



INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE RELATED TO HORTICULTURE (BASED ON FIELD RECORDINGS)

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Abstract

This article contains information about folk knowledge, skills and experiences related to gardening, which are elements of the intangible cultural heritage of the Fergana Valley, as well as information about gardening. The history of the development of gardening in the valley and its widespread spread among the people are widely and comprehensively covered.

Keywords: Intangible cultural heritage, knowledge, skills, abilities, gardening, experience in storing grapes and apples, special water containers, equipping rooms, underground storage, climatic conditions.

Introduction

Agriculture is one of the most ancient occupations in Uzbekistan. The experience accumulated over years and centuries, as well as the skills of the local population, have not lost their significance even in today's conditions of globalization. At present, along with modern methods in horticulture, there still exist traditions inherited from our ancestors and passed down from generation to generation. Field research notes reflect the traditional practices and experiences related to agriculture and horticulture that are still in use among the local population. The Fergana Valley, with its natural conditions, fertile land, and hardworking and hospitable population, is considered one of the jewels of our republic. The development of agriculture in the valley demonstrates that each area specializes in particular agricultural sectors. Due to the existence of centuries-old experience in agriculture, certain aspects of this field have been subjected to analysis.



LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

In the Oltiariq district of Fergana region, unique knowledge, skills, and long-standing experience are applied in the cultivation, maintenance, and storage of grapes. For instance, special storage rooms are prepared for preserving ripe grapes, where platforms are constructed at a height of half a meter to one meter above ground level to place the grapes.

In Oltiariq and Qo'shtepa districts of Fergana region, grapes are mainly stored using wooden boxes. Special paper materials are placed at the bottom of the boxes in accordance with grape bunches. Additionally, special water containers are placed on both sides of each box. In some households, these containers are made by cutting the lower parts of plastic bottles, while nowadays disposable containers are also used.

Only the healthiest and cleanest grape bunches are selected and cut to a length of approximately one to two spans, then placed into the boxes. Small cleaned stones are placed into the water containers, and sugar water is poured into them. The stones serve to stabilize the containers and prevent them from tipping over.

The grape stems are cut and placed into the boxes in groups of four to six bunches, depending on their condition, with one-third of the stem immersed in the sugar water within the containers. In this manner, all boxes are filled.

If the storage room has windows, they are covered with objects to create a dark environment. It is preferable that the walls remain unpainted. The prepared boxes are then stacked in rows of five to seven units.

After arranging the room, the door is closed from the outside and covered with a large coarse cloth. The air in the room is refreshed every five to ten days. During this process, the door is opened inward, while the cloth remains closed from the outside. The ventilation process lasts for about thirty to forty minutes.

During this time, the water containers are refilled with sugar water if needed. The positions of the boxes are also changed—for example, the first and second rows are moved to the fourth and fifth rows, and vice versa. This is done to prevent the grapes from remaining in one position for too long, which could lead to disease or decay.

This traditional method helps preserve grapes in their original condition for a long period. According to experienced farmers, grapes can be stored in this way until



February–March. Depending on market conditions, grapes can be sold at prices ranging from 40,000 to 500,000 Uzbek soums [1].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary objective of grape storage is to ensure the preservation of high-quality natural grapes and to supply them to the population during the winter season. Grapes are typically harvested in September–October, depending on weather conditions, and then transported for storage. When approximately one hundred crates of grapes are brought into a storage room, they are arranged in three or four rows depending on the room’s length, elevated 20–30 cm above the ground.

The doors and windows of the storage room are initially covered with gauze or cloth and then insulated with blankets. A thermometer is placed inside the room to maintain a constant temperature. During the daytime, when the weather is warm and sunny, the blankets are removed, and the doors are opened for ventilation. If the temperature drops and fog appears, the doors and windows are closed, and insulation is reapplied.

Every 10–15 days, sulfur is applied by placing it over hot embers in a bucket and bringing it into the room. This process is usually carried out in the evening, after which the room is sealed to allow fumigation. The purpose of this practice is to prevent spoilage and maintain grape quality. Additionally, every 15–20 days, the positions of the crates are rearranged to ensure uniform storage conditions. During this process, grapes are inspected, and any diseased or spoiled fruits are removed, as they may negatively affect the remaining produce. It is essential to prevent fog from entering the storage room and to ensure regular ventilation when the air temperature rises. Proper adherence to storage practices helps preserve grape quality, ensures high market demand, and generates good economic returns [2].

In the Bukhara region, grape cultivation involves the removal of excess leaves (locally referred to as “khomtak”) twice a year. The first pruning occurs in late autumn before winter, while the second is carried out during the flowering stage, when small berries begin to form. During this stage, leaves blocking sunlight from reaching the fruit are removed, allowing the grapes to develop a firm and crisp texture. During harvesting, each grape cluster is cut with one leaf left



attached. The harvested grapes are then hung on ropes at a height of about one meter in a special storage room. This method improves air circulation and reduces the risk of disease.

In the Sokh district of the Fergana region, apples are stored using traditional underground methods. A specially prepared pit (locally called “chog‘ora”) is commonly used. This pit is typically dug to dimensions of approximately 4 × 5 meters in a location protected from direct sunlight. The underground environment provides a naturally cool temperature, preventing the fruits from freezing while maintaining freshness. The upper part of the pit is equipped with ventilation openings on both sides, often using pipes for air circulation. The walls and base of the pit are usually reinforced with concrete to ensure durability and optimal storage conditions.

When apples are placed in crates and stacked, it is important that they do not press against each other. The crates should be flat or relatively shallow. The apples placed in the crates are covered with a light cloth. The most important condition is that the storage room should not be warm and must be protected from direct sunlight. During warm days, the entrance of the storage pit should be opened for one to one and a half hours daily for ventilation. It should be emphasized that if the storage process is supervised by a single responsible person, apples can be preserved for a longer period [3].

Furthermore, in the Asaka district of the Andijan region, several methods are used for storing apples. In one method, a special dark room is prepared for storing harvested ripe fruits. Apples are arranged evenly at a height of about one meter above ground level. In another method, pits are dug in locations protected from rain and sunlight, where apples are buried for storage. Additionally, there are practices of placing containers with water among the stored apples to maintain humidity and preserve freshness [4].

The Chortoq district of the Namangan region is mainly specialized in horticulture and livestock farming. Almonds, apples, and cherries are widely cultivated in this area. Almond trees typically bloom in March, and common varieties include “Qilich” and “Qaymoq” almonds. The most productive variety is the “Qaymoq” almond, with an eight-year-old tree yielding up to 40 kilograms. Almonds are harvested in September and stored in dry conditions on specially constructed platforms raised 70–80 cm above the ground. Fertilization of almond trees begins



in February. Due to the mountainous nature of the Chortoq district, late-blooming almond varieties tend to have higher productivity [5].

CONCLUSION

In the Fergana Valley, traditional agricultural centers such as grape cultivation in Oltiariq, melon farming in Beshariq (notably Andarxon melons), rice cultivation (Cho'ng'ara devzira rice), and apricot growing in Mindon and Chimyon continue to operate based on rich indigenous knowledge and long-standing farming traditions. Even today, experienced farmers actively apply traditional practices alongside modern approaches.

The regular organization of agricultural festivals and traditional ceremonies related to farming in the country contributes to increasing awareness among youth and the wider public about intangible cultural heritage.

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