MONASTIC GARDENS

I. Introduction

II. Background information
   A. Rule of Saint Benedict
   B. Centers of learning

III. Charlemagne
   A. Re-civilization of Europe
   B. Regularize monastic observance
   C. Alcuin of York
   D. Capitulare de villis

IV. Walafrid Strabo (808 - 849)
   A. abbey of Reichenau near Lake Constance
   B. Poem called "Hortulus" described 23 plants he knew and obviously loved

      Though a life of retreat offers various joys
      None, I think, will compare with the time one employs
      In the study of herbs or in striving to gain
      Some practical knowledge of nature's domain.
      Get a garden! What kind you get it matters not!

V. A Monastic garden
   A. always enclosed
   B. long raised beds with easy access from both sides
      Kitchen beds:
      Medicinal
      Brewer's Herbs:
      Strewing Herbs

VI. Later developments
   Meditation gardens
   Paradisum
   Hortus Inclusus

Modern Monastic Herb Gardens
England: St. Mary de Haura in southeast England

Buckfast Abbey
Famous for lavender gardens, also physic garden, poisonous surrounded by a small moat, meditation garden with scented herbs and flowers, with a fountain that was once part of a cider press.

Jarrow
St. Bede the Venerable lived at Jarrow in Northumbria. They have reproduced the medieval herb garden there. It is maintained by a dedicated team of volunteers.

France: L’abbaye Royale to Fontevreau in the Loire Valley
Vegetable garden now given over to boxwood hedges enclosing grass
Also some medicinal herbs (including cocklebur and cannbis!)

US The Bonnefont Cloister Herb Garden associated with the Cloisters in NY
The herb garden in the Bonnefont cloister contains more than 250 species of plants which were grown during the Middle Ages. Its design is typical of a medieval monastery garden plan, but no attempt was made to replicate any one monastic garden in particular. Many medieval sources were referenced to ensure that the choice of plants was historically accurate. The raised beds, wattle fences, and central wellhead are features of a medieval garden.

Some Web Resources

Medieval gardens in general
http://www.gallowglass.org/jadwiga/herbs/medievalgardens.htm
http://hcs.osu.edu/hort/history.html

Capitulare de villis
http://www.biozac.de/biozac/capvil/karl_f.htm

Plan of Saint Gall
http://www.stgallplan.org/

Monastic Herb Garden Design
http://www.superbherbs.net/design.htm
http://www.gardenhistoryinfo.com/gardenpages/monasticgardens.html

Books
Brother Cadfael’s Garden by Rob Talbot and Robin Whiteman (Little, Brown and Co., 1996)
In a Monastery Garden by Elizabeth and Reginald Peplow (David and Charles, 1988)
Monastic Gardens by Mick Hales (Harry N. Abrams, 2000)