

## **Greening Baltic History: Gardens, Food and Bodies in Early Modern Times**

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Since the late seventeenth century, productive gardening has been propagated as an innovative way of facing the severe demographic crisis that had decreased Baltic society of around 1700 to more than a half. Despite its slow spread among Baltic German upper class and Latvian and Estonian peasants due to unstable climate and ownership structures, it would become a remarkable symbol of sustainable modernization with an enormous influence on food habits and public health.

The book unravels the history of productive gardening, focusing in the first part on the changes it meant for landscapes, local food cultures, health, society, and economy in three important phases of modernization in the 1680s, 1780s, and 1880s by looking at the lives and work of leading gardeners and cooks. In a second part, it will exemplify the innovations gardening brought in three case studies that will deepen knowledge about processes of biocultural transfer: apples and asparagus, mothermilk and surrogates, diseases and grafting.

By analyzing German, Estonian and Latvian gardening and cookbooks, public discussions, economic literature, poems, and novels, as well as seed lists, herbaria, and archaeological excavations, the study will challenge some common understandings of Baltic productive gardening history. Instead of being “traditional,” it has always been part of the modernizing process and propagated like this throughout enlightenment and early modernity. In adding the often forgotten kitchen side of the history of gardening, it stresses the importance of the body in environmental history and questions gender stereotypes, asks about changing understandings in food culture and medicine, and proposes an anti-declension story of resilience and modernity.