

The history of Frescati and The Experimental Field

Long before it became part of the Stockholm University campus, Frescati was a place for research and experimentation. Initially a Royal hunting ground and then a centre for agricultural and physical experiments, the area has also housed a retail plant nursery and an agricultural museum.

In the 1670s, a Royal hunting ground was established on Norra Djurgården, which, by the mid-18th century, had been transformed into a pleasure park. In the 1780s, Gustav III travelled to Italy and was greatly impressed by classical architecture and art, which is reflected in the naming of the sites around Brunnsviken: Frescati, Tivoli, Albano and Bellevue. Home to many imposing and lavish turn-of-the-20th-century institutional buildings, the area was known as Stockholm Science City and comprised: the Swedish Museum of Natural History, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and its three Nobel institutions (for physical chemistry, theoretical physics and the institute for experimental physics which today is Accelerator's premises), the former Royal College of Forestry, the former Veterinary College, the Bergius Botanic Garden and buildings that belonged to *The Experimental Field*.

In the late 18th century, Europe saw many developments in agriculture, including agrarian reforms, new machines and tools. Interest in agriculture grew among land-owners and an educated upper class was interested in how agriculture could provide economic gains. Agricultural sciences emerged as a new discipline of natural science. In Sweden, agricultural issues were discussed in various associations, and in 1811, when Carl XIII established the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture (now the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry), Sweden finally had a central organisation that could lead the technical and scientific development of agriculture. In 1816, the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture established the Experimental Field at Frescati. Abraham Niclas Edelcrantz, parliamentarian, inventor, poet, theatre director and academician, played a crucial role in the establishment of both the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and the Experimental Field. Inspiration for the Experimental Field came from one of Edelcrantz's many research journeys in Europe, primarily to England and Scotland, which at the time were at the forefront of agricultural innovation. Edelcrantz also ran a model farm at Stora Skuggan on Norra Djurgården. One of the reasons for establishing the Experimental Field at this location was to demonstrate how untillied land could be cultivated with the help of new tools and modern techniques.

In conjunction with the establishment of the Experimental Field, an experimental farm was founded as well as a model farm that would finance the research activities. In

his 1813 operational plan, Edelcrantz emphasised that the idea was not to generate economic gains but to promote social benefits. The experimental activities were intended to increase the profitability of Swedish agriculture by disseminating new findings throughout the country. Modern tools in accordance with new, international models and the introduction of crop rotation were indispensable for the model farm. On the experimental side numerous experiments were carried out and departments of agricultural chemistry and plant physiology were instituted. Oats, root vegetables, berries and garden plants were cultivated and various breeds of cows and sheep were introduced, primarily from Great Britain and Germany, in order to study growth and milk production in relation to domestic breeds. The Experimental Field's first director, Olof Carling, was an associate professor of Greek and had also translated several international agricultural scientific texts.

In the 1940s, the Experimental Field's agricultural research activities were transferred to the Ultuna University of Agricultural Sciences, which later formed part of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU. The Experimental Field's garden, which around 1900 was the largest retail plant nursery in Sweden, remained in the area until 1963. In 1960, Stockholm College was granted university status and was relocated to the Experimental Field. Many buildings were demolished and the few that remain from the Experimental Field are used by the university. The Gréens, Gula and Skära villas date from this time and Bloms hus, the principal building on the Experimental Field, houses the senior management team of the university. Today the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture's Fisheries and Agriculture Museum from 1905 is the Lantis restaurant.