

Orto
Botanico
di Brera



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI MILANO



Aboca

ART O

Art and botanical walk between the
Pinacoteca and the Botanical Garden of Brera



Nature has always provided a source of privileged inspiration for artists, each of who interpreted it according to his own culture and sensitivity.

Visit this important museum, the Pinacoteca di Brera, focus your attention on the world of plants depicted in painting and find the same, living plants in the Botanical Garden. Make unexpected and fascinating discoveries.

A unique walk among art and nature that traces the journey of representing reality and leads us to question the relationship between nature and culture, between man and his environment.

Culture and symbolism reach their apex when referring to medicinal plants; for thousands of years the only remedy to our health problems, balanced delicately between magic and science, ever accompanying us through our development.

From here we set out on the Arte Orto path, founded by Aboca in collaboration with the Pinacoteca and the Botanical Garden of Brera, to rediscover where we come from via the beauty of art and plants. To return to discover the intimate bond between man and nature.

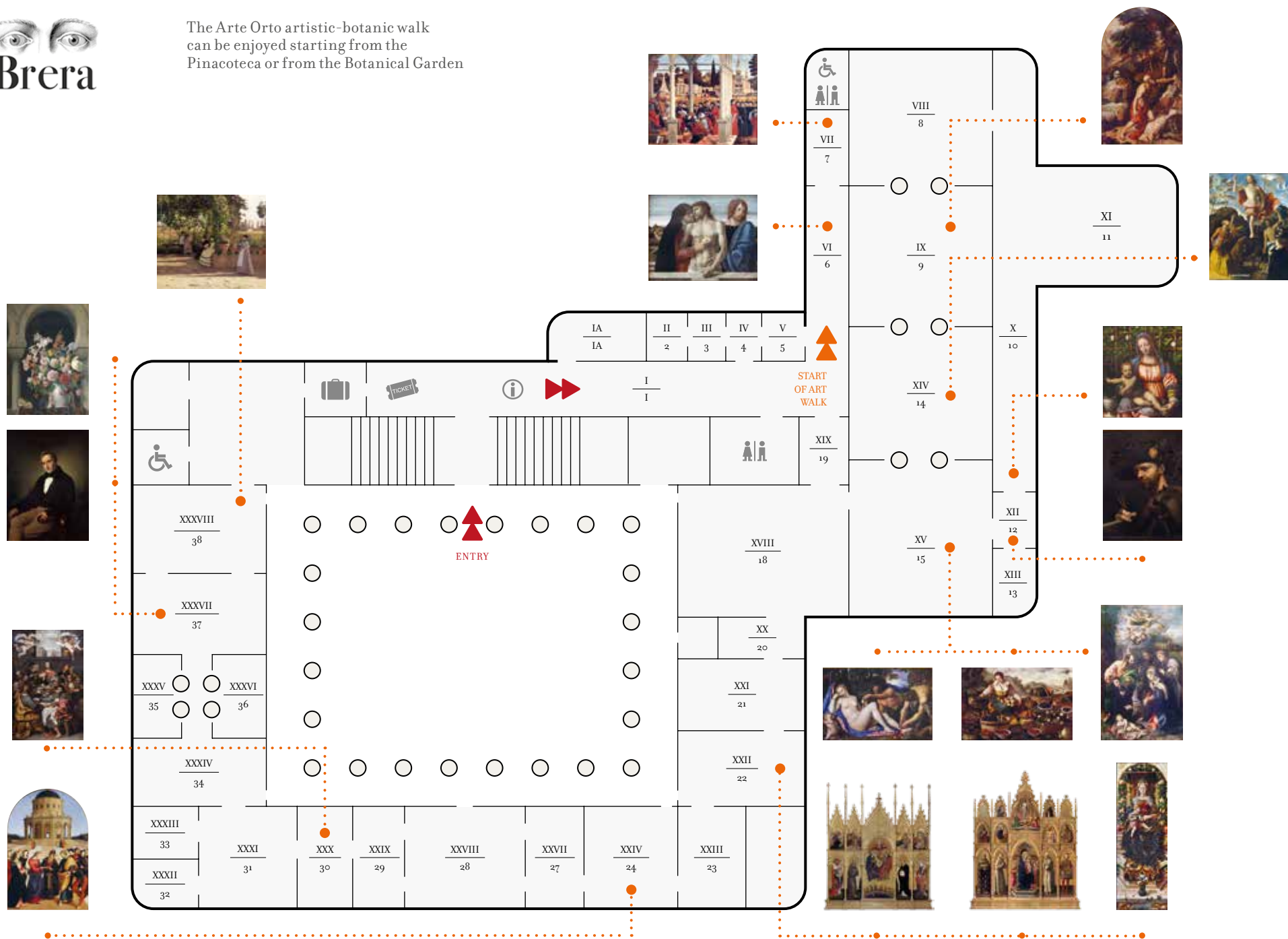
Massimo Mercati

Aboca Chief Executive

ART E O

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The Arte Orto artistic-botanic walk
can be enjoyed starting from the
Pinacoteca or from the Botanical Garden



According to tradition, the Crown of Thorns Jesus wore during his crucifixion was made with branches of **Christ's Thorn**



Hall
VI



Giovanni Bellini

Pietà, 1465 circa

Giovanni Bellini (Venice, c. 1430 – 1516) was a key figure for the success of modern painting in the area around Venice. His long artistic career was marked by a capacity to grasp and develop new stimuli from art at that time, creating a very personalised language, capable of major emotional intensity.

In his *Pietà*, Mary and John the Evangelist support the lifeless body of Christ, just taken down from the cross. Their agony seems to be embodied by the greyness of the sky, forming a single bond between man and nature. Tradition has it that the crown of thorns, referred to in the three Books of the Gospels – Matthew (27, 29), Mark (15, 17), John (19, 2) – and placed on the head of Christ after the flagellation, was woven by the Roman soldiers using twigs of this plant, a spiny shrub with flexible branches.

In fact the scientific name of Christ's Thorn is *Paliurus spina-christi*, in reference to its infamous use in the passion.

Plant
No. 1



Christ's Thorn

Paliurus spina-christi Mill.

Few plants have such a clear and intuitive specific name as the one attributed to this species by the 18th-century Scottish botanist Philip Miller.

Christ's Thorn (most widespread common name for referring to *Paliurus spina-christi*) is a perennial, bushy shrub with branches bearing pungent, rigid, very sharp and unequal spines, the shortest being barbed. The fruits are disc-shaped and taste of dried apple.

Recent studies on fossil discoveries have identified its area of origin as southern Europe and western Asia, from where it spread to and adapted for other regions such as North Africa, where it was used as a medicinal plant and for fencing. Alternatively, Pliny described it as a species from *Paliurus*, close to the Gulf of Bomba in Libya, which separates historical Cyrenaica from the adjacent Marmarica. In traditional medicine the fruit was used for its diuretic and hypercholesterolaemic activity and in the treatment of kidney and bladder stones. More recent studies have shown an antibacterial action.

The **cypress** tree is traditionally planted near tombs as a symbol of mourning and pain.

Maybe in this case it represents the martyrdom of Saint Stephen. It may also symbolise the Christian church defended by Stephen in Jerusalem, as the Cypress is a plant that tends to reach higher than the others; connecting the earth with the sky



The word **borage** could also refer to the world of wool producers. The majority of the members of the Saint Stephens School worked in that industry

Hall VII



Vittore Carpaccio

Sermon of Saint Stephen, 1514

Vittore Carpaccio was born in Venice around 1465 and worked there until his death, in 1526. His most famous paintings are the history cycles he created for the leading brotherhoods of the city's great painting *Schools*. In this work, the Venetian narrative tradition is merged with the detail Flemish art was known for, introducing fantasy settings, with famous monuments.

The *Sermon of Saint Stephen* forms part of a series of five large canvases telling the stories of this Saint, found in the Venetian home of the Laneri School.

Carpaccio set the event, which took place in Jerusalem, in an imaginary context. Even the plants, many of which are medicinal, are described in minute detail and the blue-flowered borage can be seen to have been included. The unusual choice of including this plant possibly derives from it being associated with the world of producers and distributors of wool, which form the majority of the patrons of the Saint Stephen, or Laneri, School. The word *borage* derives from the Latin *borra*, a coarse wool fabric, which resembles the fur on the plant's leaves.

Plant No. 2



Borage

Borago officinalis L.

Borago officinalis is a mysterious plant. There are a number of diverging opinions on both its origin and its historic, alleged, psychotherapeutic activity.

While today it is in fact acknowledged as one of the best plant sources of essential fatty assets obtained by crushing the seeds, in the past it was used in a now little-known treatment: curing melancholy and sadness, as witnessed by Pietro Andrea Mattioli (*I Discorsi*, 1568). It may in fact form the secret ingredient of the mythic Nepenthe medicinal beverage, from Homer's *Odyssey*, which takes away all sorrows. Many classical authors consider it able to make a person euphoric. The authors, Castore Durante and again Mattioli refer to its earlier name, *corragine*, through its miraculous properties in treating affairs of the heart (*cuore*), or perhaps as a corruption of the Latin *cor-ago* (meaning courage) by Celtic peoples who used it to embolden soldiers before battle.

Medicinal and dietary use of *Borago officinalis* is currently not recommended, through the content (excluding the seeds) of hepatotoxic pyrrolizidine alkaloids.

Ivy represents the resolute faith of Saint Jerome



Hall IX



Titian

Saint Jerome in Penitence, 1552 circa

Titian, or Tiziano Vecellio (Pieve di Cadore 1488/90 – Venice 1576) was one of the leading painters of the 1500s. He had a very long career, during which he created works of extraordinary dramatic force, especially in his later years, featuring highly expressive colour mixes.

In *Saint Jerome in Penitence*, he created for the Venetian church of Santa Maria Nuova a representation of the Saint completely merged in the surrounding mountainous landscape, in a practically monochromatic range of earthy hues. The ivy, included in great detail on the rock in the foreground, is a plant implies a variety of symbolic interpretations: it is evergreen (a reference to the immortality of the soul), luxuriant yet resting on modest stems (analogous to the humility of Christ in becoming man), and difficult to eradicate (like man's faith). In this specific case it would seem to symbolise the resolute faith of Jerome. The additional presence of oak in the work would reinforce this concept.

Plant No. 3



Ivy

Hedera helix L.

An evergreen, vine-like plant with adaptable stems that can adhere via temporary roots to almost anything vertical; however, not a parasitic plant representing a threat to the trees it grows on.

Pliny described it as a noble species used for making crowns for poets. The most credible reason for this use and its sacred references is the belief that a crown tight to the head could be the best remedy for headache caused by excess alcohol.

Currently the leaves are used in medicine for the treatment of bronchial secretions, once also used externally for the treatment of ulcers. All parts of the plant are however rich in potentially toxic active compounds, especially the fruit. Curiously, bovine species look for ivy leaves immediately after giving birth, through their benefit against bleeding and as a tonic for the uterus.

● The **olive** is universally recognised as a symbol of peace and unity



Hall XIV



Giovanni Cariani

*Resurrection of Christ with Saint Jerome,
John the Baptist and the Donors, 1520*

Giovanni Busi known as Cariani (Bergamo around 1485 – later 1547) was one of the most interesting painters from Bergamo in the 1500s. He trained in Venice and his young works were in fact borrowed from Bellini and Giorgione. Subsequent periods in Lombardy influenced his mature style, which was closer to Lombardian art and influenced by the works of Lorenzo Lotto.

This *Resurrection* was commissioned for the family funeral chapel by Ottaviano Vimercati, an arts patron from the southern part of Cremona (depicted kneeling together with his wife). An Olive tree, considered a symbol of peace since classical times, is clearly recognisable on the left. To reinforce this symbolism, standing in the branches is a dove, which in Genesis (8, 11) returned to Noah with an olive branch to announce the end of the global flood and the start of a new era of peace between God and men. In the same way, the Resurrection of Christ established peace between humanity and God, and this is perhaps one of the most profound meanings of the work.

Plant No. 4



Olive

Olea europaea L.

For peoples of the Mediterranean it is impossible to imagine a more important and representative plant than the olive. Since antiquity the Mediterranean has been the nerve centre of the development of olive growing, which continues today with more than 750 million varieties, concentrated primarily in Spain, Greece and Italy. The origin of this species is still uncertain. The current theory has the olive deriving from an unknown part of the Eastern Mediterranean, from where it spread, evolving into new forms, in the Aegean area, North Africa and then southern Spain and Italy. Wherever it originates, the olive has become a fundamental part of the culture of all the greater civilisations. Forming one part of the trio of divine foods together with grapes and cereals, their fruit, leaves, seeds and oil have always been known for their medicinal and cosmetic benefits. Today the leaves are used for their metabolising activity of carbohydrates and lipids, for normalising blood pressure, improving blood circulation and as antioxidants through the presence of polyphenols.

The **pomegranate** is in this case an attribute of the goddess Venus, indicating fertility and prosperity.

Also, classic mythology holds that this tree, and therefore the fruit, were born from the blood of the god Bacchus



Grapes are a symbol attributed to the God Bacchus and his disciples, the satyrs

Hall
XV



Simone Peterzano

Venus and Cupid with two satyrs in a landscape, 1570 circa

Pupil of Titian and teacher of Caravaggio, Simone Peterzano (Bergamo 1540-1596), was active primarily in Milan. His later works are characterised by simple compositions, major attention to the preparatory design and a modest colour range.

Venus and Cupid with two satyrs in a landscape, painted around 1570, is one of the artist's few secular paintings. This painting was inspired by Titian's *Jupiter and Antiope* (Louvre). The strong and explicit eroticism of the subject of the work perhaps aims to celebrate the generative power of nature and the pleasures of carnal love. Venus, the goddess of love, sleeps in the company of her son Cupid, while two satyrs, representing abandon and luxury, try to rouse her. The setting is a verdant natural landscape, with a highly detailed still life in the lower right corner, where there are also some pomegranates.

These seed-laden fruits are a symbol of prosperity and fertility, associated with the goddess Venus.

Plant
No. 5



Pomegranate

Punica granatum L.

The fruits of pomegranate are tough skinned many-seeded berry, full of numerous seeds with a red watery-meaty pulp, with that unmistakable pomegranate red.

In his interesting treatise, *Phytognomonica* (Naples, 1588), which illustrates the medicinal properties of plants compared with the various parts of the human body, the naturalist, philosopher and alchemist Giovambattista della Porta indicates pomegranate for problems with the teeth, given the similarity of the peeled fruit to a half open mouth with teeth on show.

Today this use has no basis, but the pomegranate remains a medicinal species of enormous value and interest. The juice of the fruit protects against cardiovascular diseases and has antibacterial and antioxidant properties, considered three times greater than red wine and green tea.

The bark of the young branches and the root was already known in Roman times as a vermifuge.

The abundance of fruit associated with the harvest season and the presence of bunches of **grapes**, and **hazelnuts** which are a feature of the harvest, have led some to suggest that the painting is an allegory of Autumn



This painting has explained in many different ways: the many fruits and vegetables placed on view in the baskets (**cherries, asparagus, artichokes, figs, pumpkins**) suggest that the work represents one of the four elements, the Earth; or, according to Counter-Reformed ideas, the opulence of fruit and vegetables could be a hint at moderation in eating

Hall
XV



Vincenzo Campi

The Fruit Seller, 1578 circa

Vincenzo Campi (Cremona 1536 – c.1591) was famous in his later years for still life and lively scenes of markets and kitchens, populated by farmers. His pictures, influenced by Flemish art, helped to frame the Lombardian style of picture and still life.

The Fruit Seller forms part of a series of four paintings having various interpretations, such as allegories of the four elements or four seasons of the year. This peculiar iconography seems to reinforce the idea that these canvases had a moralising intent associated with counter reformation ethical painting, which stimulates faith to reflect on divine love, good and bad, and on earthbound vices, perhaps in this cycle wishing to allude to moderation in eating. Worthy of note in *The Fruit Seller*, is the realism of the selection of fruits and vegetables of the various seasons on display. In particular, in a basket on the right, there is a good view of hazelnuts. The hazel was considered a symbol of patience, since this plant fructifies in quite a long time.

Plant
No. 6



Hazel Tree

Corylus avellana L.

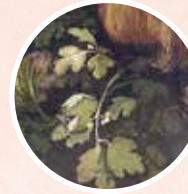
The hazel has been indispensable to the creation of essential, even magical tools since earliest times. According to popular belief, this tree could confer the gifts of clairvoyance and absolute power to those who gathered its wood in the hour before midnight on Saint John's Eve. It also was used to make the caduceus, the winged sceptre wand with two serpents associated with the Greek god Hermes, a symbol of peace, commerce and reconciliation. Today, the caduceus is linked to the profession of pharmacist.

Better known today is the use of the tree's fruit, the hazelnut, as a foodstuff with nutritionally valuable dried nut, composed of carbohydrates, proteins, fats and a high polyphenol content. The fruit's scientific name, *Corylus*, derives from the Greek *korys* (helmet, hood) because of the external hull of the fruit. The addition of the adjective *avellana*, according to Pliny, comes from Abella, the ancient city on the slopes of Mount Avella (Italy) where the *negus corilanus*, the great hazel forest of Irpinia, was to be found.



● **Hawthorn** is referred to with Mary and Jesus. The white flowers indicate the Immaculate Conception; the red fruit symbolises the drops of blood shed by Jesus on the cross; the thorns refer to Christ's crown during the crucifixion

Hall
XV



Giulio Campi

Virgin and Child with Saints,
1530 circa

Giulio Campi (Cremona c. 1508 – 1573) was, together with younger brothers Vincenzo and Antonio, one of the protagonists of Italian Mannerism.

In his works he translates into a Lombardian style the formal refinements of painting of that time, Emilian and Roman in particular (Giulio Romano), giving life to highly decorative paintings with accentuated illusionism.

This *Virgin and Child* comes from the church of San Mattia in Cremona.

The background consists of figures in flight, Saint Matthias introduces the donor to the Virgin and the Child, in the company of a group of saints. Jesus is reclined on a soft blanket, which is laid close to a small, clearly recognisable hawthorn plant. This shrub is associated with the figure of the Virgin Mary, as its white flowers refer to the Immaculate Conception.

The red fruit symbolise the drops of blood shed by Jesus on the cross and the thorns refer to the infamous crown Christ wore during the crucifixion and his death.

Plant
No. 7



Hawthorn

Crataegus monogyna Jacq.

Since classical times hawthorn has been held to have a strong symbolic meaning, although it had to wait until the 19th century before its therapeutic properties were brought to light, perhaps because of incorrect botanical interpretations. Curiously some of its curative qualities have strong association with legends, for example with rest and protection while you sleep.

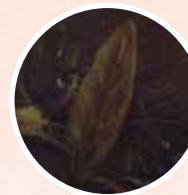
This belief is deeply rooted in the story of the *Sleeping Beauty*. In the legend, Princess Rosaspina fell into an enchanted sleep for 100 years after being pricked by a needle, which at that time would have been made with hawthorn. We know that cave dwellers used to accompany and protect their dead in eternal sleep, after having bound their feet above the head with hawthorn branches.

Thanks to chemical studies complex molecules have been found in hawthorn leaves and flowers which have a cardiokinetic and slightly sedative action, which would promote sleep, relaxation and mental well-being in general. It is also helpful in the regulation of blood pressure.



Since ancient times the **bay tree**, or laurel, has been a symbol of victory and eternity

Hall XII



Giovan Paolo Lomazzo

*Self-portrait in the robes of an abbot
of the Academy of the Val di Blenio, 1568*

In 1560, a curious confraternity of artists, noblemen and writers dedicated to juvenile pranks founded the Academy of the Val di Blenio in Milan.

The eccentric members of the “Academy” trusted in the protection of Bacchus and met together as false *popolani* in a sort of secret initiation.

In 1568, the society made Giovan Paolo Lomazzo its abbot and this title, clearly written, stands out on the picture.

The author paints himself in humble clothing, with the sign of Thyrsus covered in ivy and a garland of grapevine braided with laurel, in a grotesque mockery of the symbolic values traditionally associated with laurel: victory, fame, triumph and honour, as well as poetic and literary flair, are accompanied here by the iconography of Bacchus.

The medallion with the watering can, seal of the Academy, refers to the idea that Dionysian inebriation, achieved with orgiastic beverages, feeds the creative, bizarre and grotesque *furor* so typical of Mannerism.

Plant No. 8



Bay tree

Laurus nobilis L.

The only Italian species of the extraordinary *Lauraceae* family, best known for sacred plants and enormous therapeutic powers, grows in the sunny areas of olive cultivation.

They are plants characterised by the presence of volatile oils and spicy flavours, such as cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum* J. Presl) and camphor, *Cinnamomum camphora* (L.) J. Presl. The Greeks and the Romans awarded the laurel, or bay, wreath in the form of a crown, at any glorious opportunity.

Its therapeutic uses also go back to ancient times. Hippocrates and Pliny were already prescribing the oil of its berries for neuralgic pain of any kind.

Today the leaves, through the high stimulating, carminative, antispasmodic essential oils, are considered a helpful remedy for disorders and spasms of the digestive system. The oil obtained from pressing the berries (laurel essential oil) is indicated for local treatment of rheumatic pain.

The **aquilegia** flower, with its brown-violet colour changing to claret, represents the passion of Christ and the associated pain of Mary



The **rose** is symbolic of Mary, free from original sin, as defined by the Provence poet of the 13th century, Pierre de Corbiac, "Rose without thorns, the most aromatic of flowers"

Hall
X



Bernardino Luini

Madonna in the Rose Garden,
1520-1521 circa

Bernardino Scapi, known as Luini was born in Dumenza in around 1480, but was active primarily in Milan, where he died in 1532. His early works show an influence of Zenale, Bergognone, Bramantino and Leonardo. His mature style shows very simple compositions and a measured expression of feelings, even in the most dramatic scenes.

The *Madonna in the Rose Garden* was a work probably destined for the monastery Certosa di Pavia. In his representation of the Virgin with the Child, Luini united his taste for the description of the typical of the Lombardian tradition with the botanical studies initiated by Da Vinci since the Florentine period.

Each plant species is clearly recognisable and painted faithfully to reality. Of particular significance is the pergola of roses that spring from the background, creating a *hortus conclusus*, an element that began to be associated with the figure of Mary and with her virginity. The iconography of the closed garden is associated with the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin and with her complete virtue.

Plant
No. 9



Damask Rose

Rosa ×damascena Mill.

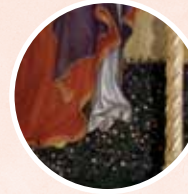
A shrub with strong curved thorns that produces fragrant flowers, with pink or white petals, its origin results from a random hybridisation then reproduced botanically by crossing *Rosa gallica* and *R. phoenicea* or *R. ×bifera*, introduced to the world by Crusaders returning from the holy land. Its fragrance made it one of the most significant roses for the perfume industry, becoming a reference for whole areas like the Kazanlak Valley in Bulgaria, where legend has it that Alessandro Magno, on return from Persia, introduced its conservation.

The flowers are collected manually before they are fully open. Currently the major producers are Bulgaria, Iran, India and Turkey. It is used for its terpenes, glycosides, flavonoids and anthocyanins, even in medicine. The pharmacological effects are primarily on the nervous system: hypnotic, analgesic and anticonvulsant. It also has an action on the cardiovascular system, it is antibacterial, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant. It can also be helpful for inflammation of the gallbladder and for gallstones.

Because of its form, the **clover** is used to symbolise the mystery of the Trinity. Its three leaves represent the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as well as the three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity



Hall
XXII



Gentile da Fabriano

Valle Romita Polyptych, 1410-1412

One of the most important exponents of International Gothic, Gentile da Fabriano was the personification of the itinerant artist. The central panel of this polyptych, painted for a Franciscan hermitage near Fabriano, depicts the Coronation of the Virgin with a representation of the Trinity and a choir of angel musicians on the bottom.

On the central panel, with the Coronation, and the side panels, with the four saints, the figures have a contemplative air. The saints in the upper pinnacles are drawn realistically, however, illustrating salient episodes in their lives.

Other figures are set in a field, where different botanical species are depicted. Biblical exegesis always has closely linked the figure of the Madonna with a garden (in reference to Eden or Paradise), perceived as a place of original innocence (the purity of Mary) and symbol of the perfect accord of man with God.

A luxuriant garden also symbolised the blessed spirit, cultivated with faith and virtue.

Plant
No. 10



White clover

Trifolium repens L.

White clover is a leguminous plant native to Europe and central Asia used today all over the world for fodder. It is an herbaceous, low-growing perennial with heads of whitish flowers, often with a tinge of pink or cream, and leaves that are smooth and splashed with white. The symbolic significance of the plant's trifoliate leaves has caused it to be known as the Trinity plant, used also by Saint Patrick to spread the doctrine of Christianity.

Clover came to be considered a symbol of deliverance, since it was used in ancient times as an antidote for snakebite.

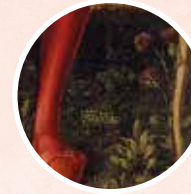
Today, the plant is considered beneficial to respiratory function, to menopausal troubles and to detoxifying the system. It is used as a remedy for rheumatism, for eye inflammation and as an anthelmintic. In India, clover in powder form is used to improve cognitive function and memory.

In the Caucasus, a hydro-alcoholic tincture of its flowers is advised as a cure for epilepsy and gynaecological troubles.

The **carnation**, or *dianthus*, the flower of God, appears in the hand of the Virgin Mary or of Jesus, or at times in the garden of Paradise. This flower was commonly called a "nail" for the shape of its fruit, and its image consequently became associated with the Passion of Christ



Hall XXII



Alunno (Niccolò di Liberatore)

Cagli Polyptych, 1465

Alunno was the only artist of the Umbrian Renaissance to be recorded (together with Perugino and Pinturicchio) in Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*.

Born Niccolò di Liberatore in Foligno around 1430 to a well-to-do family of pharmacists, Vasari tells us that "he gave his figures heads drawn from nature and that seemed alive". This polyptych, which comes from a Franciscan church, represents the *Madonna on a Throne with Infant and Angels*, along with the saints dearest to the Franciscan order. Their placement in the compartments is archaic, but the figurative language of the painter is modern. The Virgin is on her throne, which advances toward the viewer, and, in the upper portion of the polyptych, an unclothed Christ walks on a pavement of clouds in perspective.

Naturalistic details, like the foot of Saint Francis and the scroll held by Saint Ludovic bridge the gap between Man and Good and the sacred in a stylised *hortus conclusus* where saints are active. The accurately drawn field represents the perfection of creation and the beauty of the souls of the saints.

Plant No. 11



Carnation

Dianthus caryophyllus L.

The species *Dianthus caryophyllus* L. represents one of the most important hybrids obtained by English gardener Thomas Fairchild (1667-1729).

The scientific name *dianthus* is derived from the Greek and means "divine flower," while the common English word "carnation" may be a corruption of the word "coronation", or an evolution of the Arabic *qaranful*, meaning "clove", or the Italian word for flesh, *carnagione*.

Legend has it that the scientific name is due to Diana, goddess of the hunt. Madly in love with a sturdy shepherd, but furious over her vow of chastity, Diana selfishly decided to rip out the poor, unfortunate shepherd's eyes and throw them into a field, which quickly became filled with delicate carnation flowers. Before becoming celebrated as an ornamental species, carnations were used to make perfume and liquor. Today, particularly in Asia, the flowers are used as tradition dictates: to treat gum and throat infections, gastrointestinal troubles, and as a cardiotonic and diaphoretic.

Even if not explicitly mentioned in the Bible, the forbidden tree was traditionally identified as **apple** (in Latin *malus* – meaning bad as well as apple). Its fruit therefore became an emblem of sin. If however it is associated with Mary and Jesus, it refers to the redemption of humanity

The vase contains **white roses** and **lilies**, as a symbol of the purity of Mary. The **red roses** may refer to charity, but also to the Passion of Christ

The **peach** has a number of recurring meanings: temperance, immortality, truth

In Christian symbolism the **pear** is often associated, through its sweetness, with the love of God for humanity

The red colour of the **cherries** could indicate the blood shed by Christ on the cross, but also the flame of charity

Hall XXII



Carlo Crivelli

Madonna of the Candle, 1490 circa

Carlo Crivelli was born in Venice around 1430, a contemporary of Giovanni Bellini and Andrea Mantegna. He was trained in Padua, at the Squarcione school; then he was in the Marche, where he specialised in the production of altarpieces. He was one of the primary exponents of the figurative language of the Adriatic area, characterised by an original mixture between the still late Gothic styles and naturalism of the Renaissance.

Flowers and fruit often appear in his paintings, often decorated with plants suggested to him by the work of Squarcione, and which were given symbolic meanings. In the *Madonna della Candeletta*, painted for the cathedral at Camerino, the plant symbolism refers to the salvation of man.

An example of this is Jesus holding a perfect pear in his hand. This fruit appears in many representations of the Virgin with the Child: its sweetness traditionally refers to the affection and tenderness of mother and child and love of God for humanity.

Plant No. 12



Pear

Pyrus communis L.

The pleasant sweetness of the pear, and its multiple forms are qualities that the common pear has developed to nourish us, for our enjoyment, inspiration, even for inebriation.

Pyrus communis L. is in fact a species which did not exist in its current status, but was cultivated by man.

The pear reached its peak between 1750 and 1850, known as the golden century of the pear, during which thousands of different varieties were created.

As well as its wide dietary and mythological uses, the pear was used for a medication called *liquamen castimoniale*, used as a celibacy drink and obtained by pressing pears with salt and obtaining a poultice which was stored for at least three months in small casks and then added to red wine with an extract of *Nigella sativa*.

In more recent times the leaves have been used in treating urinary disorders, and the fruit are used as diuretics and anti-uricaemics.

Tradition holds that the branch given to the suitors of Mary were of **nerium** wood



Hall XXIV



Raphael

The Marriage of the Virgin, 1504

Raphael Sanzio (Urbino 1483 – Rome 1520) was one of the undisputed protagonists of the Renaissance and his works featured harmonious composition, chromatic balance and measured expression.

The Marriage of the Virgin was painted for the church of San Francesco in Città di Castello. In the background there is a classic circular temple which provides a perfect convergence for the lines of the paved piazza.

The main scene is occurring in the foreground: a minister presides over the marriage between Mary and Joseph.

According to traditional iconography, the young bride is accompanied by a group of women, the man however is surrounded by uninvited aspirants.

The apocryphal gospels report that to choose the husband of Mary a dry nerium branch was given to each one of the suitors.

Miraculously, only the one of Joseph flowered and the choice fell on him: from that moment the plant was called Saint Joseph's staff.

Plant No. 13



Nerium

Nerium oleander L.

In ancient times, Nerium was believed to be linked to the land of Colchis, deemed to have magical properties and was considered a plant of Medea, an ambiguous figure with extraordinary magical powers.

In the 5th century B.C. Xenophon reports that some soldiers were inebriated maybe poisoned by red flowers of nerium; Theophrastus reports that the root macerated in wine temporarily makes a man sweeter and cheerful.

Popularly it is also known as "ass killer", in accordance with the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, or Saint Joseph's staff.

As reported, nerium is toxic in all of its parts with cardioactive glycosides.

On the therapeutic side the most important of these glycosides is oleandrin.

A particular oil, oleandrose, and a heteroside, have also been extracted from nerium, with an action similar to Strophanthus.



● The **lemon** is often depicted in the scene of *The Last Supper* as a symbol of salvation

Hall
XXX



Daniele Crespi

The Last Supper, 1629-1630

Daniele Crespi, a key figure in the artistic renewal of Lombardy in the 17th Century, born into a family of painters originally from Busto Arsizio, and died of the plague in 1630 in Milan. He was able to reconcile the naturalism of the Bolognese School with the realism achieved in examples by Caravaggesque painters and the Lombard school, thanks to the speed with which he was able to update his own style.

In his later years, with the famous examples of Da Vinci and Gaudenzio Ferrari in mind, he painted *The Last Supper* for the Benedictine church at Brugora (Brianza). On the canvas, we note the intense expressions on the faces, the classical citation above the buildings in the background, the perfect depiction of the two angels holding the scroll and the vivid rendering of the still life on the table. Between the bread, salt and food arranged on pewter plates appear slices of lemon, a fruit often included as a symbol of salvation, since it was once used as an antidote.

Plant
No. 14



Lemon

Citrus limon L.

The botanical origin of the lemon has long been a mystery, but today, thanks to the possibilities offered by the study of DNA, it has been identified as a hybrid derived from the union of the cedar and the bitter orange.

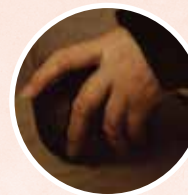
Initially, the plant grew from China to India, where for the first time it was selected and cultivated, then in the 11th century, by way of the tortuous trade routes that linked Asia and Europe, it reached the Mediterranean.

The first attestation of its presence in Italy dates back to 1095. The treatise, compiled by the Arabic doctor Ibn Jamiya over a century ago, is one of the first on the therapeutic and culinary uses of the plant. Already at that time, the lemon was used as a respiratory disinfectant or as a condiment. Later, the fruit began to be pickled, eaten with honey and saffron, used as an antidote to poisons, and, unusually, to repress a woman's sexual desires.



It was believed that the seeds of the **tobacco** plant had almost magical properties

Hall
XXXVII



Francesco Hayez

Portrait of Alessandro Manzoni, 1841

Born in Venice in 1791, Francesco Hayez completed his training in Rome under the tutelage of Antonio Canova. He then arrived in Milan and soon became the largest exponent of the romantic current.

The canvas reproduced here was commissioned by Teresa, Manzoni's second wife, and by stepson Stefano Stampa, who insisted that in the scholar's hands there was not a book, but the snuffbox which he used daily. The painting is characterised by its simple composition: the figure of Manzoni, positioned obliquely on the small armchair in a natural and almost forgotten pose, emerges from a dark and barely lit background. The illumination of the face, in particular, the true fulcrum of the work, stands out against the muted warm and brown tones. Having become the most famous image of the writer, the portrait is the result of a good fifteen sittings, due to Hayez's scruple to take everything from reality, even the dear snuffbox, which contained a mixture of spices with snuff tobacco.

Plant
No. 15



Tobacco

Nicotiana tabacum L.

Native to tropical and subtropical zones of America, the *Nicotiana tabacum* is an annually-growing herbaceous plant, generally between 1-2 metres tall, with large green leaves and long, white-pink, trumpet-shaped flowers.

The members of the expeditions with Columbus first described the custom of the indigenous people to smoke tobacco in pipes or rolled up in leaves. Bartolomé de Las Casas, chronicler of the fourth voyage conducted by the Genoese explorer, noted that after the men had lit the rudimentary cigars at one end, "at the other they suck or breathe inward, thus receiving the smoke that relaxes their flesh and makes them almost drunk". In 1559, Jean Nicot, the French ambassador of Lisbon sent to the court of Caterina de' Medici the seeds of an extraordinary medicinal plant with the power to cure ulcers and fistulas that were considered incurable by doctors, as well as migraines: so began the fashion at court of sniffing powdered tobacco leaves.



The **nasturtium** was used by Native Americans to treat all kinds of wounds

In ancient Greece, the **lily** was consecrated to Hera, the sovereign of the sky, and it was said to be created from drops of her milk which fell to the Earth during the creation of the Milky Way

Hall
XXXVII



Francesco Hayez

A vase of flowers on the window of a harem,
1881

From 1850 until his death in 1882, Francesco Hayez was a professor of Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts of Brera, where as early as 1822 he had taught as a substitute.

Created in 1881, this work can be considered a pictorial testament to the artist, proof of the extraordinary abilities of perspective, drawing and colour achieved during his long career. The beautiful hands of an odalisque, of whom we also see part of the face and the bright blue turban that wraps her head, arrange a sumptuous and colourful floral composition on the sill of a harem. The oriental setting is suggested by the Persian carpet placed under the vase and from the horseshoe shaped arch that frames the scene. Among the evocative blaze of colours, we note the presence of nasturtiums and white lilies, which, like the other flowers in the vase, Hayez paints from life.

Plant
No. 16



Nasturtium

Tropaeolum majus L.

Originating in Peru, the nasturtium is a plant with characteristic bright flowers, which come in different colours. The generic name *Tropaeolum* derives from the Greek word *tropaion*, "trophy", a pole on top of which the vanquished foe's helmets and the shields were tied, that in form and aspect resembled the flowers and leaves of the plant.

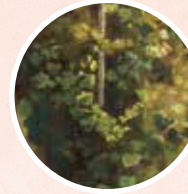
The nasturtium arrived in Europe thanks to Spanish explorers: the first specimens were called *flores de sangre* and were sent to Nicolás Monardes, a doctor and botanist who specialised in the study of exotic plants. Monardes introduced them to France, where they were christened *capucine* because they were likened to the hoods of monastic robes.

Native Americans used the species to treat all kinds of wounds and even today they are known for their healing, as well as for their antifungal, antibacterial and diuretic properties.

In the Sacred Scriptures, the **grapevine** and its fruit are considered symbols of Christ and his sacrifice, as well as symbols of the fertility of the earth, a gift of the Lord



Hall XXXVIII



Silvestro Lega

An Afternoon (The Pergola), 1868

In his youth, Silvestro Lega (1826-1895) trained at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence. After acquiring the basics of academic painting, he became acquainted with the Impressionist techniques of the artists who met at Caffè Michelangelo, and later evolved his style towards Realism.

A small masterpiece of intimist poetry, *An Afternoon (The Pergola)* portrays a quiet family moment, a pause at the heart of a feminine community. Lega succeeds in highlighting the simple pleasures of petit bourgeois life which still preserves a happy relationship with the countryside of Piagentina, just outside Florence. The whole scene is pervaded by calm and evident silence. The painter imbues the simple and genuine life of these women with natural religiosity. The grapevine covered pergola that encloses the scene serves as a background and, at the same time, identifies the space and indicates its value: it is a modern *hortus conclusus* where the rites of daily life are celebrated in a sort of religious respite.

Plant No. 17



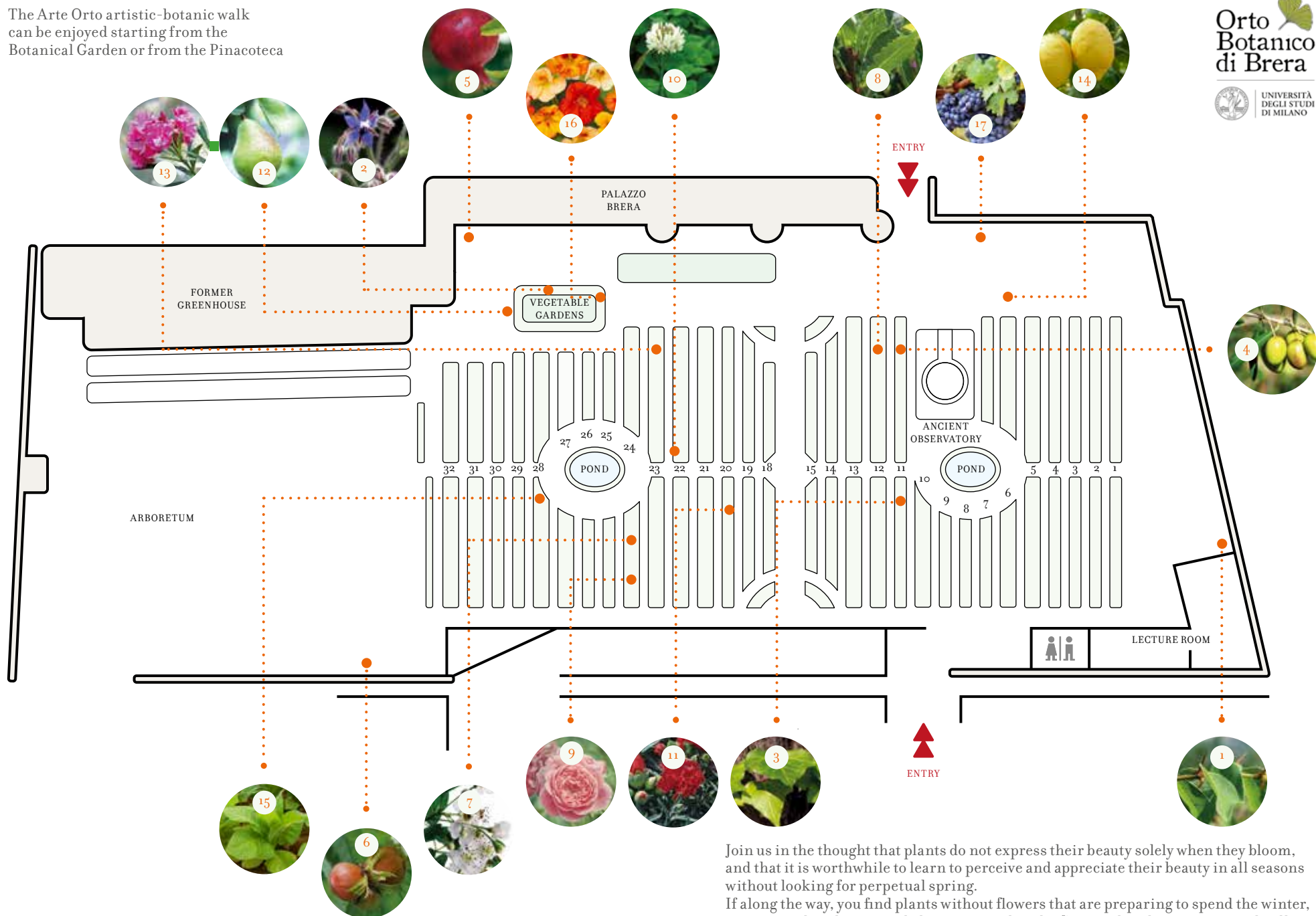
Grape

Vitis vinifera L.

The grape is a species which in its natural state is a climbing plant which can reach one hundred years of age: plants of 340 years have even been described with branches over 30 m long. Over the years humans have selected hundreds of varieties with different grape characteristics and more or less suitable to the different uses: wine or table grapes. The cultivars or vine varieties fall within the European *Vitis vinifera*. Other species of the *Vitis* genus, important for viticulture, originate from North America and gave rise to varieties of rootstock and to varieties for the production of grapes.

In spite of all the historic and literary references associated with the primary product of grapes, wine, other parts of the plant have interesting properties. The leaves provide an important antioxidant activity and regulate circulation and the cardiovascular system, while the oil extracted from the seeds facilitates integrity and function of the cell membranes and acts against menstrual cycle disorders.

The Arte Orto artistic-botanic walk can be enjoyed starting from the Botanical Garden or from the Pinacoteca



Join us in the thought that plants do not express their beauty solely when they bloom, and that it is worthwhile to learn to perceive and appreciate their beauty in all seasons without looking for perpetual spring. If along the way, you find plants without flowers that are preparing to spend the winter, store away their beauty and always remember the flowers that they gave you and will give you again.

ART O

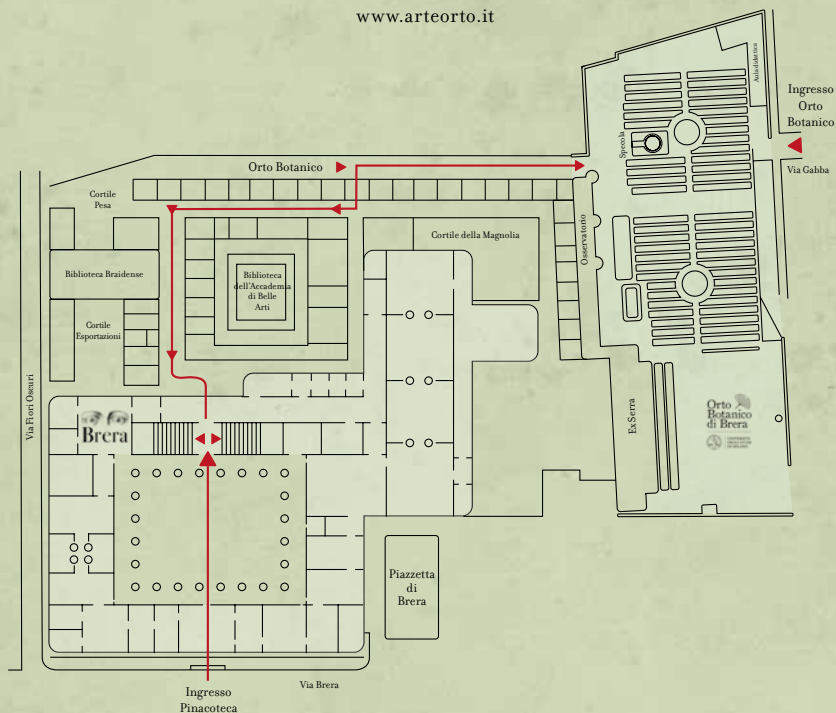
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|----------|--|---------------|---|
| 1
VI | Marruca - <i>Paliurus spina-christi</i> Mill.
<i>Pietà</i>
Giovanni Bellini | 10
XXII | White clover - <i>Trifolium repens</i> L.
<i>Valle Romita Polyptych</i>
Gentile da Fabriano |
| 2
VII | Borage - <i>Borago officinalis</i> L.
<i>Sermon of Saint Stephen</i>
Vittore Carpaccio | 11
XXII | Carnation - <i>Dianthus caryophyllus</i> L.
<i>Cagli Polyptych</i>
Alunno (Niccolò di Liberatore) |
| 3
IX | Ivy - <i>Hedera helix</i> L.
<i>Saint Jerome in Penitence</i>
Titian | 12
XXII | Paer - <i>Pyrus communis</i> L.
<i>Madonna of the Candle</i>
Carlo Crivelli |
| 4
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<i>The Marriage of the Virgin</i>
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| 5
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| 6
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<i>A vase of flowers on the window of a harem</i>
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| 8
XII | Bay tree - <i>Laurus nobilis</i> L.
<i>Self-portrait in the robes of an abbot of the Academy of the Val di Blenio</i>
Giovan Paolo Lomazzo | 17
XXXVIII | Grape - <i>Vitis vinifera</i> L.
<i>An Afternoon (The Pergola)</i>
Silvestro Lega |
| 9
X | Damask Rose - <i>Rosa ×damascena</i> Mill.
<i>Madonna in the Rose Garden</i>
Bernardino Luini | | |

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The Pinacoteca di Brera has one of the most important collections of Italian paintings in the world. Founded by the empress Mary Therese of Austria in 1776, as an aid for students at the Academy of Fine Arts, it became a public museum at the behest of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1809.

Brera mostly exhibits works from the 14th century up to the 19th century with a religious subject, which come from abolished churches and convents.

www.pinacotecabrera.org

The Brera Botanical Garden of Università degli Studi di Milano was established by Mary Therese of Austria in 1774 for the studies of the medicine and pharmacy students. This historic garden forms an enchanting yet educational island of green within Palazzo Brera, right in the centre of Milan. This splendid, open-air museum is an ideal place for learning about plants, with a different spectacular discovery for every season.

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