

‘It is the most
amusing park that
I know.’¹: Ernst
von Silva Tarouca
and Průhonice/
Pruhonitz in the light
of contemporary
German garden
literature

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1 SILVA TAROUCA, Ernst Emanuel, *Farbensönheit im Landschaftsgarten, Die Gartensönheit*, 1927, 8, 5, pp. 120–121 (part 1) and 1927, 8, 6, p. 149 (part 2). Quotation from a lady who visited Průhonice. Count Ernst Emanuel wrote (p. 149), ‘She meant it in all seriousness, and I was grateful to her for that.’

Following Count Ernst Emanuel von Silva Tarouca's death in 1936, Camillo Schneider paid tribute to him as one of the greatest landscape designers of his time, concluding as follows: 'In him, the world of garden design has lost a practitioner ... whose importance has by no means yet been properly acknowledged.'² Given that

this is still the case today, any attempt to put this right – such as the present volume of symposium proceedings – is to be welcomed most heartily. The intention of this short essay is to cast light upon Silva Tarouca's links with Germany, with reference to the relevant literature and the count's family background.³

Family

The union of the imperial-royal cavalry captain Count August Alexander von Silva Tarouca (1818–1872) and Countess Gisela zu Stolberg-Stolberg (1824–1864) brought forth two sons. While Franz Josef (1858–1936), as the elder of the two, inherited the large family estate of Čechy pod Kosířem, Moravia (German: Czech), Ernst Emanuel (1860–1936) came into that of Průhonice (Pruhonitz) near Prague through his marriage in 1885 to Countess Marie Antonie Nostitz-Rieneck. Sadly, the works written by Franz Josef, who was himself also an enthusiastic gardener and garden designer, have been so little appreciated that his *Der Park*, published in 1896, is erroneously attributed to his younger brother in the latter's Wikipedia entry.⁴ Furthermore, Franz Josef's publication of 1920 on landscape

gardening, *Landschaftsgärtnerei*, has now been entirely forgotten.

While the particular importance of the paternal country seat at Čechy pod Kosířem and of the Silva Tarouca family has been noted, principally in Czech-language publications,⁵ it is also illuminating to look at Franz Josef and Ernst Emanuel's German mother's family in the light of its association with historical gardens and garden design.

Gisela von Silva Tarouca had been born into the princely (albeit only 'gefürstet')⁶ house of Stolberg-Stolberg, a family of counts with origins in the north German Harz region. In the course of the centuries, this small but not insignificant dynasty split into several branches. Franz Josef and Ernst Emanuel's great-grandfather Friedrich Leopold von Stolberg (1750–1819), who converted to Roman

2 SCHNEIDER, Camillo, Ernst Graf Silva Tarouca, *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1936, 17, 11, pp. 247–249 (p. 247). For a further obituary, see *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Dendrologischen Gesellschaft*, 1936, 48, pp. XIV–XV.

3 Little note appears to have been taken of Ernst Emanuel von Silva Tarouca outside the German-speaking lands. References are to be found in ALLINGER, Gustav, *Ausstellungen. Ausstellung für Gartenkunst in London*, *Die Gartenwelt*, 1928, 32, 52, p. 730, and Schneider did give an account of Průhonice in English publications, see for example SCHNEIDER, C., *A modern park: more particularly the Park of Graf E. Silva Tarouca at Pruhonice near Prague*, *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, 1929, LIV, part 2, pp. 299–305.

4 Available online: <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernst_Emanuel_von_Silva_Tarouca> [2025-06-17].

5 ŠREK, Robert, František Josef II. Silva Tarouca (1858–1936). *Léta dětství a dospívání*, *Zprávy Vlastivědného Muzea v Olomouci*, 2021, 322, p. 40. IDEM, František Josef II. Silva Tarouca (1858–1936). *Léta zralosti*, *Zprávy Vlastivědného Muzea v Olomouci*, 2024, 328, p. 24. IDEM, František Josef II. Silva Tarouca (1858–1936). *Životopisný náčrt*, *Zprávy Vlastivědného Muzea v Olomouci*, 2018, 316, p. 150. IDEM, *Zámecký park v Čechách pod Kosířem za hrabat Silva-Tarouců*, *Zprávy Vlastivědného Muzea v Olomouci*, 2019, 318, p. 86 (part 1), 2020, 320, p. 59 (part 2).

6 In the case of a house that is 'gefürstet', the emperor grants only the head of the family and his wife or eldest son princely status, so that it occupies an intermediate position between the high and lower nobility. Furthermore, amongst such families there is a distinction between those who rule over an imperial territory and those who simply bear a princely title. The Silva Tarouca family improved its status by consistently marrying women from houses of the ancient imperial nobility (e.g., Sternberg-Manderscheid).

Catholicism, was a keen follower of the German Enlightenment and Romantic movement, as was their grandfather Christian Ernst (1783–1846); as a result, a love of nature and also of gardens had played an important role in their mother's family background.

For example, the German great-uncle of the Silva Tarouca brothers, Christoph Ernst von Winterfeld (1751–1813), was not only superintendent of gardens to the dukes of Oldenburg, but also had the surroundings of the ruined monastery of Hude landscaped, shortly after 1780, it seems, and presumably with the assistance of the court gardener Carl Ferdinand Bosse (1755–1793), the founder of a famous north German gardening dynasty. Hude is a prize example of the early German landscape garden. Another genealogical line leads to Söder, near Hildesheim, a country seat that was remodelled in the landscape garden style from 1788 by the art collector Johann Friedrich Moritz von Brabeck. The pavilion at Söder is attributed to the Dessau court architect Friedrich Wilhelm von Erdmannsdorff, who designed most of the garden buildings in the Dessau-Wörlitz Garden Realm (German: Wörlitzer Gartenreich).

Before her union with Count Christian Ernst von Stolberg (1783–1846), the Silva Tarouca brothers' maternal grandmother, Josephine, had first been married to Count Maximilian Friedrich von Plettenberg-Wittem zu Mietingen (1771–1813). Maria (1809–1861), a daughter from this first marriage and thus a half-aunt to the Silva Tarouca brothers, not only inherited the large and important Baroque palace of Nordkirchen near Münster but also, together with her husband Count Miklós Ferenc Esterházy de Galantha (1804–1885) and with the assistance of the garden designer and Prussian court gardener Maximilian Friedrich Weyhe (1775–1846), landscaped the remaining parts of the formal garden. Count Miklós Esterházy was himself the owner of one of the first landscape gardens in Hungary, Tata (German: Totis), which was laid out in 1783 by Franz Böhm and subsequently enhanced with buildings designed by, among others, Charles Moreau.

It can thus be fairly claimed that through both their parents, the two Silva Tarouca brothers were immersed in the world of garden design from their very birth.

Silva Tarouca's first appearance in print

The name Ernst Emanuel von Silva Tarouca first came to the attention of German garden experts in 1908 when the specialist journals reported on the foundation of the 'Dendrologische Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Gartenkunst und Gehölzkunde in Österreich-Ungarn' (Dendrological Society for the Promotion of Garden Design and Knowledge of Trees and Shrubs in Austria-Hungary), which was headed by Silva Tarouca as Chairman and Camillo Schneider (1876–1951) as secretary and treasurer.⁷ Born in Gröppendorf, Saxony, Camillo Schneider had

already made a name for himself as a dendrologist, garden designer and writer; from this point onwards, numerous articles from his pen ensured that garden enthusiasts in Germany became familiar with the park at Pruhonitz and with its creator Ernst Emanuel. What is more, Schneider compared Silva Tarouca with Hermann von Pückler-Muskau and ranked him equally highly. The collaboration and exchange between Silva Tarouca and Schneider was particularly intensive between 1908 and 1913 and continued uninterrupted until Tarouca's death in 1936.⁸

7 HEIKE, Carl, Verschiedene Mitteilungen, *Die Gartenkunst*, 1908, 10, 9, p. 164; HESDÖRFFER, Max, *Dendrologische Gesellschaft Wien (Österreich)*, *Die Gartenwelt*, 1908, 12, 40, pp. 479–480.

8 *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1936, 17, 11, p. 247. The two became acquainted in 1906 through Richard von Wettstein, director of the Botanical Garden in Vienna, see SCHNEIDER, C., (obituary on Wettstein), *Die Gartenschönheit / Gartenwerk*, 1931, 12, 9, p. 172.



Fig. 1: Autumn in Průhonice, in October. Source: SILVA TAROUCA, Ernst Emanuel, Herbstfärbung, *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1925, 6, 10, p. 181.

The particular orientation of their society, which differed from that of the purely specialist ‘Deutsche Dendrologische Gesellschaft’ (headed by Count Fritz von Schwerin) and the Société Dendrologique de France (under Maurice de Vilmorin), was underlined for German readers by Schneider in an article of 1909 in which he noted that its central focus was on ‘the art of garden design in general’⁹ with, consequently, herbaceous plants (‘Stauden’) forming an important field of interest.¹⁰ Furthermore, it was intended that the society should establish a garden of its own, ‘for the exclusive cultivation and propagation of rare and beautiful trees and shrubs [‘Gehölze’] and perennials that

cannot be purchased in the trade or only with great difficulty, in continental Europe at least.’¹¹ Collecting and exchanging plants was thus a major society activity. Notable parks and gardens of the Monarchy were to be presented in a series of yearbooks, the first of which was devoted to Průhonice and Konopiště.¹²

As Schneider wrote: ‘The publication’s whole manner of production is aimed at making it a lavishly illustrated volume that will be seen in the salons of the wealthy and thus contribute to bringing members of precisely these social circles ... into very close contact with the art of garden design.’ And further on: ‘We are therefore primarily targeting ... the high nobility, the great landowners,

9 ‘die Gartenkunst im allgemeinen’.

10 SCHNEIDER, C., *Die Gartenwelt*, 1909, 13, 25, pp. 299–300.

11 ‘in dem nur seltene und schöne Gehölze und Perennen gepflegt und vermehrt werden, die im Handel überhaupt nicht, oder wenigstens auf dem Kontinent nicht, bzw. nur sehr schwer käuflich zu haben sind’; IBID.

12 See *Die Gartenanlagen Österreich-Ungarns in Wort und Bild*, 1909, 1, reviewed by Max Hesdörffer; in: *Die Gartenwelt*, 1909, 13, 27, pp. 323–324, for photographs see pp. 318, 319, 321.



Fig. 2: The scenery of Průhonice Park. Source: SILVA TAROUCA, Ernst Emanuel, Herbstfärbung, *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1925, 6, 10, p. 182.

and the owners of large-scale industrial concerns.¹³ It thus comes as no surprise to find that in addition to court officials and directors of parks and gardens, the society's list of patrons featured such prominent names as Liechtenstein, Schwarzenberg, Harrach or Rothschild. This exclusivity laid the ground for successful undertakings which in their turn led to the membership growing to around six hundred. There is no doubt that Silva Tarouca was the driving force behind the society's expansion. When it broke up following the downfall of the Monarchy

and the establishment of nation states such as Czechoslovakia,¹⁴ Schneider wrote an account of its principal achievements for his German readership: in 1909, the society had established its own garden with Franz Zeman as head gardener at Průhonice, which – most notably as a result of enabling Schneider to spend an extensive period in the USA (1915–1919) and to go on a tour to China (1913) – finally boasted a total of around five thousand species; through intensive propagation it had been able to pass on as many as 100,000 plants to its

13 'Die ganze Ausstattung der Publikation ist darauf berechnet, sie zu einem Bildwerke zu machen, das überall in den Salons der reichen Leute aufliegt und dazu beiträgt, gerade diese Kreise ... mit der Gartenkunst in recht enge Fühlung zu bringen.' / 'Wir wenden uns deshalb in erster Linie an ... den Hochadel, den Großgrundbesitz und die Großindustriellen.' SCHNEIDER, C., *Die Gartenwelt*, 1909, 13, 25, p. 300.

14 Anonymous, Hauptversammlung der Dendrologischen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Gartenkunst und Gehölkunde in Österreich-Ungarn und Auflösung, *Die Gartenwelt*, 1920, 24, 26, p. 244.



Fig. 3: The scenery of Průhonice Park. Source: SILVA TAROUCA, Ernst Emanuel, *Herbstfärbung, Die Gartenschönheit*, 1925, 6, 10, p. 183.

members; and in addition, it had brought forth numerous publications and built up its own library.¹⁵

After having duly announced the society's closure in 1920, however, in 1922 the German garden journal was able to report on its re-foundation in Prague as the 'Dendrologische Gesellschaft für Tschechien' (Dendrological Society for Czechia) – once again under the direction of Silva Tarouca, now in collaboration with the Prague professor of botany Karel Domin (1882–1953).¹⁶ As a result, the society was able to continue its work, albeit in a more modest form,¹⁷ with its park at Průhonice continuing to operate under the headship of the knowledgeable Zeman. As the journal in due course informed its readers, however, the park of Průhonice was to be sold to the Czech state in 1925 (it was finally sold in 1927), and in 1929 it was opened to the public.¹⁸ Silva Tarouca continued as director of what was now a Czech national park,¹⁹ with the result that in the 1920s Průhonice – no doubt to an extent as a result of the *Kulturhandbücher* ('Cultivation Handbooks', see below) – became increasingly well-known and was regularly visited by garden-lovers from Germany.²⁰ Fulsome praise came from, among others, Hans Felix Kammeyer, a garden designer and teacher from Pillnitz, Dresden: 'Pruhonitz! Can there be a specialist whose heart does not beat faster when he hears the very name?' – the park, he surmised, was 'perhaps the only one of its kind and calibre in all Europe.'²¹ In 1923 Karl Foerster was a guest at

- 15 SCHNEIDER, C., Die Dendrologische Gesellschaft zur Pflege der Gehölzkunde und Gartenkunst in Österreich-Ungarn, *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1920, 1, 8, p. 120. On Camillo Schneider's stay in the USA (1915–1919), see IDEM, Im Arnold Arboretum. Zum fünfzigjährigen Bestehen, *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1923, 4, 12, pp. 224–227.
- 16 SCHNEIDER, C., Chronik, *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1922, 3, 3, p. 67, and *ibid.*, 1922, 3, 5, p. 115; Anonymous, Der Gartenbau im Auslande: Tschecho-Slowakei, *Die Gartenwelt*, 1922, 26, 26, p. 272.
- 17 KRIECHBAUM, Wilhelm, Aus dem Pruhonitzer Versuchsgarten (Böhmen, Tschechien), *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1925, 6, 2, p. 38. The garden engineer Zeman had taken the garden over in 1909 and had also started cultivating new plants.
- 18 Anonymous, Der Gartenbau im Auslande: Tschechoslowakei [Průhonice Park], *Die Gartenwelt*, 1929, 33, 41, p. 575.
- 19 SCHNEIDER, C., Chronik. Graf Ernst Silva Tarouca, *Die Gartenschönheit / Gartenwerk*, 1930, 11, 4, pp. 96–97 (marking the count's 70th birthday).
- 20 HEIKE, Carl, Verschiedene Mitteilungen: Schlesische und Böhmisches Reisetage, *Die Gartenkunst*, 1910, 12, 9, pp. 161–162; KNEISE, Louis, Studienfahrt der Gartenklasse der höheren Staatslehranstalt für Gartenbau in Pillnitz, *Die Gartenkunst*, 1925, 38, 8, p. 128; KAMMEYER, Hans Felix, Anregendes und Unterhaltendes: Gärtnerische Studienfahrten: Pruhonitz (Tschechien), *Die Gartenwelt*, 1925, 29, 38, pp. 646–647; SCHNEIDER, C., Studienfahrten: Pruhonitz (Tschechien), *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1921, 2, 7, pp. 157–160; IDEM, Studienfahrten: Parkeindrücke aus Böhmen (Tschechien), *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1924, 5, 5, pp. 95–96.
- 21 'Pruhonitz! Welches Fachmanns Herz schlägt nicht höher, wenn er diesen Namen hört?' / '... vielleicht in ganz Europa der einzige in seiner Art.' KAMMEYER, H. F., Anregendes und Unterhaltendes. Gärtnerische Studienfahrten. Pruhonitz, *Die Gartenwelt*, 1925, 29, 38, p. 646.



Fig. 4: From Průhonice, in April. Source: FOERSTER, Karl, *Die Zukunft des deutschen Waldes* (Deutschland). *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1926, 7, 4, p. 85.

Průhonice and reported upon it with enthusiasm, praising it as a ‘world-class garden’.²²

After the annexation of the Sudetenland in 1938 and the occupation of all Bohemia and Moravia in 1939, some German authors attempted to claim the park of Průhonice for the Reich; the rock garden specialist Wilhelm Kriechbaum, for example, who

had collaborated on the *Kulturhandbücher*, described the park as a ‘jewel of German garden design’.²³ And even Camillo Schneider ventured to ask whether it might not make sense to affiliate the park with the National Socialist ‘Reichsaboretum’ at Frankfurt am Main;²⁴ fortunately, this Germanization was never carried through.

The Society’s publications

While the particular orientation of the ‘Dendrologische Gesellschaft zur Förderung der

Gartenkunst und Gehölkunde’ and its successor the ‘Dendrologische Gesellschaft für Tschechien’

22 ‘Weltgarten’; FOERSTER, Karl, Nach Pruhonitz (Tschechien), *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1923, 4, 5, pp. 97–99.

23 ‘Kleinod deutscher Gartengestaltung’; KRIECHBAUM, Wilhelm, Die Sudetenländer und das Böhmisches-Mährische Schutzgebiet bereichern den Garten! [The Garden Enhanced by the Sudetenlanders and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia], *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1940, 21, 1, pp. 9–10 (p. 9). Another tendentious article by Kriechbaum is found dating from after the end of the war, see IDEM, Der Park des Grafen Silva Tarouca in Pruhonitz bei Prag, *Mitteilungen des naturwissenschaftlichen Vereins für die Steiermark*, 1947, 76, pp. 82–85; available online: <https://www.zobodat.at/pdf/MittNatVerSt_76_0082-0085.pdf> [2025-06-17].

24 SCHNEIDER, C., Pruhonitz. Der interessanteste Park im Protektorat Böhmen, *Gartenbau im Reich*, 1941, 22, 10, pp. 185–187.



Fig. 5: Průhonice Park. Source: FOERSTER, Karl, *Die Zukunft des deutschen Waldes* (Deutschland). *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1926, 7, 4, p. 88.

is apparent from its newsletters ('Mitteilungen'), it is most clearly reflected in the three programmatic *Kulturhandbücher für Gartenfreunde* (Cultivation Handbooks for Garden-Lovers) that were published under Silva Tarouca and Schneider's editorship. The first volume, on outdoor herbaceous plants (*Freiland-Stauden*), was published in 1910 and was followed in 1913 by a second volume on outdoor deciduous trees and shrubs (*Freilandlaubgehölze*) and a third on outdoor conifers (*Freilandnadelhölzer*). All three went into multiple editions (*Freiland-Stauden*: 1910, 1913, 1922, 1927, 1935; *Freilandlaubgehölze*: 1913, 1922, 1930; *Freilandnadelhölzer*: 1913, 1923, 1934) incorporating massive revisions, with the first volume in five editions becoming the most popular.

The German specialist journals accorded all volumes numerous previews and reviews,²⁵ one of which, in a 1923 issue of *Gartenwelt*, summed up the positive response by describing the *Kulturhandbücher* as 'the crowning glory of any gardener's library'.²⁶ Similarly, the garden architect Reinhold Hoemann praised the volume on deciduous trees as 'one of the best and most valuable [publications] to have appeared in the past decade', and put his cards firmly on the table with the assertion, 'I know nothing of equal worth in this field.'²⁷ A fourth volume was planned, to be entitled *Garten und Park*, but the project was abandoned in 1922.

The various forewords composed by Silva Tarouca and Schneider clearly reflect their pride

25 For an excellent survey of the individual reviews see VIERLE, Claudia, Camilo Schneider. *Dendrologe und Gartenbauschriftsteller, Eine Studie zu seinem Leben und Werk*, Berlin 1998, available online: <https://www.paeon.de/h1/schneider/vierle/15_03.html> [2025-05-02].

26 'Hauptzierde jeder Gärtnerbibliothek'; Anonymous, *Unsere Freilandstauden* (book review), *Die Gartenwelt*, 1923, 27, 6, p. 48.

27 'eines der besten und wertvollsten, welches im letzten Jahrzehnt erschien ... Ich kenne nichts Gleichwertiges auf diesem Gebiet'; HOEMANN, Reinhold, *Unsere Freiland-Laubgehölze* (book review), *Die Gartenkunst*, 1913, 15, 9, pp. 134–135 (p. 135).

in having established an extensive and constantly growing network of contacts, which resulted in their receiving an ample flow of new plants, catalogues and photographs, and benefiting from exchanges of ideas and information that enabled them to enhance the handbooks with substantial additions and corrections. Numerous well-known garden specialists collaborated on the handbooks: private owners of parks and gardens (Count Istvan Ambrózy-Migazzi, Count Fritz von Schwerin, Count Herbert von Schaffgotsch-Purgstall), nursery owners and breeders (J. Goos & Koenemann in Niederwalluf, Georg Arends in Ronsdorf, Helmuth Spaeth in Berlin, Th. Hoog Haarlem, James Veitch & Sons), garden inspectors from – for preference – botanical institutions (Wilhelm Kesselring, Alfred Rehder, Anton Purpus, Heinrich Teuscher), university scholars (Adam Schwappach, Paul Robert Hickel, Adolf Cieslar), and a number of editors of specialist journals such as Carl Heike of Frankfurt.

The most important volume in the series was without doubt the one devoted to herbaceous plants, which Camillo Schneider praised as follows in 1922: 'Neither at the time of the first edition [1910] did a comparable book exist, nor does one exist now, whether in German or any other language.'²⁸ Wolfgang Singer, director of the royal spa garden at Bad Kissingen (Bavaria), explained and justified this bold assertion by pointing out that the book not only marked a turning away from the stereotyped tradition of landscape gardening but also offered stimulating ideas for the further development of the reform gardens with their geometrical shapes, for which Silva Tarouca's books were not strictly intended.²⁹

With respect to their goal, the editors wrote as follows: 'In any case our primary purpose was

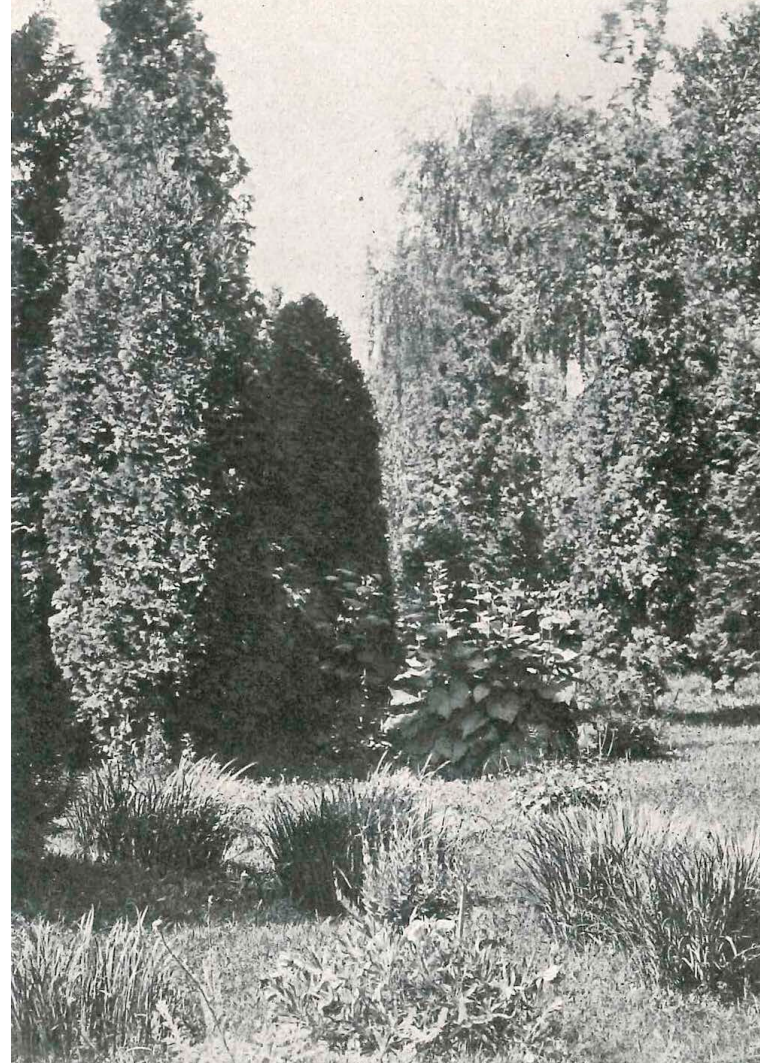


Fig. 6: Conifers and Perennials in Průhonice Park.
Source: SILVA TAROUCA, Ernst Emanuel – SCHNEIDER, Camillo, *Unsere Freiland-Nadelgehölze*, in: *Kulturhandbücher für Gartenfreunde*, Wien 1923, p. 6.

to create a reference book for the plant-lover and professional gardener alike that would include all (or as many as possible) the genera and species listed in the catalogues of the herbaceous plant nurseries and provide a handy means of obtaining swift information about their value as cultivars, their potential for cultivation, and their use

28 'Ein solches Buch gab es weder damals, als die erste Auflage erschien, noch gibt es dies heute in deutscher oder irgend einer anderen Sprache'; SCHNEIDER, C., *Literatur: Unsere Freilandstauden*, *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1922, 3, 12, p. 279.

29 SINGER, Wolfgang, *Freilandstauden* (book review), *Die Gartenkunst*, 1911, 13, 3, pp. 61–63.



Fig. 7: Autumn Scenery from Průhonice. Source: SILVA TAROUCA, Ernst Emanuel – SCHNEIDER, Camillo, Unsere Freiland-Nadelgehölze, in: *Kulturhandbücher für Gartenfreunde*, Wien 1923, plate 2.

in planting.³⁰ This intention was even realized to the extent of including special chapters on herbaceous perennials protected by law (chap. XXXVI) and ornamental fruit trees (chap. XXIX). Furthermore, in the second edition Schneider emphasized in a special notice that the information on 'trees and shrubs for industrial areas, for the protection of birds, and for the benefit of bees, and particularly important new trees and shrubs'³¹ had been revised. These sections make a remarkably modern impression.

Already evident in the first edition, this approach provoked criticism from the above-mentioned Wolfgang Singer, who as a professional

practitioner raised objections to the ideas presented by the 'amateur' Silva Tarouca and was clearly not yet able to understand the visionary concept behind his proposals for the use of plants and the creation of colour harmonies.

The fact is that at that time the art of using shrubs and perennials to best effect was still in its infancy. In order for the art to develop and grow, it was arguably still waiting for the appearance of Karl Foerster of Potsdam, a major personality who as breeder, writer and garden designer was to introduce further new thoughts into the discussion. In his debut work published in 1911, *Winterharte Blütenstauden und*

30 'Jedenfalls war es in erster Linie unsere Absicht, ein Nachschlagebuch für den Pflanzenfreund und Gärtner zu schaffen, das möglichst alle in den Katalogen der Staudengärtnereien geführten Gattungen und Arten verzeichnet und schnelle Auskunft über deren Kulturwert, Kulturfähigkeit und Verwendung gibt'; SILVA TAROUCA, E. E. – SCHNEIDER, C. (ed.), *Unsere Freiland-Stauden*, Vienna and Leipzig 1934, p. 1.

31 'Gehölze für Industriegebiete, Vogelschutz, Bienengehölze sowie besonders wichtige neuere Gehölze'; SCHNEIDER, C., *Unsere Freiland-Laubgehölze, Die Gartenschönheit*, 12.1. (1931), p. 5.

Sträucher der Neuzeit (Hardy Flowering Herbaceous Plants and Bushes of Modern Times) he concentrated on the domestic garden. Schneider praised the work, writing that Foerster's ideas 'complement our concept excellently', certainly aware that he (Foerster) was also concerned with the planting of flowering shrubs and bushes in parks and rock gardens.³²

Silva Tarouca as a writer

In addition to the works published under Silva Tarouca's co-editorship, we also know of a dozen specialist gardening essays from his pen. However, an article he wrote for *Die Gartenschönheit* entitled *Wild im Landschaftsgarten* (Game in the Landscape Garden)³³ suffices to show that he wrote as a lover not only of fine gardens but also of field sports;³⁴ indeed, as he confesses, it was when out shooting in the mountains that he was first overcome by a passion for alpine plants.

His style is essayistic, with narratives and anecdotes complementing his general reflections and vice versa. In his articles on the art of gardening he always reveals a measure of his personality by adopting definite standpoints. In 1922, for example, he is found letting off steam on a number of subjects in the context of the extremes of weather in 1920/21: 'All manner of adversities descended upon Pruhonitz like the ten plagues of Egypt,' and a great number of plants had been damaged through dryness and severe frost – 'quite apart from the social conditions, the high wages, the [maximum] eight-hour working



Fig. 8: *Picea canadensis*, left, and *Pseudotsuga taxifolia* var. *glauca*, in Průhonice (Bohemia). Source: SILVA TAROUCA, Ernst Emanuel – SCHNEIDER, Camillo, *Unsere Freiland-Nadelgehölze*, in: *Kulturhandbücher für Gartenfreunde*, Wien 1923, plate 8.

day that can hardly be adhered to in agriculture and gardening, the shortage of workers, the price increases affecting all commodities, and the state's obstruction of traffic and devouring of all financial means, not to mention the plague of moths that

32 Ibid., p. 2.

33 SILVA TAROUCA, E. E., *Wild im Landschaftsgarten* (Pruhonitz), *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1924, 5, 1, pp. 8–9.

34 Kein Heger, kein Jäger! Ein Handbuch der Wildhege für weidgerechte Jagdherren und Jäger, Berlin 1899 (2nd printing 1927); and Glückliche Tage. Jagdgeschichten aus fünf Jahrzehnten, Berlin 1923 (further printings 1928, 1938, 1944).



Fig. 9: Scenery of the Alpine Garden in Průhonice. *Anchusa italica* in the foreground, *Dictamnus* in the background. Source: SILVA TAROUCA, Ernst Emanuel – SCHNEIDER, Camillo, Unsere Freiland-Stauden, in: Kulturhandbücher für Gartenfreunde, Wien 1923, p. 5.

destroyed a number of very fine protective plantings of spruce.³⁵

Over and above dendrological themes, he not only gave vent to his opinions about the art of landscape gardening and its fundamental design principles,³⁶ but also wrote regularly about planting and above all colour. His aim

was to use native and foreign plants sharing the same location requirements to create 'landscape pictures', and in this endeavour he opted for mass plantings, homogeneous groupings and effective colour contrasts, not only with trees and shrubs but also herbaceous plants. In 1925, writing in *Die Gartenschönheit* on the subject of autumn colours,

35 'Wie Ägyptens Plagen sind allerlei Heimsuchungen über den Pruhonitzer Park gekommen, abgesehen von sozialen Verhältnissen, den hohen Löhnen, dem für Landwirtschaft und Gärtnerei kaum durchzuführenden Achtstundentag, dem Mangel an Arbeitskräften, der Verteuerung aller Bedarfsartikel, der Behinderung des Verkehrs und der Absorbierung aller Geldmittel durch den Staat, abgesehen von der Nonnenplage (:Motte), welche einige als Schutzpflanzungen wichtige sehr schöne Fichtenbestände zerstörte.' SILVA TAROUCA, E. E., Vom Winter 1921/1922 (Park von Pruhonitz, Böhmen, Tschechien), *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1922, 3, 9, pp. 207–209.

36 Über landschaftliche Gartenkunst, Mitteilungen der Dendrologischen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Gehölkunde und Gartenkunst in Österreich-Ungarn, 1910, 1.



Fig. 10: A partial view of the Alpine Garden in Průhonice. Source: SILVA TAROUCA, Ernst Emanuel – SCHNEIDER, Camillo, *Unsere Freiland-Stauden*, in: *Kulturhandbücher für Gartenfreunde*, Wien 1923, p. 8.

he made his point by quoting a well-known folksong: “May blooms but once a year – love but once in a lifetime.” Now, thanks to the introduction of new cultivars, it is not only the spring that blooms but also the summer and the autumn, when the park is finally clad in a flamboyant array of radiant hues with which even May’s wonderful spectacle cannot compete. The exuberantly colourful beauty of nature is so magnificent before it has to yield to

the cold and lifeless beauty of winter that we may well hope that love too – the love of nature and of gardens, that is – will once again blossom when people have come to themselves and rediscovered their ideals.³⁷ It has to be admitted that he suffered under the changes that took place after 1918. He had no time for the fashion for short skirts of the ‘Roaring Twenties’, nor for the modern abstract painting of early twentieth-century Primitivism.³⁸ On the other

37 “Nur einmal blüht im Jahr der Mai, nur einmal im Leben die Liebe.” Dank der Neueinführung und Züchtungen blüht jetzt nicht nur der Frühling, sondern auch der Sommer und Herbst, und dann kleidet sich noch zuletzt der Park in ein buntes Flammenmeer von leuchtenden Farben, gegen die auch die Blütenfülle des wunderschönen Monats Mai nicht aufkommen kann. So prachtvoll ist die lebensfrohe farbenfreudige Schönheit der Natur, bevor sie der kalten, toten Schönheit des Winters weichen muss, daß wir wohl hoffen dürfen, daß auch die Liebe, die Liebe zur Natur und zum Garten, wieder aufblüht, wenn die Menschen sich und ihre Ideale wiedergefunden haben.; SILVA TAROUCA, E. E., *Herbstfärbung (Böhmen, Tschechien)*, *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1925, 6, 10, pp. 181–184 (p. 184).

38 IDEM, *Wild im Landschaftsgarten*, *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1924, 5, 1, pp. 8–9.



Fig. 11: Opuntia on a rock face in Průhonice. Source: SILVA TAROUCA, Ernst Emanuel – SCHNEIDER, Camillo, *Unsere Freiland-Stauden*, in: *Kulturhandbücher für Gartenfreunde*, Wien 1923, p. 265.

hand, his sense of colour can very well be compared with the contemporary art of the Expressionists. His plantings featured a great variety of strong colours, as he himself emphasized in 1927, at the same time

giving the distinct impression that former critics such as Singer had changed their basic attitudes as a result of having made visits to Průhonice and the further development of their way of seeing things.³⁹

Silva Tarouca's work as a garden designer

Průhonice was first presented to German readers in 1909 in the first volume of the society's series on the great gardens of Austria-Hungary,

Gartenanlagen Österreich-Ungarns in Wort und Bild.⁴⁰ Even at that early time, Camillo Schneider made a point of particular interest: 'As far as I know, the

³⁹ IDEM, *Farbenschönheit im Landschaftsgarten*, *Die Gartenschönheit*, 1927, 8, 6, p. 149.

⁴⁰ HESDÖRFFER, M., *Bücherschau: Die Gartenanlagen Österreich-Ungarns in Wort und Bild*, *Die Gartenwelt*, 1909, 13, 27, pp. 323–324, 318–319, 321; SCHNEIDER, C., in *Die Gartenwelt*, 1909, 13, 25, pp. 299–300. Published by Tarouca and Schneider's 'Dendrologische Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Gartenkunst und Gehölzkunde in Österreich-Ungarn', the volume in question also focused on Archduke Franz Ferdinand's garden at Konopiště; according to Schneider, the Habsburg heir apparent and Silva Tarouca were good friends.

master of Průhonice has never delved into studies of historical garden design and knows neither the English landscape gardens nor the creations of Sckell and Pückler. Furthermore, he only recently became familiar with the book by [Willy] Lange and thus with the modern scientific theory of garden design.' And further: 'Count Silva Tarouca has never drawn a plan in his life, but when proceeding with any given planting he has always retained a vivid image of it in his mind's eye.'⁴¹

Although Silva Tarouca was therefore often compared with Pückler, that other great amateur landscapist, the count himself expressed reservations about the comparison, as he had no great sympathy

for Pückler's personality and was all too aware of the limitations of nineteenth-century garden design. Garden designers of Pückler's time had imitated nature and only used the few native species available to them. Now, by contrast, 'garden artists have a superabundant stock of material from all parts of the world at their disposal.'⁴² For Silva Tarouca, the observation of nature should not lead to realistic gardens (as Willy Lange believed), but was to inspire one to exploit the means of the time for the best purposes of garden design. For, as he wrote, 'The grander the scenery, the larger are the expanses of colour with which the artist should work: grandeur and repose are kindred concepts.'⁴³

An appraisal

German garden-lovers had first come into contact with the park at Pruhonitz and its creator Silva Tarouca through the printed word, conveyed through publications. At the time this led to responses of, variously, respectful recognition, criticism, interest, or plain incomprehension. The combination of the creation of parkland in the traditional noble manner with the most modern discourse on garden design raised many questions. In the 1920s the received image of Průhonice changed as numerous garden specialists visited the park, which for most of that decade was private,

before being opened to the public. So it was that assessments such as the following appeared: 'Today Průhonice is, like Pückler's Muskau, a classic example of landscape park design embodying the thought and creative spirit of a whole era.'⁴⁴ Even as early as 1909, Schneider had lauded Průhonice as a 'milestone in the development of contemporary garden design'; and had continued: 'It furthermore demonstrates the merit of the extensive use of magnificent herbaceous plants for parkland, done in a manner I do not know on any other private property in the continent of Europe or elsewhere.

41 'Soviel ich weiß, hat sich der Schloßherr von Pruhonitz nie mit historischen Studien der Gartenkunst befaßt und kennt weder die englischen Parkanlagen, noch Sckells und Pücklers Schöpfungen, noch kannte er bis vor kurzem das Langesche Buch und damit also die naturwissenschaftliche Gartenkunst-Theorie der Neuzeit.' 'Graf Silva Tarouca hat nie einen Plan gezeichnet, aber das Bild der künftigen Anlage immer im Geiste plastisch vor sich gesehen.' SCHNEIDER, C., Über die landschaftliche Gartengestaltung von heute (Pruhonitz, Böhmen), *Die Gartenkunst*, 1909, 11, 6, pp. 102–105 (p. 103). The article compares Lange's ideal of the natural garden unfavourably with Silva Tarouca's general approach.

42 '... dem Gartenkünstler ein in Form und Farben überreicher Werkstoff aus allen Weltteilen zur Verfügung.' Ernst Graf von Silva Tarouca, 'Farbensönheit im Landschaftsgarten', *Die Gartensönheit*, 8/5 (1927), p. 120.

43 '... je großartiger die Szenerien, desto größer müssen auch die Farbenflächen sein, mit denen die Künstler wirken will: Größe und Ruhe sind verwandte Begriffe.' SILVA TAROUCA, E. E., Farbensönheit im Landschaftsgarten, *Die Gartensönheit*, 1927, 8, 6, p. 149.

44 'Schon heute ist Pruhonitz neben Pücklers Muskau eine klassische Stätte landschaftlicher Parkgestaltung, in der sich das Denken und Schaffen einer ganzen Zeitepoche verkörpert.' SCHNEIDER, C., Silva Tarouca, Ernst, Graf, *Die Gartensönheit / Gartenwerk*, 1935, 16, 2, p. 15. On 3 January 1935 Silva Tarouca had celebrated his 75th birthday.

This is the difference between Count Silva Tarouca and Prince Pückler, that Tarouca uses herbaceous plants in just as original a manner as he does his trees, and thereby achieves most wonderful effects.⁴⁵

Silva Tarouca and Průhonice stand at a crossroads that saw the classic landscaped park being superseded by the domestic garden. Herbaceous planting and the deployment of colour came to be identified with the person of Karl Foerster, who collaborated with Camillo Schneider on the garden of the Villa Müller in Prague. Silva Tarouca's ideas and approach faded further and further into the background.

It is difficult to identify cases of Silva Tarouca exerting direct influence. However, it may be assumed that his ideas had a beneficial effect on the garden complexes of Schloss Eckberg in Dresden, which display comparably rich and conspicuous plantings not only in the landscaped part but also in

the rock garden. And plant colours were deliberately given a similarly central position by another amateur garden designer, Roberto Burle Marx, who may well have dipped into the *Kulturhandbücher* in the course of his painting studies in Berlin in 1928/29.

Ultimately, the many questions raised by Silva Tarouca's achievement make it clear that this subject should be better and more thoroughly researched. In any case, not only does the park at Průhonice still remain the best embodiment of Silva Tarouca's ideas, but it also fully deserves its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, an honour that its creator in a sense foresaw when he wrote the following prescient words: 'May all visitors who come to look upon my life's work at Průhonice not flee in sheer boredom but, rather, say, "Actually the old boy was not so wide of the mark with his delight in colours; that is really a very enjoyable landscape garden, and even one from which we have a lot to learn"'.⁴⁶

45 '... Markstein in der Entwicklung der heutigen Gartenkunst' / 'Es beweist ferner die ausgedehnte Anwendung prächtiger Stauden im Parke, wie sie mir aus einer Privatanlage auf dem Kontinent noch nirgend bekannt ist. Darin unterscheidet sich Graf Silva Tarouca sehr von Fürst Pückler, daß er in gleich origineller Weise, wie das Baummaterial, auch die Stauden im Parke verarbeitet und dadurch ganz wundervolle Effekte erzielt.' SCHNEIDER, C., 1909, pp. 102–103 (see n. 41).

46 'Möchten doch alle, die in Zukunft mein Lebenswerk in Pruhonitz besuchen und betrachten, nicht etwa gelangweilt die Flucht ergreifen, sondern sagen: der Alte hat doch nicht so unrecht gehabt mit seiner Farbenfreudigkeit, das ist wirklich ein unterhaltsamer, vielleicht sogar ein lehrreicher Landschaftsgarten.' SILVA TAROUCA, E. E., 1927 (see n. 1), p. 149.