

Kuphaldt's Heritage

Educationally informative booklet about landscape architect Georg Kuphaldt, a glimpse into the parks of Eleja and Žagare manors



Mežaparks (Rīga)

Maßstab 1:4000 Meter.



Georg Friedrich Ferdinand Kuphaldt

Landscape architect Georg Friedrich Ferdinand Kuphaldt (1853 – 1938).

Georg Kuphaldt was born and spent his childhood with his siblings in Plön, Germany. Plön was a small town with beautiful nature and landscape, which Kuphaldt often mentioned in his memories – beech forests, romantic lake landscapes, meadows, grain fields, small rivers, palace terraces and the royal garden. His interest in the art of gardening came from his father – a teacher and enthusiast of botany. Later, after his father's death, Georg's mother provoked his interest in the profession of a gardener by visiting various gardening sites together. This was partly related to his health, as being in the fresh air had been recommended by doctors. He started his studies at the Horticulture School in Oitin and later continued at the Institute of Pomology in Reitlingen. He continued to strengthen his practical knowledge by working in nurseries, the Royal Training Institute for Gardeners in Potsdam, and the Cologne Zoo. He started his career as a head gardener in Ostspringnitz, Brandenburg, later he managed the works and participated in the planting of trees along the German highways, worked on several small garden projects, and therefore had the opportunity to travel a lot.

In 1879, Georg Kuphaldt was invited to become a city gardener in Riga – at that moment he was 26 years old. Riga Gardens will be mentioned in the following articles, but it should be noted that this position and moving to Riga was a turning point in Kuphaldt's life, connecting his professional career with the Baltic region, working creatively in Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Finland, and Estonia.

Wartime in 1915 forced Kuphaldt to return to Germany, where he worked as director of the Steglitz Garden in Berlin. During this period, he compiled his knowledge in the monograph "Practice of Applied Dendrology in Parks and Gardens" (Die Praxis der angewandten Dendrologie in Park und Garten), published in 1927.

Later, as the repressions subsided, in 1931, Kuphaldt and his wife visited Riga, nostalgically visiting his established gardens and parks, as well as their home in Ķeizardārzs. The changes that took place under the leadership of gardener Andrejs Zeidaks, unfortunately, did not please Kuphaldt, but those were different times, a different fashion for garden art, other requirements for the outdoor space. On the other hand, Kuphaldt was happy to see that after the war, the parks and gardens in Riga continued to live, that the work of diligent Latvian gardeners continued. Upon Kuphaldt's passing in 1938, several European horticultural societies and fraternities made him an honorary member in recognition of his horticultural knowledge and lifetime contribution. In 2014, celebrating the 135th anniversary of the Directorate of Riga Gardens and Parks, a memorial to the first creators of the city's gardens was unveiled in the greenery of the city's canal in front of the building of the University of Latvia.

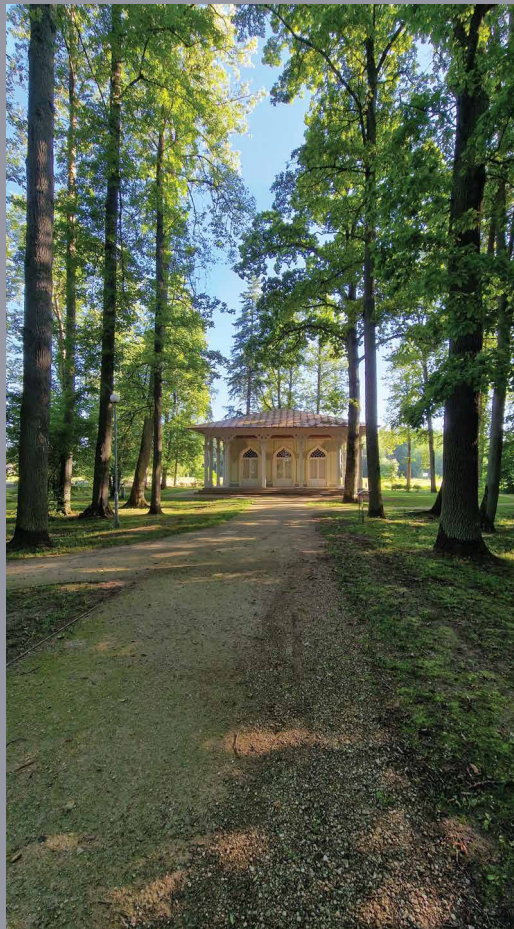
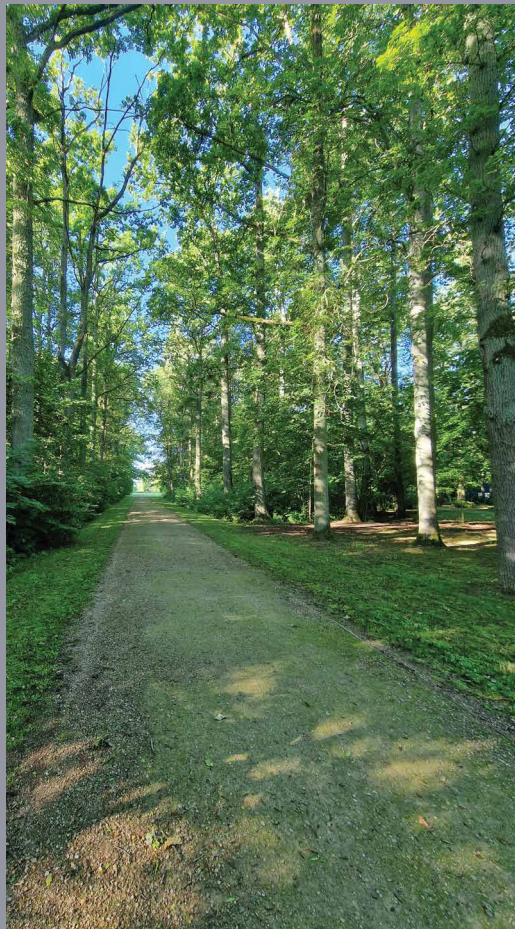
Kuphaldt followed several principles of park and garden construction in his professional work, one of them – the construction of outdoor space is determined by natural conditions and the location of the territory. It was important to understand the three-dimensional nature of the outdoor space because plants in parks and gardens are a basic element that creates both the spatial structure and brings colours, shapes and diversity, harmony, or contrast. According to Kuphaldt, one of the most inspiring elements of the outdoor space is water, which is an inexhaustible source of ideas. He built the composition of the park from picturesque views and interesting perspectives, considering the planned movement paths of the park and the most important view-points from which these views and perspectives are revealed – this is how the unified spatial concept structure of the park was formed.

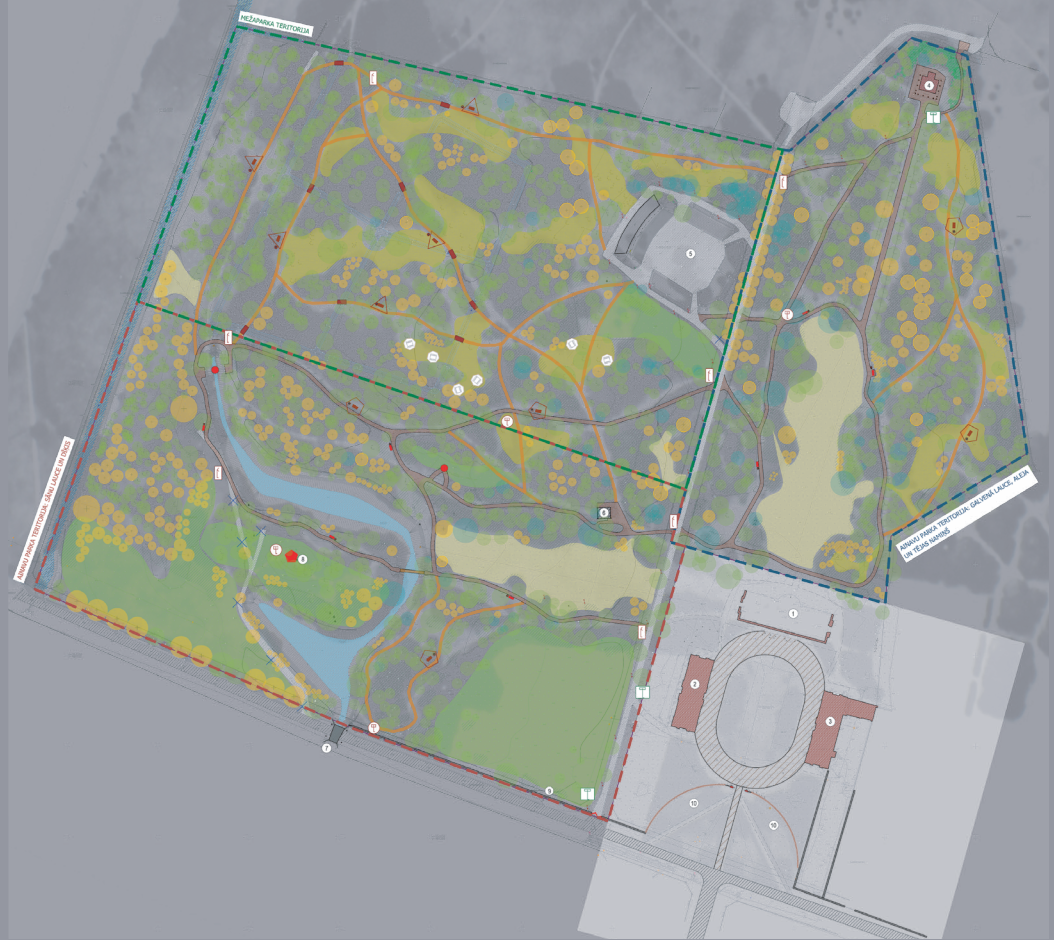


Bastejkalns (Riga)

Park of Eleja manor

In 1905, Georg Kuphaldt developed the project for the reconstruction of Eleja manor park, respecting and preserving the free planning characteristic of the English park, which is as close as possible to natural conditions, supplemented with water bodies, picturesque groups of trees and bushes, winding paths, pavilions, sculptures, and monuments. Kuphaldt's project envisaged expanding the park towards the north, creating a cemetery at one end, unfortunately, this part of the project was not fully implemented. Only the cemetery was built, which Kuphaldt had designed in more detail. The cemetery was created at the beginning of the 20th century – in 1912 on an island surrounded by a wide canal filled with water. There was only one entrance to the cemetery and a bridge guarded by sphinxes was built to get to it. The historic bridge and entrance gate with pillars and urns have survived to this day, although the sphinx figures and the gate pillars were badly damaged during the First World War. In the later years, the grave sphinx statues were moved to the building area of Eleja manor, where they still stand half-ruined today.





Eleja manor park landscape improvement plan (2018) Author: SIA Veido Vidi

The spatial structure of the park consists of a central square that stretches from the palace to the Tea Pavilion; the parade ground between the manor buildings, which is an open and festive part of the park; park fields surrounded by groups of trees and alleys that characterize the main axes of the park; water bodies with a bridge connecting the open field and the wooded part of the park; restored arched boulder fence that marks the central facade of the manor ensemble; the ruins of the rotunda still await their rebirth.

Alleys can be found in the park – from the local species there are mostly lindens, oaks, maples, ash and birches, black alders, swamp birches, elms, mountain ash and others are in smaller numbers; most of the bushes are hazel and blackberry, there are also yews; non-native species include European linden, broad-leaved linden, larch, horse chestnut, Weymouth pine, mountain maple.

Currently, Eleja park is adapted to the needs of tourism, developing infrastructure that attracts interested parties and gives the opportunity to organize various events – walking trails with rest areas, environmental objects, and an exhibition hall.

Park of Žagare manor

In 1898, Georg Kuphaldt reconstructed Žagare manor park according to the traditions of English-style parks, also improving the old part of the park. It must be noted that the park has retained its majesty and enchanting aura even today, highlighting Kuphaldt's planning principles. There have been two phases in the history of the park, which can be seen in the structure of the park and the choice of vegetation. The smaller or the old part of the park around the castle is associated with Zubov, who ruled Žagare until 1858. After becoming the owner, Narshkin and his son Georgij began to take care of the creation of the new park and the repair of the old manor. Kuphaldt's project envisioned expanding the park and increasing its diversity, both from a dendrological point of view and by adding walking routes.

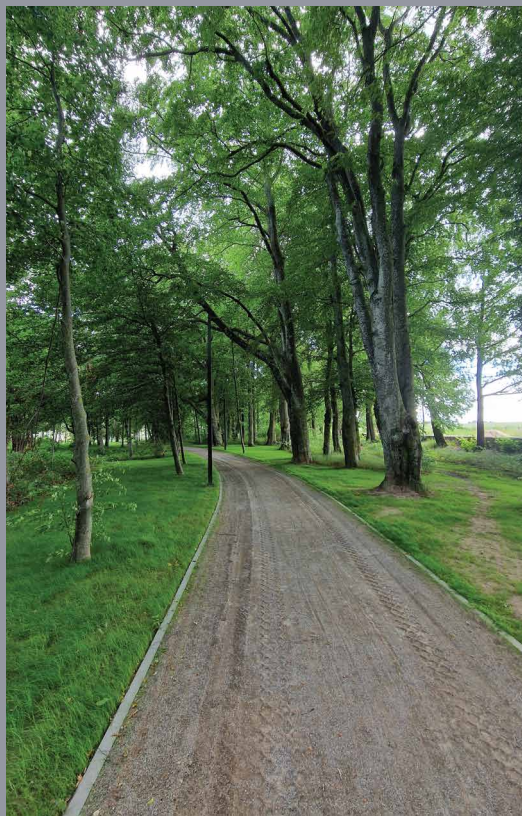


Žagare manor park landscape improvement plan (2013) Author: SĮ "VILNIUS PLANAS"

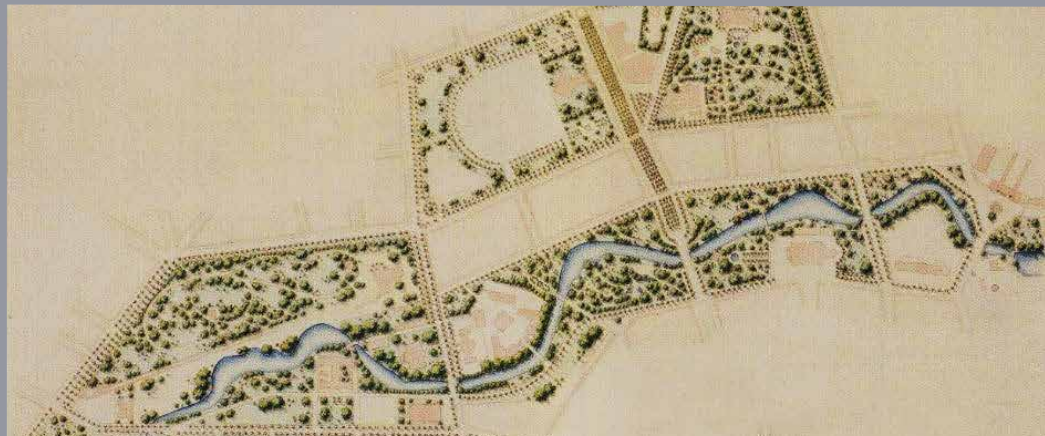
The spatial structure of the park consists of the central parade square, a square with a fountain and terraces at the facade of the manor, which was a festive part of the park with magnificent greenery. Several fields are also formed in the landscaped part of the park, alternating with freely vegetated parts of the park and winding walkways, revealing excellent lines of sight both to the park and to the surrounding countryside. Architectural objects are an integral part of the spatial structure of the park – several manor buildings, which have been preserved even today with various functions, where the culture of horse breeding stands out, while the stable, which, like a field, fits into the structure of the park.

One of the most outstanding Kuphaldt's legacies preserved in the park is the beech grove. A dendrological trail has also been created in the park, which marks and offers information about 15 rare trees, e.g., Weymouth and black pine, mountain maples, European larch, red oak, silver maple, etc.

Kuphaldt's first major work in Riga was the rebuilding of Bastejkalns. Later, he designed and improved the greenery of Kanālmala, Ēsplanāde, Arkādijas park and Mežaparks, he also created the territorial planning of Riga Zoo. He is the author of the first round of Mežaparks planning (1901), which was the first garden city in our region. Outside of Riga, he created parks in Cīrava and Kazdanga manors in Kurzeme, Eleja manor in Zemgale.



Currently, Žagare manor park is an active natural tourism object and the park is undergoing reconstruction, restoring the spatial structure of the park, adding plantings, as well as providing the necessary landscaping. At the same time, the museum's expositions are supplemented with interactive materials about Kuphaldt's legacy and achievements.



*The situation plan of the greenery of the city of Riga with the canal, Bastejkalns, Esplanāde and Vērmanes dārzs.
G. Kuphaldt, 1903*

During his 35 years of professional life, Kuphaldt had to establish gardening with greenhouses in Riga and to enrich parks with introduced species, which had long been known in Europe, but here it caused astonishment and required great efforts, because many rare species died in the Latvian climate. Kuphaldt not only planned and managed the works, took care of the procurement of materials, but also surveyed already old parks, planned their maintenance and renovation. It must be acknowledged that it was with his work that the parks and gardens of Riga became not only the privilege of rich gentlemen but were accessible to all residents on a daily basis. From a modern point of view, it was the time of the formation of public greenery, or the emergence of outdoor space in Riga, about which we are currently talking and debating a lot, but almost 140 years ago, the public greenery of the city created by Georg Kuphaldt significantly changed the “characteristics of Riga”, which we perceive today as an integral part of the urban environment.

Interreg V-A Latvia-Lithuania Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020. Project LLI-444 Sustainable Integration of Novel Solutions into Cultural Heritage Sites (NovelForHeritage).

The goal of the project is to increase the tourism potential of cultural heritage objects – manor parks, by providing a modern approach, objects, and services in classic manor parks.

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