



Figure 9.8 Upper part of a knife scabbard case, part of a set made for John the Intrepid, Duke of Burgundy, between 1385 and 1404, showing a watering pot used as an emblem. British Museum. From Dalton 1907, pl 39, opp p 426

help suggest the idea of an otherwise unsuspected garden.

One recipe giving such a vivid and detailed description does not mean that the plant was treated in a like manner by all gardeners. A number of contemporary and equally detailed descriptions of growing the bottle gourd, clearly produced as a result of personal experience, make no mention of watering the plant with a holed earthen pot (eg Braekman 1985, 25–6). Such variations between different descriptions of growing the same plant, and the different roots for such knowledge, suggest that they were written down from practical knowledge and experience, and



Figure 9.9 Two Saxo-Norman pots from Northampton with centrally bored holes in their bases. Two late 14th century horticultural works advise the watering of specific plants with 'automatic drip feeds' made from earthen pots which would produce holes in their bases identical to these (see text). There are many other possible explanations for such holes, some of which are discussed in the text (Photo: S Moorhouse)

were not simply literary curiosities. They are part of the very diverse evidence which suggests that there was a highly developed horticultural science in the Middle Ages, little of which has come down to us in surviving literature.

Beehives

Honey was in regular supply for a variety of uses during the Middle Ages. Fermented honey formed the staple drink of mead until superseded by ale and later by beer. It was a common sweetener, was used extensively as a preservative and also as a soother in otherwise bitter tasting medicines. The importance of honey gave rise to the hive becoming a manorial monopoly in some regions during the Middle Ages. Typically, honey was mass produced by institutions and organisations, and apiaries were commonly found in the manorial complex and monastery, and on their estates. They were sited in the places where bees found it most suitable to pollinate: apple blossom and plants such as lavender, marjoram, and thyme found groups of hives sited in orchards and herb gardens, two locations which would keep the mass of bees away from the main living area.

Medieval hives were made in a variety of materials, the most common being the straw hive or skep, most of which would rarely survive in the archaeological record. That pottery hives were used is hinted at only obliquely in the documents. In describing the keeping of bees, Palladius recommends the use of a variety of materials for the hive, but pours scorn on the ceramic hive: 'but

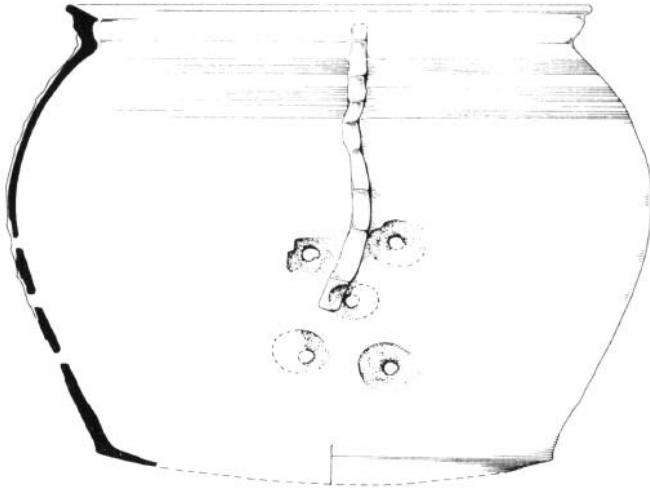


Figure 9.10 Pottery jar from Borough High Street, Southwark, London, with five secondary holes bored in the midriff of the vessel. Pots with similar patterns of secondary holes from Roman Britain have been interpreted as possible beehives (see text). From Thorn 1978, 136, fig 53, no 35. Scale 1:4

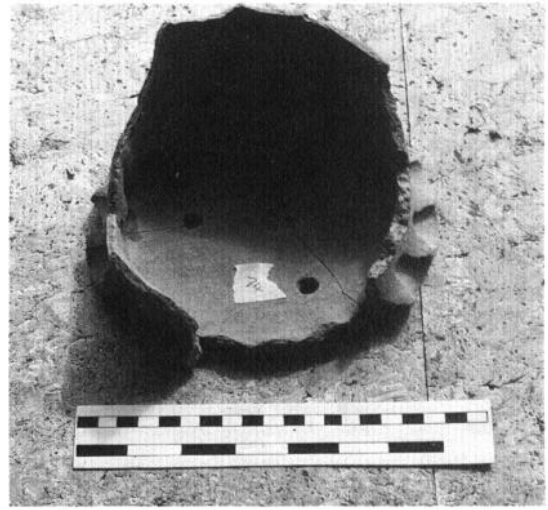


Figure 9.11 Medieval jug base from Canterbury, Kent, with three secondary symmetrically placed holes drilled through the base. Many pottery vessels are known with secondary holes piercing their bodies, some in patterns but mostly random, found on all parts of the vessel from rim to base. The documents suggest many functions but some are probably beehives (see text) (Photo: S Moorhouse)

potter's hives thou forsake' (Lodge 1873, 38, 1. 1050). While it could be argued that Palladius' text was classical in origin, and therefore not wholly reflecting medieval practices, a view now thought unlikely (see above), the use of pottery hives is attested in another source, since they are occasionally referred to as purchases in manorial accounts (J le, Patourel, pers comm).

The absence of pottery hives from excavated material is probably due to a failure to recognise them. One distinctive pottery bowl form with shallow, inward sloping sides found mainly in the western part of the country was originally thought to be the base of a hive with a superstructure in other materials (Musty *et al* 1969, 107), but more recent thoughts favour it as a dairying vessel (Sell 1984).

Ethnographic parallels show that a variety of ceramic shapes could be used as beehives, or as parts of them, often by secondary holes drilled or bored through the pots (Crane 1983, 35–7, 45–51, 57–8, 71–5, 111–15, 194, 197–202). Many medieval pots have secondary holes penetrating various parts of the body, often more than one and sometimes in patterns (eg Figs 9.10, 9.11). The findspots of some of the pots, the positions of the holes, the evidence of use (such as wear marks, sooting, and residues), and the documentary evidence suggest as many different uses as perhaps there are different positions of holes (Moorhouse in prep). The extensive use of adapted pots as hives in other parts of the world, and their use in Roman

Britain (Crane 1983, 113–14), suggest that unsuspected medieval pottery hives may be more common than is at present appreciated. Two factors may help suggest a beehive function as opposed to the many other uses: the pot is found on a site or a part of it where bee keeping could be expected, and, more importantly, the holes in the pot are no smaller than 8mm in diameter, for that is the smallest opening that a bee could get through (Crane 1983, 113–15). It is also possible that chemical analysis of their interiors (whether any residues are visible or not) may detect use as a hive.

Preserving garden produce

The preserving of foodstuff in earthen pots was practised in this country from the Roman period, if not before (Wilson 1973, *et passim*). In the Middle Ages, a wide range of eatables was kept in a variety of preservatives: a late 15th century recipe describes the preservation of venison sealed under honey in an earthenware pot (Morris 1862, 33). Household treatises and cookery books suggest that the use of pots for preservation became more common and diversified during the 16th century, while in the following century fish pies gave way to potted fish, which became big business, travelling in quantity from the west country and the north-west to London (Wilson 1973, 422, 'potting').

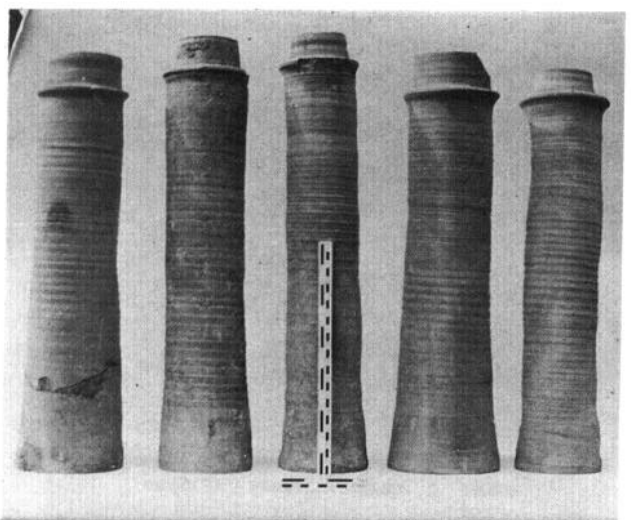


Figure 9.12 Ceramic water pipes from Basing House, Hampshire, dating to c 1540. The flanged end is one of the commonest forms (see Fig 9.15), but all types were interchangeable and a number have been found in the same drain (Photo: S Moorhouse)

The preservation of garden fruit in earthen pots appears to have been widespread and varied during the Middle Ages. Palladius describes a number of fruits grown in the country which were so preserved. Castimomial liquid prepared from pears was sealed in earthen pots for three months, apples were packed in pitched earthen pots, oranges kept in a closed pot and stored in darkness, medlars kept in pitched pots, chestnuts kept in earthen pots, and figs were preserved, packed into a stoneware pot (*stene*), with leaves placed between the pot and the figs (Lodge 1873, 90, 93, 121, 122, 185, 218). The Goodman of Paris gives detailed instructions to his wife for preserving nuts, carrots, turnips, choke, pears, and pumpkins by suspending them in honey in an earthen pot or little cask (Power 1928, 296–7). It is often suspected that Palladius' classical roots mean that he cannot be used as a reflection of medieval horticultural practices. That the advice given was practised is shown by numerous recipes for preserving fruit, scattered amongst late medieval commonplace books and other manuscript compilations, copied down as practical *aides memoires* by their authors for later use. A 15th century recipe for keeping cherries, bullaces, and plums 'until Christmas', describes how they should be placed, unbruised, in honey in an earthen pot, which is then filled with honey to cover the fruit (Trinity College, Cambridge, MS 0.2.13, fol 83r).

It is conceivable that these pots may not have been kept in the garden, but in some dark storage room within the house or farm complex. Other methods of preservation in pots almost certainly involved outside storage. Palladius advises that soft apples could be preserved by putting them in small



Figure 9.13 Ceramic junction box and pottery water pipes, part of an extensive and sophisticated medieval pottery water system uncovered at Glenluce Abbey, Dumfries, during clearance work in the 1930s (Photo: J le Patourel)

earthen pots, whose mouths were then sealed with clay and then trodden down in a hole two feet deep (Lodge 1873, 53, 1. 253). Of the many suggested methods of preserving pears, two involved the burial of earthen pots. In the first, prepared pears were placed in a pitched earthen pot and buried in the ground near a stream, while in the second prepared pears were placed in a pitched earthenware pot, whose mouth was then sealed with clay and then buried under mould in the garden 'as the sun all day upon it shine' (Lodge 1873, 89, 1. 786–99). Many purposely buried earthenware pots have been excavated, their positions and the documentary evidence suggesting many different purposes (Moorhouse in prep). Some have been recovered from what could be termed the garden areas of peasant or manorial holdings. Excavation of a small peasant farm complex at Sadler's Wood (Oxfordshire), recovered two pots buried upright outside and to the west of the 14th century building complex (Chambers 1973, 151, fig 3, 162, 164, fig 9, nos 1, 2). No function for the pots was suggested in the report, but a number of possibilities could be suggested from the documents. It is only by excavating such pots with their surroundings as archaeological features in their own right, and by chemical analysis of their inner surfaces, that we will learn more about the kinds of practices revealed by Palladius and other sources.

Water supply

Water was an essential element in all types of garden. In pleasure gardens it formed an ornamental feature, either as open water such as lakes or watercourses, or piped to feed fountains, baths, cisterns, and conduits (Harvey 1981, 11, 88, 114). Documents suggest that much of the piping was achieved by lead conduit (eg Salzman 1967,