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Vegetables, fruits and herbs in the Viking Period

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Introduction

This paper will give a brief overview of the vegetables, fruits and herbs which were planted, raised, and harvested-for consumption in Scandinavia in the Viking period AD 775 and 1050.

The Viking Garden (kaalgaard)(Serra 2017:17)

I am going to start with discussing that which grows where we live, a "*kitchen garden*", if you will. This is a small section of land that is close to a settlement; it is usually surrounded by a wall, a fence or some other way of keeping the animals out, and contains a small amount of many different species of herbs and vegetables (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012:28). Next to one of the houses in Uppåkra was a small patch of land in which the earth had been overturned as in gardening, in the soil there a few seeds of *Brassica rapa* found possibly stemming from the variety more commonly known as turnip (Serra 2017:17). "The difference between a kitchen garden and a *crop field* is the devotion of cultivation and the requirement of attention given to the plants within the kitchen garden" (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012:2012:2). When you take into consideration the inconvenience of harvesting methods, where vegetables and herbs are harvested many times over, with more time and attention necessary for cultivation and care versus, for instance, a cereal crop, then it becomes clear how time and labor intensive a kitchen garden could be. It would be easier to study this if there had been an artist that was present at the time with a hand carved drawing of the garden with all of it's plants and herbs, but we'll forge on! :)

Figure i: Field cabbage patch and herb garden at the Ribe Viking Centre, Denmark, www.ribevikingecenter.dk (Manor Farm, 980 AD: 2021)

Who had what?

Plant finds recovered from archaeological sites in southern Scandinavia dated to the Viking Age reflect the diversity of useful plants that were cultivated and collected. Everything depended on where you lived as to what would or would not grow in your garden, as greenhouses were not yet thought about. Archaeobotanical evidence for garden plants from the Viking Age forms the basis for this article, and the plant macrofossil record from northern Europe as a whole indicates that gardening was a widespread practice during the Viking Age period (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012:27). So, of course, the farther north you lived the more harsh the climate, resulting in the necessity of less varied and more hardy crops. Everyday foods would have consisted of pulses (peas and beans), vegetables and food from the sea, with cereal grains and fruits rounding out the list. Barley has been grown all over Scandinavia since the Bronze Age as it was much more winter hardy. People quickly learned they could eat the barley crushed when added with boiling water (Newman 2006:6). Trading in Scandinavia, and most likely elsewhere, happened between those living nearer to the sea and navigable rivers with those living further inland or away from the rivers. Trade also happened between different European regions and kingdoms. For example, 'Tating ware jugs' or 'Frisian jugs' from the Frankish empire (Francia) have been excavated in Birka. (Serra 2017:142)

In the northern regions (Lofoten, Norway, an archipelago off the northwestern coast (Lofoten 2021) barley was the only cereal crop that would produce any real yield, and so imports of grains from the lands to the south were necessary for brewing. Along with the vast smorgasbord of the sea and the animals that were raised in the north the harsh environment still allow for some vegetables to be grown. Archaeological finds include such plants as white goosefoot, yarrow, bilberries, lingonberries and cloudberries and more (Serra 2017:42).

Figure ii: Detailed map depicting the locations of the major trading towns in Viking Age Scandinavia. Map designed by Sven Rosborn on www.commons.wikipedia.org (Rouă 2016)

Sciringes heal or Skíringssalr, which is now present day **Kaupang**, **Norway** in period was an important trading centre, and was "referred to as the bread basket of the young Norwegian kingdom" (Serra 2017:57). The town was located by the mouth of the Oslo fjord in the region of Vestfold on the fjord's western side. The region is one of the most fertile in all of Norway (Brink and Price 2008:112).

Lejre, Denmark on coast west of Roskilde, had its share of wheat and barley, although rye was the predominant crop here. Hazel, peas, broad beans and some sorrel have also been identified. The site was the archetypical farm with an added plus; they had an oven. The oven was filled with rye, perhaps to help get it dry enough to be able to grind into flour to make, bread (Serra 2017:74). As we enter **Hedeby**, in what is now known as Germany (Visit the Hedeby Viking Museum and Village in Haithabu, Germany 2018) and the last real trade stop before the main continent we find artisans and tradespeople alongside one another. Barley was a major player here with a hefty addition of rye to the grain mix. Here in Hedeby the amount of millet found was surely a sign of the influx of trade from the Slavonic regions to the south. Sloe, plums raspberries, blackberries, sour cherries, crab apple and bilberries were available as well. Broad beans and hazelnuts were also found to be quite common here. Some of the exotic imports would be walnuts, peaches, and even hops. We must keep in mind the vegetables and cereal grains grown in Scandinavia in the period were to supplement the fish-eating diet of people of the area. Domesticated livestock were also a great part of the diet. With trading and raiding, some of the favorite pastimes of the Vikings brought them in contact with the British coastline.

Eoforwic (Anglo-Saxon), or **Jorvik** (as it came to be called by the Vikings, the capital of southern Northumbria (this area was known as the Kingdom of Deira in Anglo/Saxon times; it is in the same location as the modern day counties of Yorkshire), was sacked by the Danes and held a strong Scandinavian presence and influence up until the 11th century (Serra 2017:105). Jorvik, had a warmer climate than Scandinavia and the vegetables and crops grown there reflected this. Wheat was the chosen grain to grow, with wheat and rye used for bread, leaving the barley for the beer. Fruits were widely available: crab apples, sloe, plums cherries, wild strawberries, blackberries, dewberries, hawthorn, hazelnuts, walnuts, grape and figs. The vegetables were generally the same as those grown in the north: white goosefoot, nettle, orache, kale, turnips, sorrel and peas. Wild carrot, wild parsnip, wild radish, leek, broad bean, beet and garden cress also show up in the archaeological record in Jorvik. Herbs making the list here are dill, fennel, black mustard, summer savory, mints, yarrow and coriander and perhaps water pepper (Serra 2017:107).[1]

Uppåkra, Sweden was a religious center and wealthy hub for the elite of the age and appears to have been a major trading place and more. Archaeological finds include weapons, artifacts, gold foils and bracteates (Gold Bracteate | Scandinavian 2001) in areas where there was a great hall which had been built in the style of the Norwegian stave churches. The archaeological food remains are the same as found in other Viking settlements, although there were a bit more of them. The usual fare of the basic

1 (To break away from all the seriously serious information provided here and add a little levity into this paper let's speak upon one of the more intriguing finds in Eoforwic, the *Jorvik Turds*. Some surviving pieces of fossilized human feces give us a bit of insight into the culinary delights of the time. Though the 'turd' fossils have been found in various places, a particular specimen became well known under the name of "The Lloyds Bank turd" referring to where it was found. This turd was exceptionally large; it consisted of mostly meats and grains. Others that were found had a more varied content including nuts, fruit stones and leek (Serra n.d.:107).)

vegetables and herbs and fruits were all available in good supply. A rather unusual find here was quite a large clay oven, one believed to have been built for the sole purpose of baking bread. Along the side of one of the longhouses at Uppåkra a separate garden was found; the soil here had been purposely turned and actual seeds of *brassica rapa* were found there (Serra 2017:121).

It would be remiss of me to talk about all these Scandinavian places without bringing up the well known trading site called **Birka**. The site was a trade center with connections to the east and the north. The trades were thought to have had a major impact on the influence of foods, however, unfortunately the archaeological record does not back up that theory[2]. Rye, wheat, oats and barley would have most likely been used to make bread in Birka. Hjalmar Stolpe excavated a grave in the 1870's in the town of Birka where a simple hand quern and the remains of burnt oblong cakes (bread) were found (Serra 2017:141–143). "Interestingly Ann-Marie Hansson mentions the possibility of the cultivation of Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium caeruleum L.*) and common daisy (*Bellis perennis L.*) as ornamental plants in Viking Age Birka (Hansson 2001)." This would show that beauty and aesthetics were also in the common garden.

Figure iii: (Photo of the Fruit of English Pea (Pisum Sativum 'Maestro') 2014)

Figure iv: Ramsons - (Allium ursinum) (Allium Ursinum – Ramsons | Wild Flowers | Species | Emorsgate Seeds – (01553) 829 028: 2021)

Vegetables

The following vegetables are known to have been grown in Scandinavia during the Viking Age.

Broad Bean - (*Vicia faba*) also known in the culinary sense as the broad bean, fava bean, or faba bean, is a species of flowering plant in the pea and bean family Fabaceae. It is of uncertain origin and widely cultivated as a crop for human consumption. Remains of these have been found in Jorvik, Hedeby, Birka and Lejre. These were found to be used in bread and porridge (Serra 2017:74,143,168).

Cabbage - (*Brassica oleracea)* is a leafy green, red, or white biennial plant grown as an annual vegetable crop for its dense-leaved heads. It is descended from the wild cabbage, and belongs to the

2 The findings of "Tating ware jugs" or "Frisian jugs" (a vessel imported from the Frankish empire) would make one believe that other influences were traded as well.

"cole crops" or brassicas, meaning it is closely related to broccoli and cauliflower; Brussels sprouts; and Savoy cabbage. The Romans cultivated several different varieties of the Brassicaceae family, although aside from Kale and charlock and black mustard (see below) there are no other brassicas documented during the Viking period in Scandinavia (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012:35,36).

Celery (*Apium graveolens L.*) has been found growing along the European coastlines since the Bronze age and was most likely growing in the bogs and wetlands of Scandinavia as well. Celery is grown for its brittle, tasty stems and spicy leaves. The leaves can also be used fresh or dried as a vegetable and spice (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012:32–33).

Charlock - (*Sinapis alba*) the charlock mustard, field mustard, wild mustard or charlock, is an annual or winter annual plant of the genus Sinapis in the family Brassicaceae. As with *brassica nigra* (black mustard, see below), and kale (see above), it was available during the Viking Age in Scandinavia (Serra 2017:107,173).

Pea – (*Pisum Sativum*) -Field peas, including fall-sown Austrian winter peas, are harvested when seeds are mature and dry, and are primarily blended with grains to fortify the protein content of livestock feed. Dried peas are also sold for human consumption as whole, split or ground peas have been around in Scandinavia since the Bronze age (Serra 2017:Table-pg 162–163, 174) (Pavek 2012:1).

Ramsons - (*Allium ursinum*) known as wild garlic, ramsons, buckrams, broad-leaved garlic, wood garlic, bear leek or bear's garlic, is a bulbous perennial flowering plant in the amaryllis family Amaryllidaceae anda perennial herbaceous species, of wide-spread distribution both in Europe, from Scandinavia to Siberia and Asia (Sobolewska, Podolak, and Makowska-Wąs 2015:82–83).

Turnip – (*brassica rapa*) are a root vegetable commonly associated with potatoes or beets, but their closest relatives are radishes and arugula — all members of the mustard family in the genus Brassica. Both the bulbous white and purple taproot and the leafy greens are edible. “Turnips were presumed to be the staple of the time (Serra 2017:92).”

Wild Carrot - (*D.carota var. carota*) is indigenous to Europe, Northern Africa, and parts of western Asia, and seeds have been found dating from Mesolithic times, approximately 10,000 years ago (Stolarczyk and Janick 2011:13).

Wild Celery - *(Angelica archangelica)* The garden angelica (Angelica arch-angelica) of today grows all over Iceland; perhaps in the Middle Ages it was cultivated in the special angelica gardens (hvanngarðar) mentioned in the old laws (Kristjánsdóttir, Larsson, and Åsen 2014:564–565).

Wild Parsnip – (*Pastinaca sativa*) offers a root like the carrot or its namesake, the parsnip. The stem and flowers are highly toxic to the skin and will make those who touch it break out in rash and blisters. According to Hedrick (1919), there is some doubt as to whether plants referred to as Pastinaca were cultivated in early times and also whether Pastinaca correctly refers to parsnip. Greek and Roman civilizations reportedly used Pastinaca as a food source, but they might have also been referring to carrots, highlighting the confusion in nomenclature between carrot and parsnip plants among early botanists (Averill and DiTommaso 2007:282).

Wild Radish - the entire (*Raphanus raphanistrum*) plant is edible, from the veined purple, white, or yellow flowers to the leaves and roots. ... Wild radish pods are crisp and peppery, much like the root of a true radish, and can be eaten raw or cooked (Serra 2017:176).

Possibilities

The following vegetableswere used in Scandinavia in the Viking period. It is possible that they were acquired from trading, but there has been no evidence found that they were actually grown there.

Cucumber - (*Cucumis sativa*) - Cave excavations have revealed that cucumber has been grown as a food source for over 3000 years (Cucumber: A Brief History (David Trinklein) 2014). There is nothing showing that *Cucumis sativa* was grown in the lands of Scandinavia, it is probable that there may have been cucumber fruits traded from the south into the area in the time of the Vikings.

Garlic - (*Allium sativum*) - is a species in the onion genus, Allium. Its close relatives include the onion, shallot, leek, chive, and Chinese onion. Only rarely are remains of onion and its relatives encountered in archaeological features, although both onion (*Allium cepa L. var. cepa*) and garlic (*Allium sativum L.*) have been found in Roman Iron Age deposits in Germany (Knörzer and Gerlach 1999). This of course does not mean garlic was in Scandinavia in the Viking period, although it could easily be imagined that it was traded at Scandinavian markets after being imported from the south (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012).

Hops - (*Humulus lupulus*) - is a member of the *Cannabaceae* family of flowering plants. They are used primarily as a bittering, flavoring, and stability agent in beer, to which, in addition to bitterness, they impart floral, fruity, or citrus flavours and aromas. Although the remains of Hops are found in Birka and Hedeby, it is not considered to be locally grown, but thought to have been brought in through trade (Serra 2017:172).

Kale - (*Brassica oleracea*), or leaf cabbage, belongs to a group of cabbage cultivars grown for their edible leaves, although some are used as ornamentals (Maggioni et al. 2010).

Leek - The (*Allium porrum L.*) the broadleaf wild leek. The edible part of the plant is a bundle of leaf sheaths that is sometimes erroneously called a stem or stalk. The genus Allium also contains the onion, garlic, shallot, scallion, chive, and Chinese onion (Serra 2017:107).

Orach - (*Atriplex hortensis*) was known to the Greeks and was well distributed and most commonly grown across Europe during the period. (Orach: An Ancient Vegetable That’s New Again 2017. Another site places this spinach variety from Siberia to the Mediterranean (History Of Orach Spinach 2016).

Figure v: Oat - (Avena sativa) (AgroAtlas - Crops - Hordeum Vulgare L. - Barley (Six-Rowed): 2021)

Figure vi: Wheat - (Triticum aestivum) (Tsammalex - Triticum Aestivum (Bread Wheat): 2021)

Grains

Barley - *(Hordeum vulgare)* a member of the grass family, is a major cereal grain grown in temperate climates globally. It was one of the first cultivated grains, particularly in Eurasia as early as 10,000 years ago (Ruas 2005:400).

Millet - (*Panicum miliaceum)* are a group of highly variable small-seeded grasses, widely grown around the world as cereal crops or grains for fodder and human food (Hunt et al. 2011:4757). Millet was a crop grown to the south in the warmer climates, but has been found in the trading towns like Hedeby.

Oat - (*Avena sativa*), domesticated cereal grass (family Poaceae) grown primarily for its edible starchy grains. Oats are widely cultivated in the temperate regions of the world and are second only to rye in their ability to survive in poor soils. Plant remains were found in York, but most likely came from the southern regions of Scandinavia (Serra 2017:174).

Rye – (*Secale cereal*) is a grass grown extensively as a grain, a cover crop and a forage crop. It is a member of the wheat tribe and is closely related to both wheat and barley (Serra 2017:175). Rye was a staple crop in Jorvik, Hedeby, Kaupang and Lejre in the period.

Wheat – (*Triticum Aestivum*) is a grass widely cultivated for its seed, a cereal grain which is a worldwide staple food. The many species of wheat together make up the genus Triticum; the most widely grown is common wheat (Serra 2017:177). Places where it was used are mentioned above.

Einkorn - (Triticum boeoticum) Along with Triticum dicoccum (emmer wheat), einkorn wheat is recognized among the forms of wheat that were first cultivated by humans. Places in southern Scandinavia like Lejre and Kaupang were dominant with both wheat varieties. (Einkorn, Nature’s First And Oldest Wheat » Einkorn.Com 2015).

Figure vii: Apple Mint - (Mentha suaveolens) (Snapshot: 2020)

Figure viii: Thyme - (Thymus vulgaris) (English Thyme, Common Thyme, Garden Thyme (Thymus Vulgaris) | My Garden Life: 2021)

Herbs

The herbs listed below have been found in Scandinavia in the time of the Vikings and references to those finds have been added to each listing. Some of them are also listed in the table of archaeological records of plant remains in Scandinavia 700-1200 (Serra 2017:Table-Pages 160-165).

Angelica - (*Angelica archangelica L.*) Angelica is a genus of about 60 species of tall biennial and perennial herbs in the family *Apiaceae*, native to temperate and subarctic regions of the Northern Hemisphere, reaching as far north as Iceland, Lapland and Greenland (Hedeby Settlement 800 – 1000) (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012:29: Table I).

Apple Mint - (*Mentha suaveolens*) the apple mint, pineapple mint, woolly mint or round-leafed mint, is a member of the mint family Lamiaceae. During the Middle Ages, powdered mint leaves were used to whiten the teeth [12]. Leaves, flowers and stems of *Mentha spp*. are frequently used in herbal teas or as additives in commercial spice mixtures for many foods to offer aroma and flavor (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012:2).

Black Mustard – (*Brassica nigra, Sinapis alba*) two plants are known as black mustard and remains of both have been found in Yorvik and are believed to have been grown readily in most if not all of Scandinavia (Serra 2017:Table-pg 160-161. pg 173) (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012:33)

Camelina - (*Camelina sativa*) is a flowering plant in the family *Brassicaceae* and is usually known in English as camelina, gold-of-pleasure, or false flax, also occasionally wild flax, linseed dodder, German sesame, and Siberian oilseed. It is native to Europe and to Central Asian areas (Feussner 2015:271).

Caraway – (*Carum carvi*), also known as meridian fennel and Persian cumin, is a biennial plant in the family Apiaceae, native to western Asia, Europe, and North Africa (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012:32).

Common Chickory - (*C. intybus)* is a somewhat woody, perennial herbaceous plant of the dandelion family *Asteraceae*, usually with bright blue flowers, rarely white or pink. Many varieties are cultivated for salad leaves (Chicory and Chicory | The Medieval Garden Enclosed | The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York n.d.).

Common Sorrel - (*Rumex acetosa)* is a perennial herb in the family *Polygonaceae*. Other names for sorrel include spinach dock and narrow-leaved dock. It is a common plant in grassland habitats and is cultivated as a garden herb or salad vegetable (Rumex Acetosa L. | Plants of the World Online | Kew Science n.d.).

Coriander - (*Coriandrum sativum*) is an annual herb in the family *Apiaceae*. All parts of the plant are edible, but the fresh leaves and the dried seeds are the parts most traditionally used in cooking (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012).

Dill - (*Anethum graveolens*) is an annual herb in the celery family *Apiaceae*. It is the only species in the genus *Anethum*. Dill is grown widely in Eurasia where its leaves and seeds are used as a herb or spice for flavouring food (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012).

Fennel - (*Foeniculum vulgare)* also known as sweet fennel, is a common kitchen herb used around the world (van der Veen, Livarda, and Hill 2008:3).

Flax - (*Linum usitatissimum*) a blue-flowered herbaceous plant that is cultivated for its seed (linseed) and for textile fiber made from its stalks (Larsson 2013:510).

Garden Cress - (*Lepidium sativum*), sometimes referred to as garden cress to distinguish it from similar plants also referred to as cress, is a rather fast-growing, edible herb. Garden cress is genetically related to watercress and mustard, sharing their peppery, tangy flavor and aroma (Harvey 1984).

Meadowsweet – (*Filipendula almaria*) the whole herb possesses a pleasant taste and flavor, the green parts having a similar aromatic character to the flowers, leading to the use of the plant as a strewing herb, strewn on floors to give the rooms a pleasant aroma, and its use to flavour mead, beer, and many vinegar. The flowers can be added to stewed fruit and jams, giving them a subtle almond flavor. It has many medicinal properties. The whole plant is a traditional remedy for an acidic stomach, and the fresh root is often used in homeopathic preparations. Dried, the flowers are used in potpourri. It is also a frequently used spice in Scandinavian varieties of mead (Filipendula n.d.). Plant remains have been found in Kaupang and York (Serra 2017:Table-pg 162–163, 173).

Mugwort - (*Artemisia vulgaris*) there are several species of aromatic flowering plants in the genus *Artemisia.* In Europe, mugwort most often refers to the species *Artemisia vulgaris*, or common mugwort. While other species are sometimes referred to by more specific common names, they may be called simply "mugwort" in many contexts. - the Anglo-Saxon *Nine Herbs Charm* mentions *mucgwyrt*. A folk etymology, based on coincidental sounds, derives *mugwort* from the word "mug"; more certainly, it has been used in flavoring drinks at least since the early Iron Age. Other sources say *mugwort* is derived from the Old Norse *muggi* (meaning "marsh") and German *wuertz* (*wort* in English, originally meaning "root"), which refers to its use since ancient times to repel insects, especially moths.The Old English word for mugwort is *mucgwyrt* where *mucg-*, could be a variation of the Old English word for "midge": *mycg*. *Wort* comes from the Old English *wyrt* (root/herb/plant), which is

related to the Old High German *wurz* (root) and the Old Norse *urt* (plant) (Mugwort - A Foraging Guide to Its Food, Medicine and Other Uses 2017).

Myrtle – (*Myrtaceae*) (Myrica gale or Sweet Gale) - Historically, the most important application of gale was, however, the flavoring of beer. Beer brewing is an ancient art in Central and Western Europe; hop (*Humulus lupulus*), however, had but a small place in medieval beer brewing. Instead, brewers used a large number of aromatic plants, of which gale was one of the most efficient and also most cheap (Spice Pages: Sweet Gale (Myrica Gale/Cerifera/Pensylvanica) 2003).

Nettle - (*Urtica dioica*) often known as common nettle, stinging nettle or nettle leaf, or just a nettle or stinger, is a herbaceous perennial flowering plant in the family Urticaceae. The leaves used as greens for salads (Grasping the Nettle | The Medieval Garden Enclosed | The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 2011).

Sage - (*Salvia officinalis*) is a perennial, evergreen sub-shrub, with woody stems, grayish leaves, and blue to purplish flowers. The green parts of the plant were harvested for it's aromatic leaves and shoots before it set seeds, so it's difficult to point to a time or place (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012:30). It is a member of the mint family Lamiaceae and native to the Mediterranean region, though it has been naturalized in many places throughout the world (Sage Throughout The Ages 2016).

Sheep's Sorrel - (*Rumex acetosella*) commonly known as red sorrel, sheep's sorrel, field sorrel and sour weed, is a species of flowering plant in the buckwheat family Polygonaceae. Native to Eurasia and the British Isles, the plant and its subspecies are common perennial weeds. Its arrow-shaped leaves were a familiar sight in Medieval vegetable gardens across Europe until the 1700s, and it has since become a common wild herb in North America where it was introduced as a salad green (Sorrel - A Foraging Guide to Its Food, Medicine and Other Uses 2019).

Summer Savory - (Satureja hortensis) is among the best known of the savory genus. It is an annual, but otherwise is similar in use and flavor to the perennial winter savory. It is used more often than winter savory, which has a slightly tougher leaves and a more bitter flavor (Hamidpour et al. 2014).

Thyme – (*Thymus vulgaris*) is a member of the genus Thymus of aromatic perennial evergreen herbs in the mint family Lamiaceae. Thymes are relatives of the oregano genus Origanum. They have culinary, medicinal, and ornamental uses, and the species most commonly cultivated and used for culinary purposes. An herb that has often been associated with the viking period, but if it was, it was brought in from the south as a trade item (Serra 2017:176). This is a tough one being there is no written proof, but we know that this herb grows all over the northern hemisphere in present day.

White Goosefoot (*Chenopodium album*) known by many as Lamb's Quarters -- volunteers readily in garden beds and farm fields. The leaves are fine to eat raw, but I like to cook them as a wild spinach. ... So long as the proper parts are gathered, White Goosefoot is just plain delicious (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012). Fat Hen as it was known by some, has been found in Lejre, Birka, York and Lofoten (Serra 2017:Table-pg 164–165, 176).

Figure ix: Lingonberry - Cowberry (Vaccinium vitis-idaea) (Red Pearl Lingonberry - High in Anti-Oxidants - 3.25" Pot - Fresh Aroma: 2021)

Figure x: Bilberry - (Vaccinium Myrtillus) (The Original Garden: 2021)

Fruits

The fruits listed below were all used, and many were grown, in Scandinavia during the Viking Age.

Apple - (*Malus sp.*) is an edible fruit produced by an apple tree. Apple trees are cultivated worldwide and are the most widely grown species in the genus *Malus*. Apple has most likely played a significant role as a diet supplement, as the fruits can be stored fresh and dried and can be used for the production of juice and cider. Apples were found in the Oseberg ship burial in Norway, dated to approximately AD 850 (Sloth, Hansen, and Karg 2012:31).

Bilberry - (*Vaccinium*) or occasionally European blueberries, are native to Scandinavia species of low-growing shrubs in the genus Vaccinium, bearing edible, dark blue berries (Serra 2017:Table-pg 161-162, pg 90, 168).

Blackberry - (*Rubus fruticosus*) is an edible fruit produced by many species in the genus *Rubus* in the family Rosaceae, hybrids among these species within the subgenus *Rubus*, and hybrids between the subgenera *Rubus* and *Idaeobatus* (Serra 2017:Table-pg 160-161, pg 106, 168).

Cherry – (*Prunus section cerasus*) (*Prunus avium*) is the fruit of many plants of the genus Prunus, and is a fleshy drupe. The exact use is difficult to discern from the finds, but it is likely that they would have been dried or used in cooking (Serra 2017:Table-pg 160-161, pg169).

Cowberry/Lingonberry - (Vaccinium vitis-idaea) is a short evergreen shrub in the heath family that bears edible fruit, native to Scandinavia and the boreal forest and Arctic tundra throughout the Northern Hemisphere from Europe and Asia to North America. The fruits were primarily found in Lofoten (Serra 2017:Table-pg 162-163, pg 42,172).

Crowberry - (*Empetrum nigris*) is a flowering plant species in the heather family Ericaceae with a near circumboreal distribution in the northern hemisphere. It has been found in Kaupang, Jorvik and Lofoten. It is mentioned in Icelandic Sagas on how the bishop taught the settlers to make wine (Serra 2017:Table-pg 160-161, pg 170).

Elderberry - (*Sambucus nigra L. subsp. nigra*) is a species complex of flowering plants in the family Adoxaceae native to most of Europe and North America (Serra 2017:Table-pg 160-161).

Fig - (*Ficus carica*) is an Asian species of flowering plant in the mulberry family, known as the common fig. Plant remains were found in York, but it was not thought to have actually grown there, being imported from the south (Serra 2017:Table-pg 162-163, pg 170).

Grape - (*Vitis vinifera*) is a fruit, botanically a berry, of the deciduous woody vines of the flowering plant genus Vitis, although seed samples were found in archaeological remains in York and Hedeby most likely they were imported (Serra 2017:Table-Page 162-163, pg 90, pg 172).

Peach - (*Prunus persica*) is a deciduous tree native to the region of Northwest China, where it was first domesticated and cultivated, a single stone was found in remains in Hedeby, and are certainly proof of trade (Serra 2017:Table 162-163, pg90, pg 174).

Plum – (*Prunus dometica*) is a fruit of the subgenus Prunus, these were identified in the archaeological remains found in Birka, Hedeby and York (Serra 2017:Table-pg 162-163, pg 174).

Raspberry – (*Rubus idaeus*) derives its name from *raspise*, "a sweet rose-colored wine" (mid-15th century), from the Anglo-Latin *vinum raspeys*, or from *raspoie*, meaning "thicket", of Germanic origin. These have been identified in Kaupang, York, Hedeby and Birka (Serra 2017:Table-pg 164-165, pg175).

Sloe / Blackthorn – (*Prunus Spinosa*) is a spiny deciduous shrub that produces small edible purple plums. (Popescu and Caudullo 2016). This species occurs in most of South-Central Europe, except the lower half of the Iberian Peninsula, extending northwards to the southern part of the Scandinavian Peninsula. Sloe is a species of flowering plant in the rose family Rosaceae. this prickly shrub has made an excellent hedgerow for centuries, providing a nearly impenetrable barrier for fields and coasts (Sloe - A Foraging Guide to Its Food, Medicine and Other Uses 2018).

Wild Strawberry - (*Fragaria vesca*) commonly called *wild strawberry*, woodland *strawberry*, Alpine *strawberry*, Carpathian *strawberry*, European *strawberry*, or fraisier des bois, is a perennial herbaceous plant in the rose family that grows naturally throughout much of the Northern Hemisphere, and that produces edible fruits. (Serra 2017:Table-pg 164-165, pg 122, pg 177).

Other / Miscellaneous

Hazelnut -The hazelnut is the fruit of the hazel and therefore includes any of the nuts deriving from species of the genus Corylus, especially the nuts of the species Corylus avellana. Nuts from the Hazel tree have been consumed for as long as one can remember. Shells have been found in Hedeby, York, Kaupang, Uppåkra (Serra 2017:Table-pg 162-163. pg 171).

Juniper – A (*Juniperus*) berry is the female seed cone produced by the various species of junipers. It is not a true berry but a cone with unusually fleshy and merged scales, which gives it a berry-like appearance. The cones from a handful of species, especially *Juniperus communis*, are used as a spice, particularly in European cuisine, and also give gin its distinctive flavour. Juniper berries may be the only spice derived from conifers. Native to Scandinavia, found in Kaupang (Serra 2017:Page 172).

Malt - *Malt* is prepared from cereal grain by allowing partial germination to modify the grain's natural food substances. Although any cereal grain may be converted to *malt*, barley is chiefly used. Of course as the most common cereal grown in Scandinavia, it was not hard to find (Serra 2017:Page 173).

Salt – Salt in the medieval period was derived mostly from evaporation, the drying of pools of water from natural salt water springs or from sea water. This method did not produce very pure salt and it was usually purified further by re-hydration, filtering and drying it again (Hammond 1993, 110).

Walnut - *Walnut* trees are any species of tree in the plant genus Juglans, the type genus of the family Juglandaceae, the seeds of which are referred to as *walnuts*. (Serra 2017:90)

Conclusion / Summary

Paleoethnobotanists, those who study plant remains at archaeological sites, have painted a rather vivid picture of how things may have looked in the viking village. These village gardens did not include the manicured lawns or the sprawling gardens of the Victorian era. Plants usually considered to be Viking garden crops are vegetables, herbs and spices, as well as medicinal plants. But fruit trees and bushes can also be regarded as a common garden element in the Viking Age. Simple small and well managed herb and vegetable gardens were tucked next to their homes, surrounded by wattle fences or coppiced hedges to keep the animals out. The type and of vegetable plants, fruits and herbs growing in the years 775-1050 in Scandinavia was a great deal dependent on where you were. The farther north the colder the climate and the less that was available, the farther south you went, the better things grew, and the more varieties became available.

Links

Herbs, Spices and Vegetables in the Viking Period

Viking Age Garden Plants

What did the Vikings eat ?

Eat like a Viking

Archaeological Finds of Ninth- and Tenth-Century Viking Foodstuffs

Food, Diet, and Nutrition in the Viking Age

Interpreting the plant and animal remains from Viking Age – Kaupang

Archaeobotany is the study of ancient plant remains

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