Plant propagation practice: the start of horticulture

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Almost every garden and park is built up with cultivated plants, and somewhere the cultivation starts with a propagation process. Knowledge of plant propagation is based on a long tradition of horticultural activities in which the transfer of knowledge has mainly been restricted to the working process. The aim of this presentation is to discuss possibilities to develop strategies for keeping this knowledge when the plant propagation activities are decreasing. The discussion is based on my ongoing PhD-project, which has the overall aim to study how information of plant propagation practice can be classified in order to function as instructions.

In the last century the propagation of local horticultural plants has declined and almost ceased to exist as a gardening practice in standard maintenance in Sweden’s heritage gardens and public parks. The common approach to renew a lost perennial plant, bush or tree is to buy a similar plant in a garden centre or a nursery. But the activities of propagation have also decreased in the nurseries. The European nursery industry offer so called "plug plants", small plants propagated in a large scale, for a price that make the Swedish nurseries own propagation costs appear to be too expensive. The consequence is a risk of drainage of gardening craft skills, and a loss of both local plants and plants of historic interests. The sustainability in these choices may also be questioned.

With examples from commercial perennial nurseries and Gothenburg Botanical Garden a possible strategy for communication and development of horticultural practice will be presented based on a classifying model for practice of plant propagation.

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