays-existing Monasteries originated from the Medieval, before the Ottoman Slavery, but was totally robbed and fired at that time. Most of them were restored in 19-20 centuries, and their garden layout is dated respectively. In main features the garden repeats the one in the Bulgarian Renaissance house with its elements. Most Monastery gardens can be dated back to the Late Bulgarian Renaissance, called also Bulgarian Baroque, popular in mid of the 19-th century. During this time the Bulgarian yard is remarkable with high degree of utilization and was directly related to the residential function.
- The layout of a Monastery garden and of a typical Renaissance house garden is similar.

Exterior

Functions and elements of the Monastery's yard



The Monastery yard is usually densely built and the areas for solemn ornamental use are too small. They are *patio* shaped, or flank the residential areas. The agricultural area and temporalities, possessed by the monastery are usually out-side the Monastery walls.



The fence – is usually closed type and massive (made of wood, cobble stones or bricks). Together with the residential buildings it provides dense shadow.

Cherepishki Monastery – Residential buildings

Rojenski Monastery – The yard

Exterior

Functions and elements of the Monastery's yard



As an accent in the Monastery yard there is a *venerable three*: fruit bearing one as Pear (*Pirus*), Japanese persimmon tree (*Dyospirus*), walnut (*Juglans*) or other exotic species.

The flowers are dislocated round the main architectural structures of the Monastery yard: the gate, the faucet (fountain), the fence, and the stairs.

Flowers present in the exterior of the Monastery as *mobile or fixed flowerpots* or laid-out on the ground.

Monastery 'Sedemte prestola' – *Sejouodendron giganteum*

Klisurski Monastery – *Albizia julibrissin*



Exterior

Functions and elements of the Monastery's yard



Cobble stone and ***pavement***– made by round river stones with large joints and definite dip for water drainage. In the gaps between the stones usually sun plant (*Portulaca*), Thyme (*Thymus*), stonecrop (*Sedum*), houseleek (*Sempervivum*), *Cimbalaria* is spread – self sown or anchored between. ***Flowerbeds*** framed with trimmed *Buxus* and flower patches between. They have the feature of classical flori-mosaics. Geraniums (*Pelargonium*), Cranesbill (*Geranium*), Daisy (*Leucanthemum*), Marigold (*Calendula*) are mainly used

Rojenski Monastery – pavement

Klisurski Monastery – trimmed English box (*Buxus sempervirens*)



Exterior

Functions and elements of the Monastery's yard



Typical faucet – Cherepishki Monastery
Cranebill (*Geranium*), Lady's
Mantel (*Alchemilla*), Ferns,
Asarum and kingscup (*Caltha*)
find their perfect habitat there.

'Sedemte Prestola' Monastery – decorated
faucet

Decoration of the *faucet* and the *well*. The pure water is typical for the Monastery yard and its impact is complex – nice architecture with sprout and ladle; water babble and plant coverage. Plants are self populated – especially hygrophytes – as the water usually flows on the ground surface.



Exterior

Functions and elements of the Monastery's yard



The Gate – Cherepishki Monastery



The Gate of the Catholic Church in Malko Tirnovo

Out-lining of the *fence* and the *Gate*. Both impose inaccessibility and are used as a symbol for dividing the spiritual from the physical space of the Monastery and the suburbs. The fence is usually elaborated by compact turf plants, plants suitable for chalk or succulents as *Cimbalaria*, *Alyssum*, Wall cress (*Arabis*), Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum*), *Sedum*, *Sempervivum* etc.

Pots decoration of *out-of door stairs*. It's a fact that most of “foreign plants” from North America, Asia and Mediterranean appeared firstly here - brought by pilgrims and the rich masters during the Renaissance: *Impatiens*, *Phlox*, *Tropaeolum*. The Monastery has always been considered as the most secure and reliable place for introduction of flowers.

Exterior

New trends



- Use of pesticides and other chemical substances in plan breeding are not permitted. Different methods of bio-agriculture are applied.
- Use of ornamentals
 - 1 ***In flower Beds*** – characterized by great diversity of color, balanced by basil (*Osimum basilicum*), english box (*Buxus*), minth (*Mentha*). The full cycle of flower propagation is typical for the Monastery' farm: gathering seeds, sowing, planting, plant cutting and growing up. Volunteer's help is a certain way to integrate the layman with the ascetic life show an attitude of recognition and admiration.

**The yard of the Catholic Church in
Malko Tirnovo**

Exterior

New trends



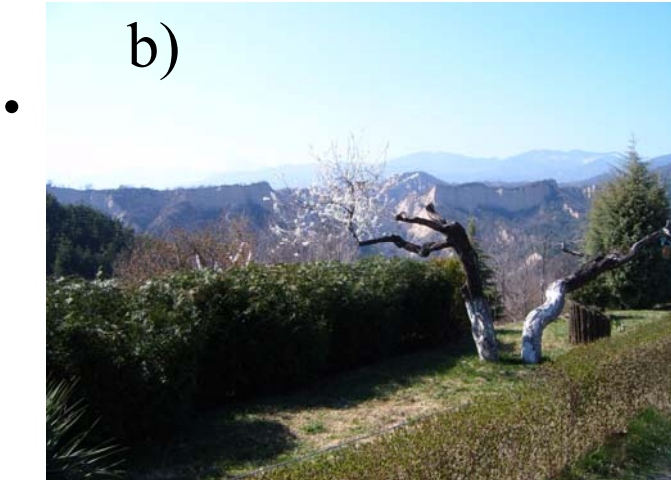
Mobile pots - the Klisurski monastery



22. *Hanging and mobile pots* – they contrast too much with the wood and stone, bearing the imprint of the past. The materials are preferably “warm” as wood, pottery-ware, leather, etc.

- 3. *Use of indigenous plants of the native flora.*
- 4. *Integrating the Monastery architecture* in the native landscape. Our Monasteries are the mostly well-fitted in the surrounding landscape – wedged in the stone, with perfectly chosen view points, sheltered position, hidden in the woods.

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a) Cherepishki Monastery and surroundings

b) Rojenski Monastery and surroundings

Exterior

New trends



Roof gardening – a way for “ageing” the roof materials (by Floriculture,russ. 5/ 2006)

Roof matting with Sedum species (by Floriculture,russ. 5/ 2006)



5. ***Organizing of visitor’s centers*** with high degree of knowledge. Native ornamentals – annuals and perennials, herbs and other nature ‘gems’ may serve as attractive points. In the old Monastery gardens the healing properties of plants are well known: as part of the offerings or in the medicine. Gathering Herbs is also connected with the Christian Calendar.
- ***6. Mastering and maintenance of the roof-space.*** Old-fashioned buildings are usually covered by ledger stones with variety of intruded ruderal flora. In cases of repair or re-building the contrast between old and contemporary materials is drastic, especially in the roof coverage. In case of plain roof the easiest way for “aging” of the facade are the vegetative mats. These covers are fulfilled by cuttings of native Sedum species and are easy to create, maintain and contribute to the spring, summer and especially autumn coloring too much.

Adjusted areas



Wild flower mowns



5. *Wild flowers mown.*

Wild flower mown is specific and nature-friendly way of landscaping, usually planned in the countries. It's a mixture of grass and annual/perennial seeds in ratio approx. 80:20 % and is typical for the Bulgarian Monasteries and are also called "Moorish lawns". The name originated by the Arabic tribes that had conquered South Spain and used to sow annual flowers on their way home. Usually the wild flower mown is named as the fragile tread between the Nature and the Civilization. The most appropriate place for such a green place is round the Monastery fence. Native ornamental annuals are recommended as *Agrostemma githago*, *Vaccaria hispanica*, *Centaurea cyanus*, poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*). etc. and hardy perennials as *Coreopsis*, *Gailardia*, *Campanula*, *Leucanthemum* etc.

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