

Orangeries

In the 17th and 18th centuries collections of Mediterranean plants, especially orange trees, became fashionable in the courts of European princes.

This tree collection obviously came to be called “the orangery”. Most importantly, it was a symbol of the ruler as well as being a status symbol.

The term “orangery” was later attached to the buildings for the orangery.

In the time of Augustus the Strong the oranges played an important role in Grosssedlitz alongside myrtles, laurels, pomegranates and figs. The Orangery and the orangery level in front of it, the exhibition place for the orange trees, form a structural unity. In summer, from May until September, the orange trees stand in rows along the entrance path and in this way highlight the architecture of the garden area.

Because of their association with the myths of the Greek god Hercules, these orange trees had a great symbolic meaning. The fruit of the citrus plants was regarded as the Golden Apple

which Hercules was to fetch out of the garden of the Hesperide for the ruler Eurystheus, as one of his twelve labors. Therefore the owner of the plant collection was associated with the virtuous hero Hercules, so loved in the Baroque.

From October until April the Orangery, at a temperature of 5 – 8 degrees Celsius, is a winter storage space for the potted plants. Both of the Orangeries in Grosssedlitz, the Upper as well as the Lower, were built in the period 1719 – 1726.

An inventory in 1736 reported, among other details, that a collection of 1,250 orange trees were stored for the winter in Grosssedlitz.

In 1929 the last orange trees in Grosssedlitz froze, presumably because the heating failed.

It was only in 1997 that the palace management could import 150 orange trees from Tuscany, and these stand in the lower orangery level during the summer months. From 1995 to 2000 the facilities in both of the Grosssedlitz orangeries were completely modernised. The 400 or so Mediterranean potted plants are now stored for the winter in the Lower Orangery which, like the Upper Orangery, during the summer season is used for receptions, exhibitions and concerts.

Currently, the Upper Orangery also accommodates the Museum Shop and Registry Office.