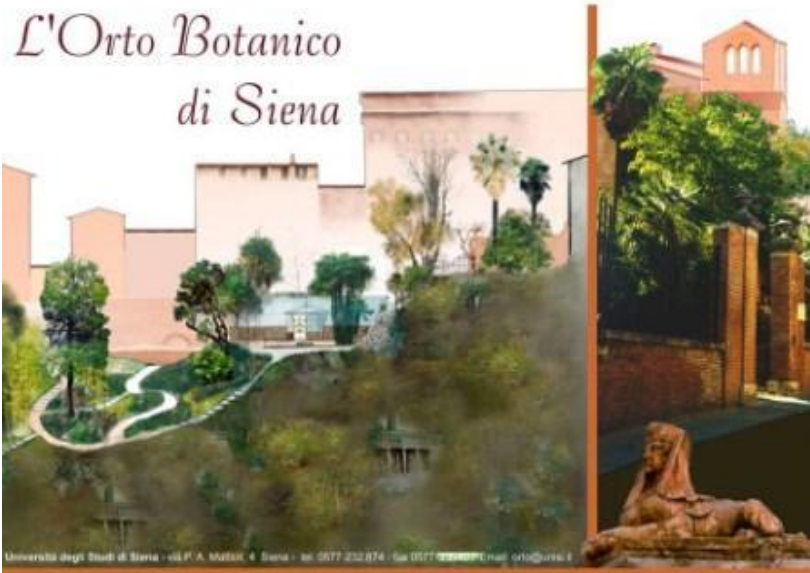


## L'Orto Botanico di Siena



### History

#### **The Herb Garden**

The Botanical Garden of the University of Siena was founded by Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1784. The University needed a herb garden "*.. for the chair of the Botannica and the education of youth ...*", which did not depend on the Hospital S. Maria della Scala. The direction was given to the lecturer (as they were called at the time) of Botany, Biagio Bartalini, and the garden was established behind the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, where there had already been a Herb Garden and dispensary since the end of 1500. More precisely, the historical origins of the Garden date back to 1588, when a Chair of Semplici (simple) was established in Siena, as in Pisa and Florence (*semplici* means the raw herbs; compounds were seen as combinations of *semplici* to obtain the medicinal substances).



*Botanical Garden of the University of Siena in an engraving of the XVII cent.*

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In 1669 Lecturer Maria Pirro Gabbrielli adds *Ostensio Semplicium*, i.e. the use of live plants, dried plants and drugs for medicinal use in the teaching of students. From 1822 to 1851 Giuseppe Giuli was Professor of Natural Science and in charge of the Botanical Garden, and enriched it according to the tradition of the time with many exotic plants still little known, originating from travels to exotic countries. At the end of 1850 the Garden was home to more than 3000 plants, arranged according to the Linnaean system, including a valuable collection of succulents, *le Succulente*, enriched with samples of *Mammillarias*, plants not common at that time.

### ***The 1856 move to the present location***

Only in 1856, after several letters requesting funding and transfer to larger premises, Director Giovanni Campani, managed to obtain approval from the Minister of Education to move the Garden to its present location on Via Tufi (now Via PA Mattioli) , on the premises of the *Academmmia dei Fisiocritici*: " ... *That the garden adjacent to the school of Botany within a Section of this Higher School, now located in the Garden of the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, is transferred to the Garden of the Academmmia dei Fisiocritici, in the form complied with the expertise of Engineer Tarducci ... and is provided with 7 rooms to be adapted to an oranger herbarium, and storage for the school ...*  ".



*Academmmia dei Fisiocritici*

With some difficulty Campani carried all the plants, including many exotic plants and the collection of succulents to the new location. In addition and quite uncommon in those days, an *Index Seminum* was published over three years, a catalogue of seeds collected in the vegetable garden or in a natural environment to enable exchange with other international scientific institutions. From 1860 to 1905 Attilio Tassi was in charge of the management; he mostly looked after the topographical arrangement of the soil of the Botanic Garden, following an agreement signed with the Academy in 1873, which declared botanical garden land the property of the Academy. Tassi endeavoured " ... *to give the appearance of a beautiful garden, with pools for the marsh plants, grottos and various hothouses ...*  " as part of the gardens of the nineteenth century villas of Chianti. In 1875 he directed the work for the construction of a heated greenhouse of iron and stained glass windows, built in a cross to provide a linear and slim design. The old greenhouse called the "stove" was heated by a wood-burning boiler to accommodate the most important collection at the time: the tropical plants. Director Biagio Longo, from 1906 to 1915, succeeded in founding the Institute of Botany as a centre of biological research and in constructing a suitable structure to house laboratories, the library, the Herbarium, a lecture hall and a residence for the director, a detached 2-storey villa. The new scientific / experimental imprint made the Garden a pivotal point for observation and experimental investigation; new horticultural plants were grown, obtained from other Italian and foreign botanical gardens; the plants were given labels with their scientific names, their family and place of origin; and the publication of the *Index Seminum* was continued, also with reference to the dendrological collection and the formaldehyde collection. The next director was Agiulfo Preda, 1916-17, who mainly worked in the herbarium. From 1935 to 1950 the leadership passed to the lecturer of mycology, Arturo Nannizzi, who brought several improvements to scientific management. In particular, he organized a separate department for the cultivation of medicinal plants (24 rectangular beds), using as a basis the collection of the Campani school. In 1935 the

Garden was transferred from the Faculty of Medicine to the recently established Faculty of Pharmacy.

### **Recent History**

In 1964 the Garden became the responsibility of the new Faculty of Mathematical, Physical and Natural Sciences. Parts of the adjoining land were acquired and the Garden now occupies the entire side of the valley of San Augustine, a total of 2.5 hectares. Also in 1964 a major new four-storey building was constructed to encompass the villa and hosting, in addition to the Institute of Botany, the institutes of Mineralogy, Zoology, the gardeners' quarters, the Herbarium and the department of medicinal plants, now forming two departments. In the mid-1960s, thanks to



the curator Vincenzo De Dominicis, the Garden opened to the public, and special attention was paid to schools and educational services in various areas of botany. This mission resulted in a more naturalistic layout of the Garden alongside the traditional exhibition of exotic plants. A hothouse was built in 1976-77 (230 square meters); it was expanded in 1980 to include the collection of succulents. In the new millennium, the central theme of all the various scientific and educational services is the preservation of biodiversity. The Botanical Gardens have therefore been completed (begun in the mid-1990) the following the installation of a rock garden, the collection of wild orchids from central and southern Tuscany, "il Felceto" (a rocky slope to accommodate indigenous plants), and the Lake, to allow students the general public to become acquainted with an increasing number of wild species of Tuscany, with the intention of bringing the visitor to respect and preserve the special heritage and endangered species. With attention paid to the issue of protection of nature, the Tuscan Regional Law 56/2000, has recognized the Botanical Gardens of Tuscany such as the Centres for Ex-Situ Conservation of flora (CESFL.). This identification enables the Garden to undertake scientific projects of conservation and to monitor the native flora of the province.

<http://www.unisi.it/v0/minisito2.html?fld=5108>



*The mediaeval fountain, Fonte al Pino*



*Entrance to the Orto Botanico*



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### Opening Hours:

Monday to Friday: 8.00 am- 5.30 pm;

Saturdays: 8.00 am- 5.30 pm

**Visiting conditions:** Free of charge

