

Introduction: Plant Textiles at the Point of intersection between Garden- and Textile history

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As a member of both **The Swedish Weaving Academy** and **The Nordic network for the Archaeology and Archaeobotany of Gardens (NTAA)** I would like to welcome you all to the 10th seminar of the NTAA research-network, at the Pufendorf Institute and the Botanical garden, here in Lund. The seminar has been made possible by a generous financial contribution **The National Swedish Handicraft Council**.

For me, the idea of bringing together **textile- and garden history** arose when I worked on my Master's thesis in Ethnology, on Hemp, textiles and historic gardens. In my study I examined how textile knowledge is constructed, and tried my best to differentiate between facts and historicalization, or constructed images of historical phenomena. The main purpose of my work was to let go of the focus on the textile objects themselves and instead highlight cultivation, studying the whole process of transformation from plants into textiles.

I found that textile- and garden historical research have much in common and that the two areas of research can fertilize each other, especially when considering the production of materials for textiles through cultivation, that has taken place throughout history.

Textile making and gardening have been two of the most important occupations of people throughout history. Today it is also clear that it was under **garden-like conditions that home cultivation of textile plants happened**, and still happen, in some parts of the world. But the further back in time the less we know about this cultivation, and the differences and uses of different textile plants.

The aim of this seminar is to highlight both **the biological/physical and cultural sides of textiles**. Textile objects are usually studied and displayed as cultural objects, not as plant matter. This distinction between Nature and Culture is also found in many other fields of research. In the horticultural context the focus is often on plants and biology, in the textile history context it is generally on cultural issues. If we let these two sides merge, this can lead to important new understandings, related to relationships and transformations between the two.

The theme for this seminar is **textile plants traditionally grown locally in the Nordic countries, mainly hemp, flax, hops and nettle**. As plants, they are easy enough to identify botanically. But when they have been transformed into a finer quality textile it is often impossible to identify the plant used, just by examining the textile visually. This has led to incorrect information on plant textiles in collections, and it has also affected terminology. This, combined with how the products of local household cultivation is often mixed up with commercially produced and imported material, that may have been produced using completely different cultivation and processing methods, has brought a lot of confusion. **Our understanding of medieval and prehistoric production can not be based solely on knowledge derived from early modern, largescale, agricultural contexts and sources.**

There are vast differences between **the cultivation- and craft processes** of small scale, traditional garden husbandry and large-scale commercial cultivation of textiles. The products they yield are very different. This has also played a part when some textile plants have, so to speak, become the winners of the market economy, and some have not. **Local textile plant cultivation that take place under garden-like conditions can generate extremely fine qualities, regardless of the plant species used.** This needs to be considered in the research of cultivation and craft processes.