

The Botanic Garden of the University of Pavia

Text by Francesco Bracco & Emanuela Martino, Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences



Front of the Scolopi Greenhouse

Recordings of the teaching of Botany in Pavia date back to the beginnings of XVI century and there had probably been a herb garden since 1520, but it was situated at the private house of Leonardo Leggi, the reader of “ordinary practical medicine”.



Memorial tablet to Franz I by D. Nocca

In 1558 a “*viridarium simplicium*” - a herb garden - was explicitly quoted, for the first time, in the registers of the University but no data are available about its location. According to an oral tradition reported by Nocca in 1818, it was in one of the courts of the ancient hospital of San Matteo.

This little garden (about 625 m²) was still in use in 1763 when Fulgenzio Vitman became the first professor of Botany of the University of Pavia at which he taught until 1773. During these years he was invited to plan the establishment of a new botanic garden.

In a letter of November 1772 from the chancellor of state and minister of foreign affairs of Austria, Prince Kaunitz-Rietberg, to Count Carlo Firmian, plenipotentiary minister in Lombardy, the area of the monastery of Sant'Epifanio was pointed out as a suitable site for the new botanical garden. Count Firmian suggested retrieving information from G. Marsili, at the Botanic Garden of Padua, concerning the organization of a botanic garden intended for university teaching. Prince Kaunitz-Rietberg also provided the plan of Vienna botanic garden and asked N. J. von Jacquin, director of Schönbrunn garden, for information.



The Rose Garden

In 1773 the works in the garden and on the building started and so this year is taken as the date of the establishment of the Botanic Garden in its present seat. In 1776 the construction of the wooden greenhouses, designed by Giuseppe Piermarini, began.

In 1777 Giovanni Antonio Scopoli became director and the Botanic garden became a centre of botanic research. Scopoli corresponded with many distinguished botanists like Adanson, Allioni, Arduin, Banks, Gessner, Gleditsch, Gmelin, Haller, Jacquin, Linnaeus. The general structure of the Botanic Garden was similar to the present one as reported in an engraving of *Deliciae Florae et Faunae Insubricae* (1786). A monumental plane tree (*Platanus hybrida*, 45 m high and 2.3 m diameter) is now the only remain of the original Scopoli plantation in 1778.

The Botanic garden was then reorganized by Domenico Nocca who was *horti-praefectus* from 1797 to 1826. He enriched garden collections by exchanging plants and seeds with other botanic gardens and promoted the reconstruction of the greenhouses designed by Piermarini. The Scopoli Greenhouses were then rebuilt by Luigi Canonica who replaced the previous wooden structures with the present masonry building. New flowerbeds "pulvilli" were built so that they could be covered with glass to protect the plants in winter. Under the direction of Giovanni Briosi (1883-1919) three new greenhouses were built in the Botanic Garden along the south front of the main building.

In 1943 the new director Raffaele Ciferri had to face war damages which had caused serious losses within the collections and injuries to the buildings. The three greenhouses built by Briosi were pulled down. The plan of the garden was redrawn following the examples of many gardens set up in Lombardy during XVII and XVIII centuries.



Arboretum – broadleaved trees



Ruggero Tomaselli, director from 1964, turned many flowerbeds to lawns and enlarged the tree collection. A new tropical greenhouse and the little orchid greenhouse were also built. His work shaped the present structure of the botanic garden which covers 1.6 ha plus 790 m² of greenhouses. About 1020 taxa are now grown in the garden.

In 1967 Giuseppe Negri bequeathed a 10 ha oak wood to Pavia University. In 1970 it became the Natural Reserve Bosco Siro Negri, managed by the Botanic Garden: here vegetation was left to natural dynamic processes and only scientific research was allowed. The Reserve is funded by the State Ministry of Environment and Land and Sea Protection and in 2008 its area was almost doubled. In 2005 the Centre for Didactic activities and Communication of the Natural Reserve was created within the Botanic Garden, where lessons and laboratories are held for school students.

Tomaselli tropical greenhouse

In 1994 the Association of Friends of the Botanic Garden of Pavia was established and it became a fundamental support for the organization of exhibitions and didactic activities for school students and common public.

The Lombardy Seed Bank was established in 2005 funded by CFA, Centre for the conservation of the native flora of the Region of Lombardy. Its purpose is to preserve the seeds of threatened species of this region; some of them are currently reproduced in the Botanic Garden.

The Botanic Garden is a partner in several networks which are aimed to perform common efforts in organizing shared activities. The networks are Sistema Museale di Ateneo (University), Pavia Musei (local) and Rete degli Orti Botanici della Lombardia (Region).

Since 2011 the garden is included in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences of University. The botanic garden in the last years has been visited by an average number of people of 10,200 per year so far. The visit is free of charge.

The main sectors are:

Scopoli Greenhouses - restored in 2003-2004; the collection of Cycads in the east wing and the collection of succulent plants in the west wing;

Tomaselli Tropical Greenhouse

Briosi Useful Plants Greenhouse - it includes several wood species used as food, aromatic or decorative plants.

Orchid Greenhouse hosts several tropical orchids and some species of *Bromeliaceae* from S-America.

Rose Garden

Arboretum

Medicinal plants collection.

Tea cultivation bed, where *Camellia sinensis* shrubs have been grown since the end of XIX century.



Scolopi greenhouse, East Wing

In recent years interest has been focused on native species of threatened habitats of the Po Plain so two little collections have been created: Plants of the undergrowth of broadleaved forests and Plants from dry grasslands and clearings.

Contact details:

Botanic Garden of University of Pavia
via S. Epifanio 14
IT-27100 Pavia

phone: +39-0382-984848

fax: +39-0382-34240

e-mail: orto.botanico@unipv.it

web: <http://www.unipv.it/orto1773>
<http://scopolia.unipv.it/index.php>
<http://www->

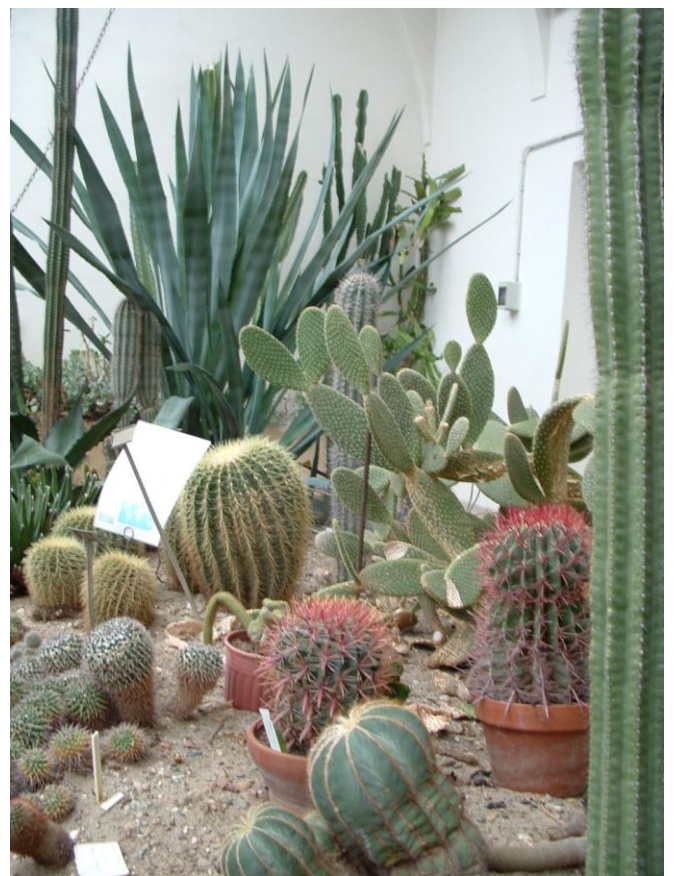
[3.unipv.it/labecove/conservazione/banca.htm](http://www-3.unipv.it/labecove/conservazione/banca.htm)
<http://www.amiciortobotanicopavia.it/>

Opening hours:

Mondays to Thursdays 9:00-12.30, 14:30-17:00

Fridays 9:00-12:00

Weekends closed; the Garden could be open if exhibitions or other activities are scheduled.



Scolopi Greenhouse, West Wing