

Seeds, plants, trees and tools 1844-46

An account from Austin & McAslan provides a glimpse of estate horticulture during the mid 19th century, including use of the hothouse.

Authors: tbc article under development

(for [East Renfrewshire Designed Landscapes and Gardens Group](#))

Austin & McAslan

The nursery and seedsman business was established in 1717 in Glasgow by John McAslan. He was succeeded by his son Alexander and Robert Austin, the firm becoming Austin & McAslan. Family ownership ended in 1860 but the firm continued in various forms. Glasgow University holds an archive of company records from 1841 to 1905. (1)

The images below are from an account rendered by Austin & McAslan in 1846 (2). It covers purchases made for the Caldwell Estate during 1844 and 1845.

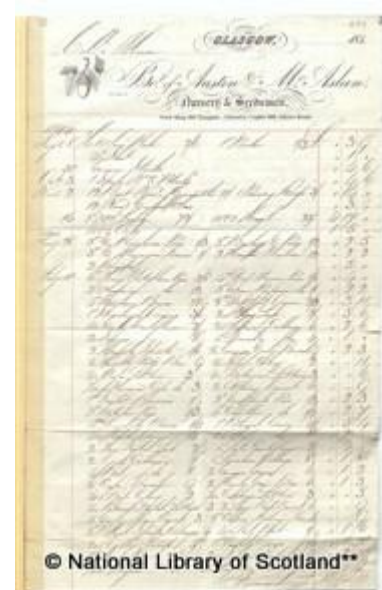


The account

There are two pages crammed full of material including seeds, tools, plants and trees. Not always easy to read, there are some notable purchases of trees and also some items likely to be destined for the hothouse. Mostly though, it is the routine purchases of vegetable and flower seeds.

Destined for the hothouse?

In 1845 there are 3 *Grape Vines* (10s 6d) and earlier in the year a *Sensitive Eggplant* (1s). At 7s each, there is a *Peach* and an *Apricot*.



A tradition of tree planting

It is no surprise that each year there are significant purchases of trees. The Mures of Caldwell were known for establishing plantations across their estate lands. The Statistical Account of Scotland of 1791, includes the following as part of the report for the Parish of Neilston (3).

....Lochlibo, covering 16 acres of land, abounding with pike and perch, surrounded with extensive thriving plantations of pines, and almost every kind of forest trees; the property of William Mure, Esq. of Caldwell, whose mansion-house and pleasure grounds in the Parish of Beith, are in the neighbourhood.

Our accompanying article *Tree planting in the 18th century* provides some information on purchases during this period.

The account from Austin and McAslan shows that in November 1844 the Estate obtained
8000 Larch, 1000 Hazel and 1000 Oaks

In March 1845 a longer list includes

*4000 Larch, 500 Hazel
4000 Spruce, 500 Cherries
1000 Oaks, 500 Planes
300 Sweet Chesnuts, 500 Beech
700 Thorns
1500 Strong Thorns*

Tools

A few tool purchases crop up throughout the account. Perhaps the most interesting is for a *wallhammer* (2s). Others include

*1 Spade No. 5 "Blacks" (4s 6d), 1 Pruning Knife (3s)
1 Pat. Scythe and 2 Scythe Stones (3s 9d; 10p)
1 Pat. Draw Hoe (2s)
Stone Nails (2s 11d)
Iron Rake (1s 8d) and another at 2s 6d
1 Round Shovel No 3 "Blacks" (3s 6d)*

Fruits

fruit trees inc dwarf pear package and some sort of cherry - march 12 page 2
120 Gooseberries, Apple trees,...

Vegetables

Flowers

Acknowledgements

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References

1. 'Records of Austin & McAslan Ltd, Seeds Merchants, Glasgow, Scotland'. Glasgow University Archive Services. <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/archives/>.
2. 'Account from Austin & McAslan'. 1846. MS 4963 Household papers 1800-45; f229. Mure of Caldwell Family Papers, National Library of Scotland.
3. Sinclair, Sir John. *The Statistical Accounts of Scotland*. Edinburgh: William Creech, 1791. <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/link/1791-99/Renfrew/Neilston/2/146/>.