

In an earlier issue of Labyrinth (No. 3, Sept. 1975) I wrote briefly about Roman gardens as they are described by Roman authors. In this article we shall look at two gardens which have been excavated in the last few years at Pompeii by W. Jashemski. She has described her discoveries fully in two articles published in the American Journal of Archaeology: "The Discovery of a Market-Garden Orchard at Pompeii: the Garden of the 'House of the Ship Europa'" (A.J.A. Vol. 78, 1974, p. 391) and "The Excavation of a Shop-House Garden at Pompeii (I.xx.5)" (A.J.A. Vol. 81, 1977, p. 217). This article is based entirely on Jashemski's work.

In this sketch-map of Pompeii, the "Shop-House" garden appears in the south-east end of the city, near the Nuceria Gate. The street that ran up from the harbour carried, no doubt, a lot of traffic, so that when it passed into the city through the Nuceria Gate, travelers arriving in Pompeii might well be glad to find shops or inns at which to buy fresh food and drinks. Perhaps the shop sold the food grown in the garden behind it, or the inn-keeper was in partnership with the winegrower who worked the vineyard nearby. The particular shop-house garden we are looking at occupied

the northern third or so of an insula or block which also contained a second shop and lamp factory, and a large enclosed vineyard. There is nothing to indicate what our shopkeeper sold, but his garden was a large and shady one, with plenty of trees, about 65 feet wide and 85 feet long. Cemented along the top of the north wall, facing the street, ran a row of broken potsherds, presumably to stop people from climbing over and stealing fruit. A side door opened from the shop into the garden, and a raised path ran down to the far end of the garden, between areas planted with vines, small fruit or nut trees and vegetables. A cistern beside the wall of the rooms just behind the shop gathered rain-water from the roof. The water would be run into channels between the rows of plants when needed.

From the number of small objects found along the path, and in an area near a niche in the wall where the path led, the picture of an outdoor living area suggests itself. Small household odds and ends - dishes, bowls, broken perfume bottles, lamps, even an iron tripod on which food would be cooked over a small fire - indicate the likelihood of the shopkeeper's family spending the hot summer evenings out of doors, in the cool shade of two or three trees and the western wall of the garden. Perhaps as it grew dark, a lamp would have been lit and set in the niche, as the owner and

his friends drank wine produced right on the premises: the seven large earthenware jars sunk in the ground at the eastern end of the garden were no doubt used to ferment wine.

The garden of the "House of the Ship Europa" was a much larger one, although it had some very similar features. This establishment was an altogether grander and probably more prosperous one, though it too had a small shop set into the house property. The block contained two adjoining houses (the eastern one being smaller may perhaps have housed the slaves) and the market-garden, vine-

yard and orchard belonging to the house-owner. Since the shop also opened into the house, he may have sold his own produce in it. As well as growing grapes and vegetables, he may have supplied the nearby lamp factory with clay from a large pit in his steeply-sloped garden, while a pile of crushed lava and a jar of lime filled from a heap nearby in the peristyle indicate that he was making cement for concrete work.

The vegetables grown in the two gardens were sown in the raised seedbeds separated by furrows which would serve both as walkways for weeding and care of the plants, and as irrigation furrows when the plants grew larger. (The cistern behind the east house had a channel leading towards a gully in the steep bank just above the large vegetable garden.) Along the sloping ramps that ran up each side of the garden were planted many small fruit and nut trees. The root cavities found by excavation were of a size and shape to suggest almonds, cherries, plums, olives, peaches or figs. Among the carbonised seeds and vegetable remains found were filbert shells, a fig, grapes, grape seeds, an almond, broad beans, charcoal and root fragments, pollen from various plants and a date seed, with some of the date still adhering to it. Jashemski comments that "it must have come from the gardener's lunch", for dates will not ripen at Pompeii. Perhaps the drawing of the ship Europa, found on the north wall of the peristyle, might suggest to us that the owner of this flourishing fruit and vegetable market-garden was also an importer of dates and other specialty foods.

These two gardens, which have been so meticulously excavated that every detail of root cavities, stake holes, flower pots, watering furrows and seed beds has been established, help to give us a clearer picture of life in Pompeii on that day in 79 A.D. when Vesuvius destroyed the town.