Three Lists, One Garden

The Capitulare de Villis (c. 800), the Plan of St Gall (c. 820) and Walahfrid Strabo's Hortulus (c. 840s), cross-referenced plant by plant

Carolyn Smith-Kizer · At Charlemagne's Behest · atcharlemagnesbehest.com

What the cross-reference shows

- **Every plant and tree named on the St Gall plan also appears in chapter 70 of the Capitulare de Villis.** All 18 kitchen beds, all 16 physic beds and all 14 orchard trees. The plan reads like a selection from Charlemagne's list, sorted by use.
- **Thirteen plants run through all three sources:** sage, rue, fennel, iris, lovage, lily, mint, pennyroyal, rose, chervil, poppy, celery and radish. These are the core of the Carolingian garden.
- **Five plants are in the Hortulus but on neither earlier list:** wormwood, horehound, betony, agrimony and ambrosia. They are Walahfrid's own additions, and four of the five are bitter herbs.
- **Five more are shared by the Capitulare and the Hortulus but missing from the plan:** southernwood, bottle gourd, melon, clary and catmint.
- **Savory is the only plant placed in both St Gall gardens,** the kitchen beds and the physic beds.
- **The Capitulare is much the largest list.** Its plants that appear in neither later source include the dangerous ones (savin, squill, colocynth, asarabacca, caper spurge), the dye plant madder, and field crops such as broad beans and peas.

A (?) marks a plant whose modern identification is debated. CdV = Capitulare de Villis; SG = Plan of St Gall. Latin spellings follow each source in order: Capitulare / St Gall / Hortulus.

1. In all three sources (13)

The backbone of the Carolingian garden: named by Charlemagne's capitulary, drawn on the St Gall plan, and sung by Walahfrid.

Plant	Botanical name	CdV	SG kitchen	SG physic	SG orchard	Hortulus	Latin as written / notes
Sage	*Salvia officinalis*	✓		✓		✓	salviam / salvia / salvia. First plant in the Hortulus.
Rue	*Ruta graveolens*	✓		✓		✓	rutam / ruta / ruta. Second in the Hortulus.
Fennel	*Foeniculum vulgare*	✓		✓		✓	fenicolum / feniculum / feniculum.
Iris	*Iris germanica (or I. florentina)*	✓		✓		✓	gladiolum / gladiola / gladiola. Latin gladiolus means iris here, not the modern gladiolus.
Lovage	*Levisticum officinale*	✓		✓		✓	levisticum / lubestico / lybisticum.

Plant	Botanical name	CdV	SG kitchen	SG physic	SG orchard	Hortulus	Latin as written / notes
Lily	*Lilium candidum*	✓		✓		✓	lilium in all three. The Madonna lily.
Mint	*Mentha spp.*	✓		✓		✓	mentam / menta / menta. Hortulus says the kinds are too many to count.
Pennyroyal	*Mentha pulegium*	✓		✓		✓	puledium / pulegium / pulegium.
Rose	*Rosa gallica and other old roses*	✓		✓		✓	rosas / rosas / rosa. Last plant in the Hortulus.
Chervil	*Anthriscus cerefolium*	✓	✓			✓	cerfolium / cerefolium / cerefolium.
Poppy	*Papaver somniferum*	✓	✓			✓	papaver. St Gall kitchen garden has two poppy beds, papaver and magones (Horn & Born).
Celery (smallage)	*Apium graveolens*	✓	✓			✓	apium in all three. A leafy wild-type celery, not modern stalk celery.
Radish	*Raphanus sativus*	✓	✓			✓	radices / radices / raphanum.

2. Capitulare and St Gall, not in the Hortulus (33)

Kitchen staples, the rest of the physic garden, and the orchard trees. Walahfrid was writing about the herbs in his own plot, so the pottage vegetables and fruit trees drop out of his poem.

Plant	Botanical name	CdV	SG kitchen	SG physic	SG orchard	Hortulus	Latin as written / notes
Onion	*Allium cepa*	✓	✓				cepas / cepas.
Leek	*Allium porrum*	✓	✓				porros / porros.
Garlic	*Allium sativum*	✓	✓				alia / alias. One bed on the plan as usually transcribed.
Shallot	*Allium cepa var. aggregatum*	✓	✓				ascalonicas / ascolonias.
Coriander	*Coriandrum sativum*	✓	✓				coriandrum / coliandrum.
Dill	*Anethum graveolens*	✓	✓				anetum / anetum.
Chard / beet	*Beta vulgaris*	✓	✓				betas / betas. Leaf beet; the swollen root beet comes later.
Parsley	*Petroselinum crispum*	✓	✓				petresilinum / petrosilium.
Lettuce	*Lactuca sativa*	✓	✓				lactucas / lactuca.
Parsnip	*Pastinaca sativa*	✓	✓				pastenacas / pastinachas. The name may also have covered carrots.

Plant	Botanical name	CdV	SG kitchen	SG physic	SG orchard	Hortulus	Latin as written / notes
Cabbage	*Brassica oleracea*	✓	✓				caulos / caulas.
Black cumin	*Nigella sativa (?)*	✓	✓				git / gitto. Usually read as nigella; some read corncockle.
Summer savory	*Satureja hortensis*	✓	✓	✓			satureiam / sataregia. The only plant in both St Gall gardens.
Costmary	*Tanacetum balsamita*	✓		✓			costum / costo.
Fenugreek	*Trigonella foenum-graecum*	✓		✓			fenigrecum / fenegreca.
Rosemary	*Salvia rosmarinus*	✓		✓			ros marinum / rosmarino.
Cumin	*Cuminum cyminum*	✓		✓			ciminum / cumino.
Watercress (?)	*Nasturtium officinale (?)*	✓		✓			sisimbrium / sisimbria. Identity debated: watercress or water mint.
Climbing bean	*Vigna unguiculata or Lablab (?)*	✓		✓			fasiolum / fasiolo. An Old World bean such as cowpea; the common bean (Phaseolus) is from the Americas.
Apple	*Malus domestica*	✓			✓		pomarios (several named kinds) / malus.
Pear	*Pyrus communis*	✓			✓		pirarios / perarius.
Plum	*Prunus domestica*	✓			✓		prunarios / prunarius.
Service tree	*Sorbus domestica*	✓			✓		sorbarios / sorbarius.
Medlar	*Mespilus germanica*	✓			✓		mespilarios / mispolarius.
Bay laurel	*Laurus nobilis*	✓			✓		lauros / laurus.
Sweet chestnut	*Castanea sativa*	✓			✓		castanearios / castenarius.
Fig	*Ficus carica*	✓			✓		ficus / ficus.
Quince	*Cydonia oblonga*	✓			✓		cotoniarios / guduniarius.
Peach	*Prunus persica*	✓			✓		persicarios / persicus. Walahfrid ends his poem in the shade of peach trees.
Hazel	*Corylus avellana*	✓			✓		avellanarios / avellenarius.
Almond	*Prunus dulcis*	✓			✓		amandalarios / amendelarius.
Mulberry	*Morus nigra*	✓			✓		morarios / murarius.
Walnut	*Juglans regia*	✓			✓		nucarios / nugarius.

3. Capitulare and Hortulus, not on the St Gall plan (5)

Plants that were on Charlemagne's list and in Walahfrid's own garden, but that the St Gall draughtsman left off.

Plant	Botanical name	CdV	SG kitchen	SG physic	SG orchard	Hortulus	Latin as written / notes
Southernwood	*Artemisia abrotanum*	✓				✓	abrotanum / abrotanum.
Bottle gourd	*Lagenaria siceraria*	✓				✓	cucurbitas / cucurbita. Old World gourd; dried for bottles, as Walahfrid says. Not a squash.
Melon	*Cucumis melo*	✓				✓	pepones / pepones.
Clary	*Salvia sclarea*	✓				✓	sclareiam / sclarega.
Catmint	*Nepeta cataria*	✓				✓	neptam / nepeta.

4. Hortulus only (5)

Walahfrid's own additions, found on neither earlier list.

Plant	Botanical name	CdV	SG kitchen	SG physic	SG orchard	Hortulus	Latin as written / notes
Wormwood	*Artemisia absinthium*					✓	absinthium. Not in chapter 70 of the Capitulare.
Horehound	*Marrubium vulgare*					✓	marrubium.
Betony	*Betonica officinalis*					✓	vettonica.
Agrimony	*Agrimonia eupatoria*					✓	agrimonia.
Ambrosia	*Uncertain*					✓	ambrosia. Identity debated; often read as tansy or a wormwood relative. The video leaves it out.

5. Capitulare de Villis only (37)

Plants and trees on Charlemagne's list that appear in neither later source. The tree list is in the second half of chapter 70.

Plant	Botanical name	CdV	SG kitchen	SG physic	SG orchard	Hortulus	Latin as written / notes
cucumber	*Cucumis sativus*	✓					cucumeres
Chickpea	*Cicer arietinum*	✓					cicerum italicum
Squill	*Drimia maritima*	✓					squillam

Plant	Botanical name	CdV	SG kitchen	SG physic	SG orchard	Hortulus	Latin as written / notes
Dragonwort / tarragon (?)	*Dracunculus vulgaris or Artemisia dracunculus (?)*	✓					dragantea
Anise	*Pimpinella anisum*	✓					anesum
Colocynth	*Citrullus colocynthis*	✓					coloquentidas
Heliotrope / marigold (?)	*uncertain*	✓					solsequiam
Bishop's weed (?)	*Ammi majus or Trachyspermum (?)*	✓					ameum
Sermountain (?)	*Laserpitium siler (?)*	✓					silum
White mustard / rocket (?)	*Sinapis alba or Eruca (?)*	✓					eruca alba
Garden cress	*Lepidium sativum*	✓					nasturtium
Burdock (?)	*Arctium lappa (?)*	✓					parduna
Alexanders	*Smyrnium olusatrum*	✓					olisatum
Savin	*Juniperus sabina*	✓					savinam
Endive / chicory	*Cichorium spp.*	✓					intubas
Dittany	*Origanum dictamnus (?)*	✓					diptamnum
Mustard	*Brassica nigra / Sinapis*	✓					sinape
Horse mint	*Mentha longifolia (?)*	✓					mentastrum
Tansy	*Tanacetum vulgare*	✓					tanazitam
Feverfew or centaury (?)	*uncertain*	✓					febrefugiam
Asarabacca	*Asarum europaeum*	✓					vulgigina
Marsh mallow	*Althaea officinalis*	✓					mismalvas id est alteas
Mallow	*Malva sylvestris*	✓					malvas
Carrot	*Daucus carota*	✓					carvitas
Orache	*Atriplex hortensis*	✓					adripias
Blite / amaranth	*Amaranthus blitum (?)*	✓					blidas

Plant	Botanical name	CdV	SG kitchen	SG physic	SG orchard	Hortulus	Latin as written / notes
Kohlrabi (?)	*Brassica oleracea (?)*	✓					ravacaulos
Chives	*Allium schoenoprasum*	✓					britlas
Madder	*Rubia tinctorum*	✓					warentiam
Cardoon / teasel (?)	*Cynara or Dipsacus (?)*	✓					cardones
Broad bean	*Vicia faba*	✓					fabas maiores
Field pea	*Pisum sativum*	✓					pisos mauriscos
Caper spurge	*Euphorbia lathyris*	✓					lacteridas
Caraway	*Carum carvi*	✓					careium
Houseleek	*Sempervivum tectorum*	✓					Jovis barba (on the steward's roof)
Pine	*Pinus spp.*	✓					pinos (tree list)
Cherry	*Prunus avium / cerasus*	✓					ceresarios (tree list)

Sources

1. Walter Horn and Ernest Born, The Plan of St. Gall: A Study of the Architecture and Economy of, and Life in a Paradigmatic Carolingian Monastery, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

2. Plan of St Gall, St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 1092 (digitised at e-codices and stgallplan.org).

3. Capitulare de villis, c. 70, in Capitularia regum Francorum I, ed. Alfred Boretius, MGH Leges II (Hanover, 1883), no. 32.

4. Walahfrid Strabo, Hortulus, trans. Raef Payne, commentary by Wilfrid Blunt (Pittsburgh: Hunt Botanical Library, 1966).

A note on safety

This guide is history and gardening, not advice on using any plant. Several plants on these lists need real care. Please talk with a qualified practitioner before taking any herb.

- **Rue:** can cause blistering skin reactions in sunlight; avoid in pregnancy.
- **Pennyroyal:** the essential oil is poisonous to the liver and has caused deaths; never take the oil internally; avoid in pregnancy.
- **Wormwood, southernwood, tansy:** contain thujone; short-term use only, not in pregnancy or for people with seizure disorders. Tansy is not for internal use.
- **Sage:** large or long-term doses carry the same thujone caution; avoid large amounts in pregnancy and breastfeeding.

- **Poppy:** opium poppy contains opiate alkaloids; legal restrictions apply in many countries.
- **Iris:** the fresh rhizome is irritant and can cause vomiting.
- **Lovage, fenugreek, feverfew, dittany:** avoid in pregnancy. Lovage is not for people with kidney inflammation; fenugreek and feverfew may interact with diabetes and blood-thinning drugs.
- **Horehound:** large doses may affect heart rhythm.
- **Savin, squill, colocynth, asarabacca, caper spurge:** toxic. Of historical interest only; not for home use. Asarabacca contains aristolochic acid, which damages the kidneys; squill affects the heart; savin was a known abortifacient.

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