

The anonymous Almanach de flore: the garden of Malmaison in decline

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Hans Walter Lack & Katrin Böhme

Abstract

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The *Almanach de flore* is an exceedingly rare print which has escaped the attention of the bibliographers of taxonomic literature. Published in Paris in two issues in 1817 and 1818, it contains among others the description and illustration of sixteen plants in cultivation in the garden of Malmaison, which was owned at that time by Napoleon's adopted son Eugène de Beauharnais. No author is given in this volume in duodecimo but evidence is presented that Étienne Soulangé-Bodin, the intendant of Malmaison at the time, is most likely to have written the botanical texts. The twelve illustrations are colour prints, five of which are based on watercolours by Pancrace Bessa. Among the sixteen species described, a single one, *Erica tamnoides* Soul.-Bod. (*Ericaceae*), had his name validated in the *Almanach de flore*; it is regarded as a later synonym for *E. fastigiata* L. The spectrum of plants dealt with in this book adds significantly to our knowledge of the inventory of the garden at Malmaison which was then in decline and later given up and sold.

Keywords

Almanach de flore – History of botany – Horticulture – Lectotype – Malmaison

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Introduction

Almanacs were originally astronomical-astrological calendars typically published annually, for example with information on the times of sunrise and sunset, moon phases, eclipses, ecclesiastical anniversaries and saints' days (SÜHRING, 2024). Increasingly over time they also contained literary texts, historical reports or treatises on travel, culture and nature. During the course of the eighteenth century with the separation of calendar and text, they took the character of yearbooks and were aimed at different readers and interest groups. Literary almanacs, e.g., the German "Musenalmanach", with primary publication of poetic works, are best known while others dealt with fashion, theatre, travel and gardens, in particular horticulture and gardening. Consequently, these almanacs were of no interest for plant taxonomy. The *Almanach de flore* is an exception because it contains descriptions and illustrations of plants, together with a miscellany of supplementary information plus eighteen poems. The subtitle specifies that the specimens dealt with were in cultivation in the garden of Malmaison near Paris formerly owned by Josephine Bonaparte, née Tascher de la Pagerie (1763–1814), Napoleon's first wife (general background: LACK, 2004, CALLMANDER et al., 2017; LACK et al., 2024). This rare almanac has escaped the attention of the bibliographers of taxonomic literature and is missing in standard reference works such as *Thesaurus literaturae botanicae* (PRITZEL, 1871–1877) and the indispensable second edition of *Taxonomic literature* with its supplements.

The Almanach de flore

The *Almanach de flore* is a small printed book in duodecimo measuring c. 13.5 × 8.5 cm. It is of extreme rarity and known today in three variants (1) with a title-page without the year of publication, (2) with a title-page giving the year 1817 and (3) with a title-page giving the year 1818, while the text matter and the illustrations are in all other respects identical. Only variant (2) is listed in a standard bibliography for almanacs printed in Paris (GRAND-CARTERET, 1896: 456, No. 1785). Four copies are known for the variant (2), three for variant (3), a single copy for variant (1) (see Appendix). The copies marked '1818' may best be interpreted as the result of a re-issue of the copies marked '1817' and underline the annual cycle of publication characteristic for almanacs per se.

The full title page reads 'Almanach | de Flore, | ou | description | de douze plantes rares | des jardins de la Malmaison; | suivie | de plusieurs morceaux de poésie. | Orné des gravures coloriées.' [Almanac of Flora or description of twelve rare plants from the gardens of Malmaison; followed by several poems. Embellished with engravings in colour], Rosa is given as publisher, P. Didot aîné as printer (Fig. 1). The latter stands for Pierre Didot (1761–1853), one of the four brothers of the third generation of the Didot family, who was "imprimeur du Roi" [printer to the King] and the owner of a famous printing

shop in Paris. Rosa refers to Frédéric-Guillaume Rosa (?–1833) who had started as a bookbinder and book-dealer in Paris. Having received his patent in 1812, he specialized in Spanish books and Spanish translations of French books under the name "Librería española y francesa de (F.) Rosa". Rosa also had a literary cabinet in the Palais Royal, which was at that time an elegant address in the center of Paris.

The text of the Geneva copy carrying the year "1818" on its title page consists of (1) title matter, i.e. pp. [i]–[iv], (2) preface, i.e. pp. [v]–[viii], (3) main text, i.e. pp. [1]–168, (4) table of contents, i.e. pp. 169–171, (5) calendar for the year 1818, i.e. pp. [173]–[180] and (6) pages with an ornate heading for the months January to December, i.e. pp. [181]–[192]. The main text consists of botanical essays, often verbose, including plant descriptions, i.e. pp. [1]–130, and a miscellany of French poems on flowers, pp. [131]–[168]. Printed without the names of their respective authors, they fall outside the scope of this paper, but would be of interest for a specialist in French lyrical productions of the early nineteenth century. Twelve colour engravings, partly based on Pancrace Bessa (1772–1846), are bound into the botanical essays (see below).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, books were usually traded without a book-cover, i.e. unbound, and the binding was produced by a bookbinder on behalf of the customer. The binding therefore can provide information about the taste and (financial) means of the owner. All copies studied by us possess different bindings. They range from simple cardboard bindings (Amsterdam, Paris), thin cardboards covered with very smooth printed (original pink coloured) paper (Kent) and Havana-coloured calfskin (Malmaison) (LEFEBURE, 2007: 45) to precious cherry red maroquin bindings with delicate floral gold embossing on both sides of the front and back covers (Geneva). The Sydney copy is remarkable with its leather-covered slipcase and inside a bluish paper-covered cardboard slip case with fanciful floral designs around the edges, the book itself has bluish paper-covered boards. The Berlin copy, which has printed and coloured paper-covered boards with gold decorations, merits attention. The front cover shows in the centre a rural scene with a peasant ploughing his field surrounded by ornamental flower garlands (Fig. 2). The copies in Berlin, Geneva, Kent and Sydney have gilt-edged pages which emphasizes their luxurious setting, for the first two copies expensive wove paper has been used as support.

Only a few copies reveal traces of provenance. While the hand-written name of the owner in the Geneva copy is illegible, the Kent copy has two handwritten names and the year 1841 on the fly leaf. The Amsterdam copy carries the owner stamp of an Amsterdam library, the Harvard copy is part of the Julio Mario Santo Domingo Collection. The Sydney copy has a printed bookplate of Sir David Lionel Goldsmid-Salomons, 2nd Baronet (1851–1925), a barrister and scientific author. The other copies are not known to include notes on previous owners.

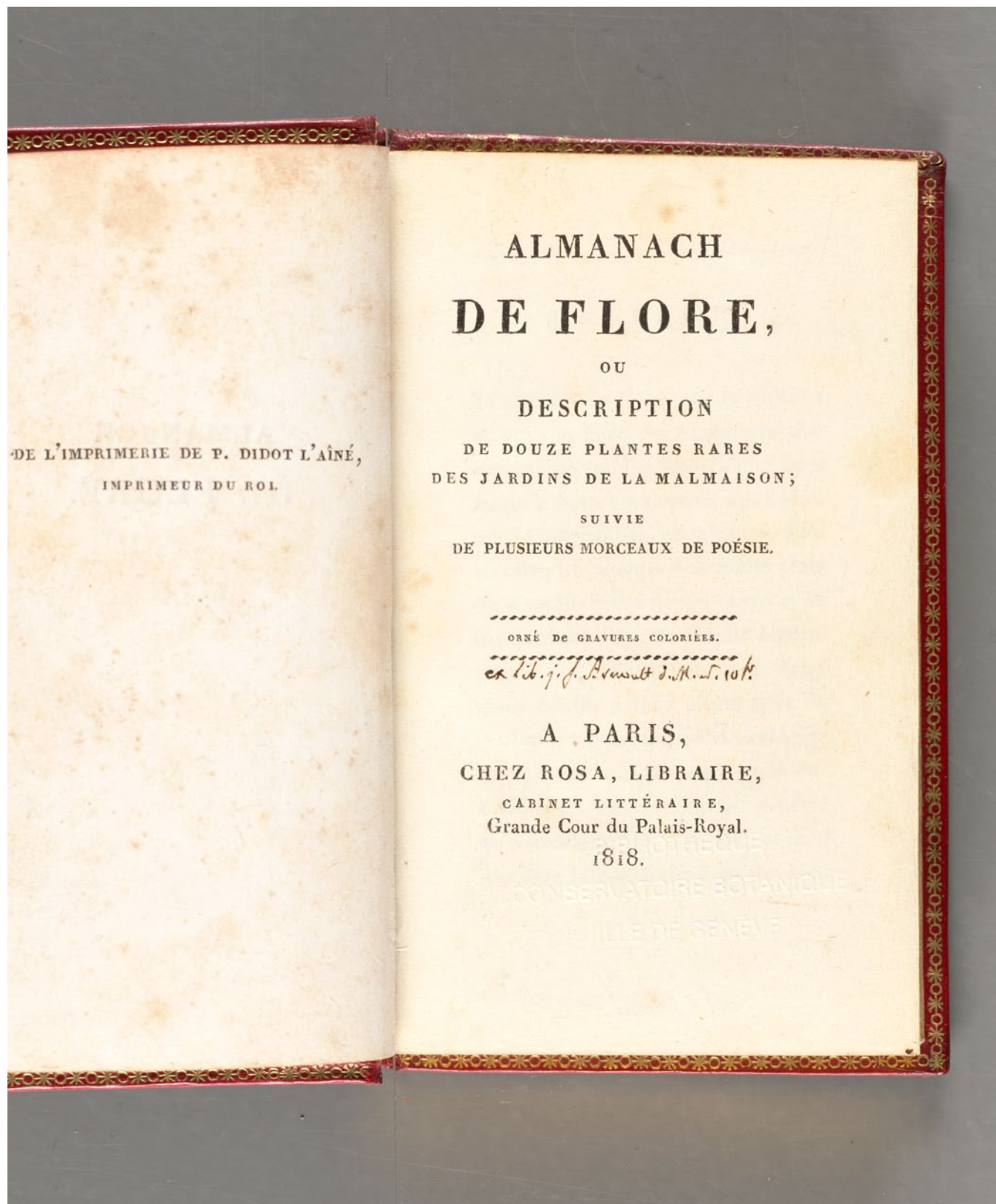


Fig. 1. – Title-page of *Almanach de flore* in Geneva.
[Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques de Genève, Bibliothèque]



Fig. 2. – Front cover of *Almanach de flore* in Berlin.
[© Staatsbibliothek, Berlin]

The putative author of the text

Ascribing the sixteen anonymous botanical texts included in the *Almanach de flore* to an author is difficult, in particular when considering that many qualified botanists and horticulturalists were living at that time in the French capital. Clearly the author was informed about the major nurseries in Paris and, furthermore, he must have had access to the garden in Malmaison which could hardly have happened without consent of Chevalier Étienne Soulange-Bodin (1774–1846), who was at that time the intendant of estate. However, there is a shibboleth embedded in the lengthy essay on the rose. In it the author compares the strength and weaknesses of the Royal Garden in Kew, the Real Jardín Botánico in Madrid, the Jardin des Plantes in Paris and the Imperial Garden in Schönbrunn with those of an unspecified garden in Moscow. While it is not unexpected to point out that, e.g., Madrid is rich in plants from Mexico and Peru, Schönbrunn in specimens from the Caribbean islands and poor in specimens from Australia, mentioning the strength of the Moscow garden in plants from the Caucasus is a great surprise (p. 17). Consulting the rich literature on Kew (e.g. AITON, 1810–1813), Madrid (e.g. CAVANILLES, 1791–1801) and Schönbrunn (e.g. JACQUIN, 1797–1804), the author could have collected a vast amount of information, but on a garden in or near Moscow? At that moment in time only catalogues on the botanic garden of Moscow University (HOFFMANN, 1808) and the famous private garden of Alexey Kirillovich Count Razumovsky (1748–1822), the minister of public education, in Gorenki near Moscow (ANON., 1808; FISCHER, 1812) existed. These were, however, lists of naked botanical names lacking descriptions and data on provenances. The seminal work on the flora of the Caucasus region, the *Flora taurico-caucasica* (MARSHALL VON BIEBERSTEIN, 1808), possesses no direct link to the gardens in Moscow. These considerations lead to the hypothesis that the putative author may himself have been to Moscow.

The number of French botanists, however, who had been to Moscow before 1816 is tiny, but there is a convincing candidate – Soulange-Bodin. Eugène de Beauharnais (1781–1824), previously viceroy of Italy and based in Milan, had appointed him chief of staff in 1807 (ANON., 1997: 211). Later, Soulange-Bodin had accompanied his master on his various travels across Europe (BERLÈSE, 1846: 490). On 14 September 1812 Napoleon, his stepson Eugène de Beauharnais, Soulange-Bodin and the French army entered Moscow and remained there until mid-October. Soon after their arrival fires broke out, which ruined the city, “an inferno in which French looters were joined by local criminals, Russian deserters and others eager to save something for themselves from the flames” (ZAMOYSKI, 2018: 531). Among others, the old botanic garden of Moscow University, the so-called Apotekarsky ogorod, in the city centre was destroyed (SOKOLOFF et al., 2002: 137). Years later, on 29 November 1826, Soulange-Bodin reminisced in a letter

written to the botanist, garden designer and author John Claudius Loudon (1783–1843). “The Germans have encamped in my garden. I have encamped in the gardens of the Germans; and it was with sword in hand that I visited the botanical collection in Schönbrunn (Vienna); Schauenburg, (near Minden); Stuttgart [Stuttgart], and Petrowskoi (Moscow). I have said of others, as they have said of me, *Barbarus per segetes!* [A barbarian in the wheat field!] It had doubtless been better for both parties to have stayed at home and planted their cabbages” (SOULANGE-BODIN, 1827: 224). As a matter of fact, Napoleon and the imperial guard resided at Petrowski Palace for a few days starting from 16 September 1812, having escaped the city in flames (BROOKS, 2006: 240) and it is likely that Soulange-Bodin stayed with them. However, the garden of Petrowski Palace, built on order of Catherine II (1729–1796), reigning empress of all the Russias, was not known for Caucasian plants, or any botanical collections at all. Therefore, it is more plausible to assume that the private garden of Count Razumovsky at Gorenki, then the richest in Russia (SOKOLOFF et al., 2002: 182–184; ELINA, 2012: 62) and apparently not effected by war action, was subsequently visited by Soulange-Bodin. Since “sword in hand” is explicitly mentioned in the text cited above, the visit to the garden of Schönbrunn must have happened in the summer of 1809. Eugène de Beauharnais was one of the commanders in the battle of Wagram on 5–6 July 1809 and was probably present when the Treaty of Schönbrunn was signed on 14 October 1809; Soulange-Bodin may well have accompanied him. After the fall of Napoleon, Eugène de Beauharnais took part in the Congress of Vienna (SCHNEIDER & WERNER, 2015), but there is no evidence that Soulange-Bodin, who was then already engaged in estate matters in Malmaison, joined him for this occasion.

There is another fact. Four of the sixteen plants described in the *Almanach de flore* belong to the genus *Erica* L. and the cultivation of heaths became the subject of a booklet published by Soulange-Bodin a decade later (SOULANGE-BODIN, 1828). Furthermore, an anonymous report (ANON., 1834: [2]) states that he had been a pupil of Antoine-Laurent de Jussieu (1748–1836), André Thouin (1742–1824) and the latter’s successor in the chair Louis Augustin Guillaume Bosc d’Antic (1759–1828), all three professors at the Muséum d’Histoire naturelle in Paris. All these facts indicate that Soulange-Bodin was a competent botanist and make it plausible to assume that the botanical texts of the *Almanach de flore* came from his pen. Therefore the anonymous *Album de flore* and new name in the genus *Erica* are ascribed here to him.

The plants described and depicted

Fifteen of the sixteen species (Table 1) dealt with in the *Almanach de flore* are of minor interest to the taxonomist, because they had already been known for decades or even centuries, but they are of relevance to the horticulturist. They underline that

the plants described and depicted in the two great flower books on Malmaison, *Jardin de la Malmaison* (VENTENAT, 1803–1805) and *Description des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre* (BONPLAND, 1812–1817), represent only the tiny fraction which the respective authors regarded as new to science or of special interest. The profusion of other species in cultivation in Malmaison were never properly listed, though the inventory taken after the death of Josephine (GRANDJEAN, 1964: 276–278) enables the reader to get a vague idea of the collection.

While the preface, probably written by the publisher, claims that the choicest plants from China and the Cape of Good Hope were selected for the *Almanach de flore*, this is definitely incorrect. The reference to these distant regions and implicitly to the exclusivity of the plants was almost certainly included to attract attention and promote sales. Only *Camellia japonica* L., *Camphora officinarum* Boerh. ex Fabr., *Paeonia ×suffruticosa* Andrews and *Rosa ×odorata* (Andrews) Sweet occur naturally in China or have been crossed and selected in this country, while the four species of heaths and *Oxalis pes-caprae* L. are native in South Africa. By contrast, *Gentiana verna* L. has a wide Eurasian distribution and *Lupinus angustifolius* L. is known from Europe and the Mediterranean area. *Jatropha integerrima* Jacq. is an endemic of the island of Cuba, *Ricinus communis* L. a native in Ethiopia and Somalia, while the three further representatives of the laurel family comprise palae- and neotropical species. Among these are *Cinnamomum verum* J. Presl and *Persea americana* Mill., both of major economic importance. A single species described and depicted in the *Almanach de flore* was regarded as new to science by Soulange-Bodin, i.e., *Erica tamnoides* Soul.-Bod., spelt “E. tamnojdès” on the plate (see Table 1), adding a note that it was also available at the Cels nursery. As a matter of fact, in the year 1817 this name appeared as an undescribed or naked name in the first printed catalogue of the nursery of François Cels (1771–1832) in Montrouge near Paris (ANON., 1817), albeit in the spelling “rhamnoides”. Since his father Jacques Philippe Martin Cels (1740–1806) had been an important supplier to Josephine, it is likely that living material of this heath was also provided by this nursery to Malmaison. So far, no herbarium specimen could be located which can be correlated with this protologue published in the *Almanach de flore*. It merits attention that the name *Erica tamnoides* validated according to the rules in the *Almanach de flore* has not been listed in the International Plant Names Index (IPNI, 2024) but only *E. thamnoides* E.G.H. Oliv. (OLIVER, 2000: 330). The name *E. rhamnoides* (see above) was also never validated. By contrast, the name *E. conventria* is best interpreted as a misprint for *E. coventrya* Andrews (Table 1).

The pertinent texts offer much more than just detailed plant descriptions, they include ample information ranging from provenance of the cultivated material and dates of introduction to hints on cultivation, plant uses and, occasionally,

etymology. Soulange-Bodin turns out to be well informed about botanical collectors in tropical America, listing Aimé Bonpland (1773–1858), Vincente Cervantes (1758–1829), Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), José Mariano Mocino y Losada (1757–1820), José Celestino Mutis (1732–1808), José Antonio Pavón y Jiménez (1754–1844), Hipólito Ruiz López (1754–1816), Martín de Sessé y Lacasta (1751–1808), Olof Swartz (1760–1818) and Juan José Tafalla Navascués (1755–1811), the latter spelt “Fafalla” (SOULANGE-BODIN, 1817: 30). Furthermore, he repeatedly refers to the two earlier works on the garden at Malmaison (VENTENAT, 1803–1805; BONPLAND, 1812–1817) and to taxonomic monographs such as those on the genus *Erica* (ANDREWS, 1802–1830) and on the genus *Oxalis* L. (JACQUIN, 1794). Likewise, several nurseries are mentioned by Soulange-Bodin, among them those of André Dupont (1742–1817) and Louis Claude Noisette (1772–1849) in Paris and of Lee & Kennedy in Hammersmith (now a district of West London), then owned by James Lee (1754–1824) and Lewis Kennedy (1789–1877).

It is unclear why these sixteen species were selected to be included in the *Almanach de flore*. Some may have been regarded as visually attractive, like the double cultivar of *Paeonia ×suffruticosa* (Fig. 3) and a variegated double form of *Camellia japonica*. Fragrance seems also to have played a role, since *Cinnamomum verum*, *Paeonia ×suffruticosa*, *Rosa ×odorata* emit scent generally regarded as pleasant. Culinary use (e.g. *Persea americana*) may also have been a motive for inclusion as well as medicinal applications (e.g. *Camphora officinarum*, *Sassafras albidum* (Nutt.) Nees). In short, the little volume was definitely not intended for botanists, but for the “amis de Flore [friends of Flora]”. This is explicitly stated in the publisher’s preface (vii), which ends with the well-known quotation taken from Horace “Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci [He, who has blended the useful with the sweet, has gained every point]”.

The twelve illustrations are framed colour engravings of excellent quality which because of their small format lack analyses. On the left-hand lower margin five (not eight as indicated in LEFEBURE, 2007: 46) engravings are marked ‘Bessa’ (see Tab. 2, Fig. 3, 4), standing for Pancrace Bessa (BRUNO, 2008). He was one of the four botanical illustrators then active in Paris known as the “unsurpassable quartet” (BAYSER, 2006), the others being Pierre-Joseph Redouté (1759–1840), Pierre Jean François Turpin (1775–1840) and Pierre Antoine Poiteau (1766–1854). The present where-abouts of the watercolours published as colour prints in the *Almanach de flore* remain unknown. Interestingly, the illustration showing *Paeonia ×suffruticosa*, i.e. tab. [4], has been copied and reduced in size, from the engraving published in the *Description des plantes rares cultivées à Malmaison et à Navarre* (BONPLAND, 1812–1817: tab. 23). The latter is based on a watercolour by Pierre-Joseph Redouté, who had been appointed flower painter of Empress Josephine in March 1805. There is

one further overlap between the *Description* and the *Almanach de flore*: in both works an illustration of *Erica vestita* Thunb. is included (see Tab. 2), though in this case the colour engraving based on Bessa and published in the former work (BONPLAND, 1812–1817: tab. 43) has not been copied.

Additionally, a tiny number of species is explicitly mentioned in the text as being in cultivation in Malmaison, e.g., *Neolitsea cassia* (L.) Kosterm. (*Lauraceae*) (SOULANGE-BODIN, 1817: 86), while other species referred to in the descriptions, among them *Rosa persica* J.F. Gmel. (*Rosaceae*) (LACK & CALLMANDER, 2024) under the name *R. monophylla* Dum. Cours. (SOULANGE-BODIN, 1817: 7) or *Gentiana lutea* L. (*Gentianeae*) (SOULANGE-BODIN 1817: 121), are not of relevance here.

It is a notable fact that Josephine is not mentioned anywhere in the text, although it was clearly a small selection of her collection which was described and commented on by the anonymous author. This is best understood in the context of the political climate of the years 1817–1818. The Bourbon family was back in power, the Restauration reigned in Paris and mentioning the name of Napoleon's first wife was clearly considered inopportune.

The garden of Malmaison in decline

Empress Josephine had died intestate on 29 May 1814. The two children by her first marriage Eugène de Beauharnais,

who by this time had relinquished his control as viceroy of the kingdom of Italy, and Hortense de Beauharnais (1783–1837), since 1810 following her husband's abdication no longer Queen of Holland, became her legal heirs. Josephine left behind immense wealth but also astronomic levels of debts. The division of Josephine's estate was negotiated between Soulangue-Bodin for Eugène and Michel-Victor-Frédéric Moisson de Vaux, Baron de Moisson (1764–1840) for Hortense (GRANDJEAN, 1964). It led to an arrangement which had amongst others the consequence that the estate of Malmaison became the property of Eugène. Furthermore Soulangue-Bodin also successfully argued that the collection of watercolours prepared by Pierre-Joseph Redouté for his *Les Liliacées* (REDOUTÉ, 1802–1815) should not be divided between the two heirs. In the end this priceless material was also attributed to Eugène. In order to pay off the accumulated debts, Soulangue-Bodin arranged the sale of the Palais Beauharnais in Paris to Friedrich Wilhelm III, King of Prussia (1770–1840) in 1817–1818 (HAMMER, 1983: 132). As Eugène's legal representative in France, Soulangue-Bodin was bound to sell parts of the inventory of Malmaison and to reduce the expenditure for the living collections, i.e., the menagerie and the garden. Apparently, this was a gradual process and at least a single herbarium specimen of an undetermined *Erica* species labelled “h. malm. 23 7^b 1815” [hortus Malmaison 23 September 1815] (G00326325) survives

Table 1. – List of plants described and depicted in the *Almanach de flore* arranged according to families. Bessa means illustration based on drawing by Pancrace Bessa; an asterisk indicates name validated in the *Almanach de flore*.

Family	Name	Pages	Illustration	Current accepted name
<i>Ericaceae</i>	<i>Erica conventria</i> [for coventrya]	128–130	t. [12] Bessa	<i>Erica infundibuliformis</i> Andrews
	<i>Erica longiflora</i>	25–36	t. [2] Bessa [as <i>E. grandiflora</i>]	<i>Erica grandiflora</i> L. f.
	<i>Erica tamnoides</i> *	125–128	t. [11] Bessa [as <i>E. tomnoydès</i>]	<i>Erica fastigiata</i> L.
	<i>Erica vestita</i>	36–43	t. [3]	<i>Erica vestita</i> Thunb.
<i>Euphorbiaceae</i>	<i>Jatropha pandurifolia</i>	101–112	t. [10]	<i>Jatropha integerrima</i> Jacq.
	<i>Ricinus communis</i>	113–116	–	<i>Ricinus communis</i> L.
<i>Fabaceae</i>	<i>Lupinus varius</i>	69–75	t. [6]	<i>Lupinus angustifolius</i> L.
<i>Gentianaceae</i>	<i>Gentiana verna</i>	117–124	t. [9]	<i>Gentiana verna</i> L.
<i>Lauraceae</i>	<i>Laurus camphora</i>	75–85	t. [7]	<i>Camphora officinarum</i> Boerh. ex Fabr.
	<i>Laurus cinnamomum</i>	85–88	–	<i>Cinnamomum verum</i> J. Presl
	<i>Laurus persea</i>	88–90	–	<i>Persea americana</i> Mill.
	<i>Laurus sassafras</i>	91–94	–	<i>Sassafras albidum</i> (Nutt.) Nees
<i>Oxalidaceae</i>	<i>Oxalis lutea</i>	94–101	t. [8]	<i>Oxalis pes-caprae</i> L.
<i>Paeoniaceae</i>	<i>Paeonia moutan</i>	43–56	f. [4]	<i>Paeonia x suffruticosa</i> Andrews
<i>Rosaceae</i>	La rose à odeur du thé	[5]–24	t. [1] Bessa	<i>Rosa x odorata</i> (Andrews) Sweet
<i>Theaceae</i>	<i>Camelia japonica</i>	57–68	t. [5] Bessa	<i>Camellia japonica</i> L.



Fig. 3. – Colour copper engraving of *Paeonia x suffruticosa* Andrews.

[Soulange-Bodin, *Almanach de flore*, tab. [4], 1818; Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques de Genève, Bibliothèque]



Fig. 4. – Colour copper engraving of *Jatropha integerrima* Jacq. based on P. Bessa.

[Soulange-Bodin, *Almanach de flore*, tab. [10], 1818; Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques de Genève, Bibliothèque]

from the first year after the death of the empress. The handwriting is by Augustin-Pyramus de Candolle (1778–1841), professor of botany at Montpellier University, who had arrived in Paris from Geneva on 16 August 1815, just two months after Napoleon's defeat in the battle of Waterloo, and was to depart for England in January 1816 (CANDOLLE, 2004: 314–317). Candolle's interest in the collections of genus *Erica* in cultivation on the estate is no surprise. They were famous, with the *Almanach de flore* mentioning that during Malmaison's time of splendour 150 species of the genus *Erica* had been in cultivation (SOULANGE-BODIN, 1817: 33) as well as more than forty species of the genus *Oxalis* (SOULANGE-BODIN, 1817: 100).

Subsequently Malmaison was to become something of a pilgrimage site for garden enthusiasts. In autumn 1817 a small delegation of the Caledonian Horticultural Society, among them the printer, horticulturist and first secretary of this society Patrick Neill (1776–1851), visited the estate and published a detailed report including a plan and a section of the large hot house (ANON., 1823: 396–405). He noted “Although the grounds are now in some measure neglected and out of repair, they are still very fine ... But unfortunately she [Josephine] died; and her heirs cared little about plants, botanists and artists ... The collection is still very rich, although we are given to understand that some of the best plants have been removed; while many rare ones have unavoidably perished, no adequate encouragement being given for keeping up, far less for increasing, the collection. In one of the conservatories, the original bulb of *Brunsvigia Josephinae* [*B. josephinae* (Redouté) Ker-Gawl.] was pointed out to us. It had been procured from the Cape of Good Hope by a Dutch collector, and was sent from Holland to the Empress ... A small greenhouse seems chiefly appropriate to the genera *Erica*, *Diosma* and *Struthiola*, from the Cape of Good Hope; but the number of species of Cape heaths here cultivated is insignificant...”.

A letter from Soulange-Bodin to Eugène of 22 April 1818 sheds additional light on the pressure exerted on him to reduce the number of specimens in cultivation in Malmaison (JOUANIN, 1997: 174). Confronted with the wish of the “jardinier bavarois [Bavarian gardener]”, apparently the head gardener of Max Joseph I, King of Bavaria (1756–1825) and Eugène's father-in-law, to give away the *Brunsvigia josephinae* and the “*Pinus Columbaria*” [probably *Araucaria heterophylla* (Salisb.) Franco] he told his superior “Si ces deux plantes n'étaient uniques que dans l'établissement de la Malmaison, je ne ferais point ici d'observations qui me missent en contradiction avec mon précédent rapport. Mais le *Pinus Columbaria* est unique en France ... il est presque intransportable ... Quant à l'*amaryllis Josephina*, il faudrait la céder sous aucun rapport ... d'autant qu'il y a déjà à Munich, un ou deux petits oignons semblables, provenant de semis qui ont été faits. C'est moi même qui en fis l'envoi [In case these two plants were only unique items in Malmaison, I would not make here any

observations which would contradict what I said in my previous report. But the *Pinus Columbaria* is unique in France ... it is almost impossible to have it transferred ... As for the *amaryllis Josephina*, it must not be given away under any circumstance ... in particular since there are already in Munich, one or two similar small bulbs, from the seeds it had formed. It was me, who had sent them]”. Furthermore, Soulange-Bodin even referred Eugène, then just made Duke of Leuchtenberg and Prince of Eichstätt by his father-in-law, to the watercolour of the *Brunsvigia josephinae* prepared by Pierre-Joseph Redouté citing even the plate number. At that moment in time this drawing on vellum was in the possession of Eugène and kept in Munich.¹ These written lines document both Soulange-Bodin's genuine knowledge of the plants under his care and his skill in arguing against giving up the two specimens, which would be “éternellement regrettés par nos Botanistes français [regretted for-ever by our French botanists]”.

Taxonomic note

Erica fastigiata L., Mant. Pl.: 66. 1767.

Lectotypus (designated by E.G.H. Oliver in JARVIS, 2007: 499): **SOUTH AFRICA**: sine loco, s.d., *N.L. Burman 13* (LINN 498.72 image!).

= *Erica tamnoides* Soul.-Bod., *Almanach de flore* 125. 1817, **syn. nov.** **Lectotypus** (designated here): [icon] (Soulange-Bodin, *Almanach* tab. [11]. 1817) (Fig. 5).

Epilogue

Gardens in decline rarely attract the attention of the visitor, nor have almanacs previously been regarded as of any interest for botanists. The *Almanach de flore* offers precisely this look into the plant collections at Malmaison in the years before Eugène's widow Auguste Amalie Ludovika (1788–1851) sold the estate stripped of its inventory to a consortium of bankers in March 1827. Why the author of the botanical texts published in this almanac did not reveal his identity, remains an enigma. Assuming that the proposed ascription to Soulange-Bodin is correct, it was the first publication for a man who subsequently became a prolific writer of horticultural texts (ANON., 1834) and famous for a hybrid he produced in c. 1820. This is *Magnolia ×soulangeana* Soul.-Bod., the pentaploid sterile cross between the tetraploid *M. liliiflora* Desr. and the hexaploid *M. denudata* Desr., both species being native in China (e.g. TRESEDER, 1978: 172). It is an ornamental tree showing hybrid vigor, widely seen cultivated in parks and gardens on five continents and no doubt Soulange-Bodin's most important contribution to horticulture.

1 Now: Philadelphia, PA, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Acc. No. 2012-159-2.



Fig. 5. – Lectotype of *Erica tamnoides* Soul.-Bod. Colour copper engraving based on P. Bessa.
[Soulange-Bodin, *Almanach de flore*, tab. [11], 1818; Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques de Genève, Bibliothèque]

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- Appendix.** – List of copies of the *Almanach de flore* located in public libraries. Copies published in 1818 are marked with an asterisk.
- Amsterdam**
Bibliotheek Universiteit van Amsterdam, shelf mark UBM: XX 645.
Note. – No date given on the title page.
- Berlin**
Staatsbibliothek, shelf mark: 50 PA 1564-1817: EBD.
- Cambridge*, MA**
Harvard University, Ernst Mayr Library if the Museum of Comparative Zoology and Harvard Botany Library, shelf mark: GEN Bot Gard 44 A56 1818.
- Geneva***
Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques, Bibliothèque, shelf mark: O Sou.
- Kent, OH**
Kent State University Library, shelf mark: SB466.F88 M3 1817.
- Paris**
Bibliothèque nationale de France, shelf mark: Ye-13983 (1817).
- Pittsburgh, PA**
Carnegie Mellon University, Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, Library, shelf mark: Main – (HIBD); DQ2 A445 RR.
- Rueil-Malmaison***
Musée national des châteaux de Malmaison et de Bois-Préau, Bibliothèque, shelf mark: MM 2007.11.1.
Note. – A selection of illustrations of this copy is available online at https://musees-nationaux-malmaison.fr/musee-maisonbonaparte/phototheque/oeuvres/almanach-de-flore-ou-description-de-douze-plantes-rares-des-jardins-de-la-malmaison_papier_velin_parchemin.
- Sydney**
State Library of New South Wales, shelf mark: MacPherson/0170.