



19. Illustration of European Tree Frog (*Hyla arborea*), engraving
(COURTESY iSTOCK.COM/ILBUSCA, ID184874330)

participation and the volunteers who organise the runs: in many ways it is a wonderful initiative. But Parkrun's mass participation and public health benefits are no different from the same benefits delivered by football clubs up and down the country and its volunteers are no different from the thousands of volunteers organising football matches in parks every Saturday and Sunday, who have long accepted that they have to budget for hiring the pitches. That means fund-raising, and every local football club in the land organises subscriptions and raffles and barbeques and other events to meet those costs.

Parkrun may not fully understand what it has unleashed here, but in *Running Free* the DCLG is taking advantage of the furor created over Little Stoke to take one more step on the road to making it impossible for local authorities to manage parks properly. By seeking to shut down a legitimate source of locally-raised income, the Government is playing out the wretched game of the last thirty years, summed up by Noam Chomsky as 'the standard technique of privatization: defund, make sure things don't work, people get angry, you hand it over to private capital'.²

Local decision-making is fundamental to the nature of public parks. Decisions over what uses are acceptable, what activities can be accommodated, and what activities should incur a charge for the organisers, can only be properly judged on the basis of close knowledge of the park itself and of the local community. Since public parks were first established, usage and regulation, including whether and how much to charge an organisation for an event, has been a continuous and evolving process of negotiation and amendment: such negotiations are part and parcel of the management of a park and have always been dealt with at a local level. The knowledge required to carry out such negotiations and to make such decisions is not and has never been available to central Government. For central Government, especially after years of the rhetoric of localism, to wade into the business of a parish council seems quite extraordinary.

Equally extraordinary, surely, would be for government to legislate to give immunity to a single company from being charged to use public parks, wherever and forever. Where does Parkrun, for all the benefits of encouraging running, get such a privileged status? This certainly is about the free use of public parks, but not about any matter of principle that concerns the public at large: this is freedom for one company to ride roughshod over the basic tenet of public parks, that they should be managed by democratically elected local authorities for the benefits of the many, not the few.

INTRODUCTION OF ZOOLOGICAL OBJECTS INTO FLOWER-GARDENS

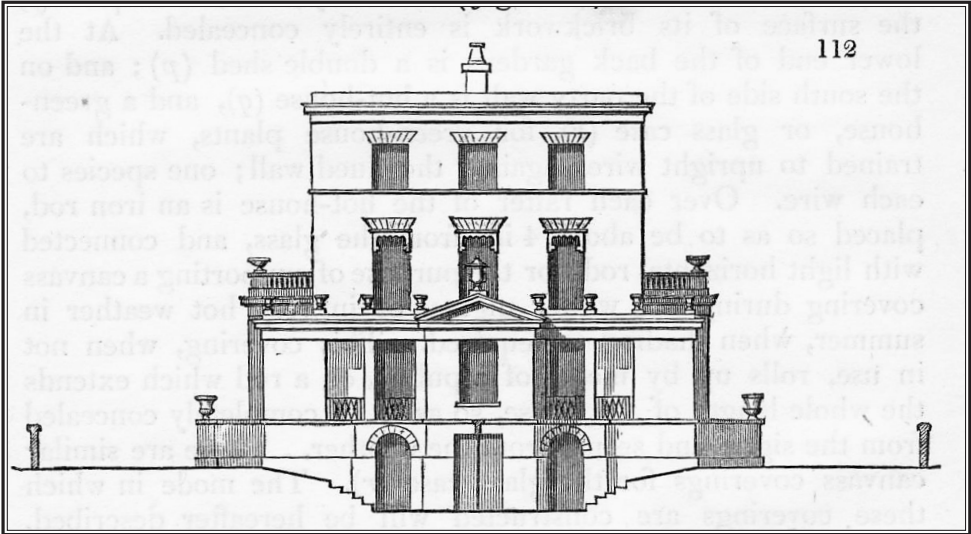
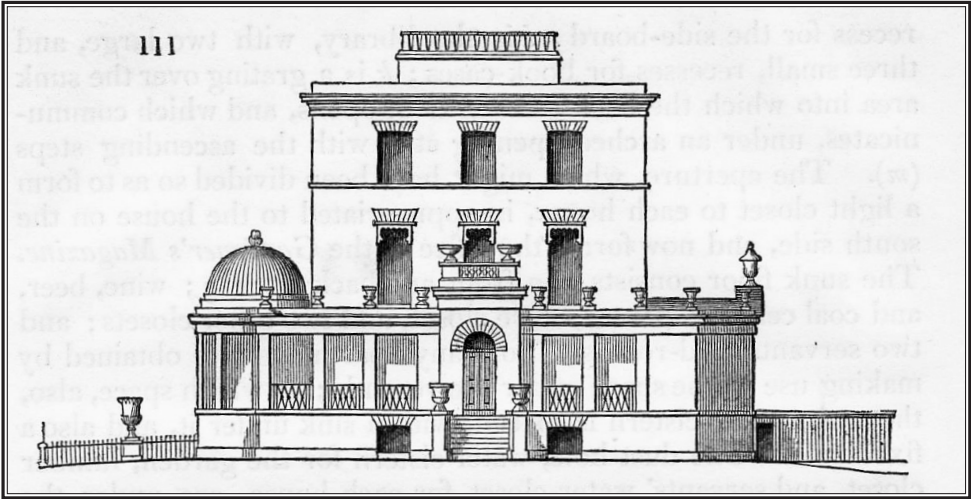
By Theodor Eduard Nietner

In 1837 John Loudon republished an article by Theodor Eduard Nietner on the theme of the 'Introduction of Zoological Objects into Flower Gardens' in his *Gardener's Magazine*.¹ The thrust of the article was that town-dwellers should be encouraged to enliven their gardens with 'animated nature' – and tree frogs (*Hyla arborea*, formerly *Rana arborea*) in particular (fig. 19).

Nietner was the son of a respected family of Prussian court gardeners, and from 1832 had been gardener to Princess Liegnitz at Niederschönhausen. He had travelled widely, had an informed interest in botany and zoology, and had contributed to Peter Joseph Lenné's *Handbibliothek für Gärtner und Liebhaber der Gärtnerei* ('Handbook for Gardeners and Lovers of the Nursery', 1837–42), which gave a general account of the experiences of court gardeners and botanists. The appearance of his article in the *Gardener's Magazine* coincided with the publication of his first book, *Die Küchengärtnerei: eine praktische Anleitung zur Erziehung und Pflege aller im Gebiete dieses Theiles der Gärtnerei vorkommenden Gewächse* ('The Kitchen garden: a practical Guide to the Cultivation and Care of all the Plants occurring in this part of the Nursery') in 1837.

2. Noam Chomsky, 'The State-Corporate Complex: a threat to freedom and survival', lecture given at the University of Toronto, 7 April 2011 (<https://chomsky.info/20110407-2/>).

1. *The Gardener's Magazine and register of rural and domestic improvements*, 1837, vol. 3, new series, pp.140–1.



20. A double detached Suburban Villa, in Porchester Terrace, Bayswater.
South and east elevations of John Loudon's house, engravings, c.1838
(REPRODUCED FROM J. C. LOUDON, *The Suburban Gardener, and Villa Companion*, p.329)

If it strikes our readers as curious that Loudon – the ‘conductor’, or editor, of the *Gardener’s Magazine* – should include an article on tree frogs in his popular miscellany, we should reflect on the fact that the aim of his *Magazine* was, in his own words, ‘to disseminate new and important information on all topics connected with horticulture, and to raise the intellect and character of those engaged in this art’. Nothing was too small nor too obscure to be included in the pages of Britain’s first periodical to combine the science and design of gardens. Loudon invited ‘all those who take an interest in gardening to assist us by their advice, and by the communication of information on every subject connected with the work’. Loudon, moreover, had a vested interest: according to his friend James Rennie he kept a tree frog in his Bayswater garden for several years (fig. 20).²

While the Common tree frog may not have figured among the most topical issues in early Victorian gardening, its status as a ‘British native’ had for centuries exercised the minds of some of the country’s greatest scientific minds. Sir Thomas Browne implied in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646) that this ‘little Frog of an excellent Parrat green, that usually sits on Trees and Bushes’ was both familiar and abundant on our shores; and in 1667 Dr Christopher Merrett listed the tree frog as a native species in his *Pinax rerum Naturalium Britannicarum continens Vegetabilia, Animalia et Fossilia*. These assertions were, however, repudiated by Gilbert White, in his *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1789). The latest thinking is that tree frogs were probably present in Britain during the Pleistocene, and that they survived until the end of the twentieth century in modest numbers in colonies in Devon, London, the Isle of Wight, and in Beaulieu in the New Forest. The zoologist Darren Naish remarked in 2010 that ‘the idea that this charismatic little green frog

might be a British native is pretty exciting to those of us living in such a herp-poor country’.³

We hope that Herr Nietner’s reflections may inspire ardent and would-be lovers of herpetofauna across the kingdom to enliven their gardens with impunity.

ART. IX. On enlivening Flower or other small Gardens that surround Dwelling-houses, by Means of Zoology. By TH. NIETNER. Translated from the Garten Zeitung, No. 45., for Nov. 1836.

The following idea will, perhaps, at first sight appear whimsical, and will be laughed at by many; but those who understand it better, and who are admirers of nature, will be pleased when they see her combinations imitated.

The picture which I form to myself of a flower-garden requires it to be filled, to the greatest degree of richness and luxuriance, with all the plants which please and gratify the senses; and which should be so arranged as to afford the highest enjoyment to the mind; and, therefore, neither simplicity nor harmony in the whole should be wanting. Openness and clearness of space should also be attended to. But the charms of the flower-garden, as the frequent haunt of men, are heightened when it presents not only the beauties of still life, but is enlivened by those of animated nature; either by the delightful melody of birds, or by the brilliant colours of butterflies, and numerous other insects, which flutter around the flowers, or crawl over the beds.

Animated nature everywhere carries with it cheerfulness and delight, and produces in the sensitive man feelings of contemplation and wonder! But it is not by means of insects only that the enjoyment of a flower-garden, or of other gardens, is most heightened; but by one of a hitherto not favourite family of reptiles; which, however, have always been beloved by me, and which I have always been delighted to find inhabitants of the garden. This reptile is neither more nor less than the leaf-frog, *Rana arborea*. (See Vol. XII, fig. 47.)

An unusual number of leaf-frogs were seen here (Berlin) last summer, from what cause I cannot pretend to say; but it is a fact that was observed by many persons. In the

2. Gilbert White, *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne in the County of Southampton, Embellished with Engravings* (1837 ed.), p. 99, fn. 7. James Rennie was briefly editor of *The Magazine of Botany and Gardening* (1833–7), and the first professor of natural history and zoology at King’s College. He fell out with Loudon in 1834.

3. See Darren Naish, ‘Britain’s lost tree frogs: sigh, not another “neglected narrative”’, posted on the internet 19 February 2007 (Science Blogs, Tetrapod Zoology, hppt:). The champion of the promotion of the Common tree frog as a British native is the freeland naturalist/photographer Charles Snell, author of ‘Status of the Common Tree Frog in Britain’, *British Wildlife*, February 2006, pp. 153–160.

month of May, when the plants were unfolding their buds to new life, and the soil covered with a lively green, I had the opportunity of obtaining thirty leaf-frogs from the pleasure-ground which surrounds the king's palace. I put them in the flower-garden which surrounds my house; and, as the year advanced, I obtained more, till the number might be said to amount to 150.

Whether they were not comfortable in their new situation, or whether it was from instinct, I do not know, but I found the greater part of them generally sitting on those plants that had either large and soft, or stiff leaves. They particularly frequented the *Heracleum*, *Rhèum*, *Lophospèrmum*, *Cánna*, *Rhododéndron*, and *Hydránga*. I sometimes observed two of them sitting on one leaf sunning themselves. However agreeable to me these harmless creatures were, even when silent, I was much more delighted when the approaching warm weather caused their voices to be heard. Rain was not, indeed, always the cause of their song; and they often deceived themselves, as well as me, in this respect: at least, there was a striking instance of it, when, from the continued drought of last summer, the plants were obliged to be watered every day; if a drop by chance fell from the watering-pot on the chin of any of the leaf-frogs, they raised their voices in all the varieties of tones, and seemed perfectly happy. On such occasions other leaf-frogs joined in the song, which had not received any drop from the watering-pot, and probably only did so from the example of their companions. Later in the season, when the weather changed, and heavy clouds darkened the horizons, the concerts of my frogs never ceased. In all creeks and corners, in every plant thickly clothed with leaves, whether high or low, they poured out their song: not, indeed, very melodiously, but not in discordant tones, and certainly to the best of their ability. A friend on a visit was often agreeably surprised by a hundred unexpected voices, which suddenly saluted his ears, as if by magic, from behind him, before him, near him, and on all sides.

GROSVENOR SQUARE: LONDON'S CAMPIDOGLIO?

By Todd Longstaffe-Gowan

There are compelling reasons why Grosvenor Square should be a subject of interest for those concerned with London's open spaces – both past and future. Garden squares first appeared in this city, and were widely perceived as an English innovation: this particular square was among the earliest to be laid out around a central planted area. The form that it now takes has been determined by an array of diverse visions, needs, assumptions and anxieties. Analysing some of these provides a starting-point for more general reflections on how we might adopt or sustain a thoughtful and inventive approach to the long-term stewardship of these spaces.

Four events, moreover, are currently concentrating the minds of those who have an interest in this remarkable square. First, the tercentenary of the initial planning of the Grosvenor Estate in Mayfair – of which it is the centrepiece – is now imminent. Secondly, the Estate is about to take back the management of the square from The Royal Parks. Thirdly, The Royal Parks are on the cusp of merging with the Royal Parks Foundation to form a new charitable trust to manage London's royal parks; and, fourthly, the American Embassy is poised to abandon its long-term domination of the square and to move to a new site in Vauxhall.

In approaching the aesthetic and practical interventions that these events might make possible, an initial point of reference suggests itself. The oval form of the garden at the centre of the square was completely unprecedented in London spaces of this kind before it was laid out in the mid-1720s. What was it that made Sir Richard Grosvenor, heir to the family's estate, think of such an unusual design element, and what symbolic purposes (not necessarily of an explicit kind) did it promise to fulfil for him and his contemporaries?