

The Contessa Entellina Estate & il giardino di Gabriella



In the heart of western Sicily,
among the hills of Contessa
Entellina where the vineyards are
an integral part of the landscape,
Donnafugata is born. These are the
places of the Gattopardo and his
“Woman on the run”, a land where
art, history and literature have been
entwined for centuries.



Il giardino di Gabriella (Gabriella's Garden)

A garden is a glimpse into the future. A few decades ago, starting with a carob tree and two olive trees, Gabriella Anca Rallo imagined a green space providing shade and a cool retreat that would connect the Contessa Entellina house with the agricultural landscape in which it is immersed. A space to pause or stroll among the plants and to take in their shade and enjoy their colours and fragrances. So she created a garden that is a **journey on three levels** down to the fact that she respected the shape, the morphology of the space opening up in front of the house and sloping down towards the plantations. **One**

level in front of the house with the most representative species of Mediterranean culture, such as olive, carob, lemon and prickly pear, leading to a **lower level** with exotic plants harmoniously intermingled with native plants and - a little further down - a scenic double row of palm trees. And over time, the garden has filled up with species found at leading Sicilian nurseries. Complementing all this is the **olive grove**, a place of both produce and enjoyment, which hints at Tuscany with its backdrop of columnar cypresses, which strikingly enhance the vineyards on one side and the Donnafugata winery and house on the other. The Contessa garden is an embroidery designed by Gabriella's green thinking, carried out with the care of one who knows that beauty

is work, it is choice, it is respect for
the generations to come.

Carob tree

[*Ceratonia siliqua*]



The carob tree, the first tree to be planted in Gabriella's Garden, is the epitome, along with the olive tree, of the hot, dry climate of Mediterranean countries. Already known in the second half of the first millennium BC for its sugary fruits and the abundant

shade offered by its foliage, the Arabs would later come to know it as *Kharrub* and its seed - the *kirat* - would be used, due to its supposedly constant weight, as a unit of measurement for precious stones and gold (carat).

It is a large, long-lived evergreen tree, with leathery, alternate, paripinnate (consisting of an even number of leaflets), leaves that are dark green and shiny on the upper surface and blue-green on the underside. The carob fruit is edible and was used by farmers in times of poverty to feed themselves, as well as for livestock. Because of their richness in sugar, carobs are used in Sicily for the production of sweets, considered as a cough remedy, a disappearing cottage

industry. In several Mediterranean countries, precisely because of its high sugar content, carob pulp was among the first crops to be used in the production of alcohol, obtained from its fermentation.

Olive tree

[*Olea europaea*]



Columella, a Roman agronomist from the 1st century AD, gave the olive tree a predominant position among trees: *olea prima omnium arborum est*. The two large sculptural olive trees in front of the house and the olive grove for oil production beyond the garden are not accidental, but

an expression of the value that the tree has for the landscape and agriculture. The olive tree is the perfect blend of interactions between man and his natural environment; its history and that of Mediterranean civilisations have been interwoven for over seven thousand years. The olive tree has provided men and women with indispensable products for their daily well-being: light, medicines, balms and perfumes, lubricants, food and seasoning, heat and wood. The development of olive cultivation has therefore gone hand in hand with the socio-economic and environmental conditions of the various populations that have come into contact with it. This has also shaped their quality of life.

Along with bread, olives and oil are staples in the Mediterranean diet, which UNESCO inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010. Central to agriculture throughout the Mediterranean basin, the olive tree dialogues with the land and characterises the landscape. Olive trees also have exceptional **environmental value**, as they are able to counteract the effects of wind and water erosion and play a strategic role in limiting soil erosion by stemming desertification. Moreover, olive groves cultivated using traditional methods play an important ecological role, representing a veritable reservoir of **biodiversity** for many animal and plant species. A wide variety

of animal species find refuge and sustenance among the foliage, gnarled and hollow trunks and impressive roots of the olive trees. Olive trees also have exceptional **environmental value**, as they are able to counteract the effects of wind and water erosion and play a strategic role in limiting soil erosion by stemming desertification. Moreover, olive groves cultivated using traditional methods play an important ecological role, representing a veritable reservoir of **biodiversity** for many animal and plant species. A wide variety of animal species find refuge and sustenance among the foliage, gnarled and hollow trunks and impressive roots of the olive trees.

Lemon tree

[*Citrus limon*]



The lemon tree is the fruit of many crosses and a long process of selection by man; that is why there are so many varieties today. It was around 1100 when the lemon tree arrived in Italy, specifically in Sicily, marking the beginning of a long history that would see it play a leading

role in the island's landscape for centuries to come. The lemon tree is re-blooming, it flowers several times during the year and therefore bears fruit more than once. This means that it can be flowering and bearing fruit at the same time on the same tree. It is a productive and beautiful tree. Just like the **Lunario** in Gabriella's Garden, which produces flowers at the new moon. Its highly perfumed flowers are purple on the outside, revealing a white colour when they open. In Sicily, they are called **zagare** (from the Arabic *zahr*). The fruit is elongated, with a thin, brightly coloured yellow skin. Cultivation in large terracotta pots harks back to the gardens of Versailles, where lemon trees had to spend the

coldest months in greenhouses;
in Sicily, growing them in pots
is not a temperature-related
requirement, but an aesthetically
pleasing habit.

Bitter orange tree [*Citrus aurantium*]



The bitter orange tree arrived in
the Mediterranean before the
sweet orange, after a long journey

from China through India, and then eastwards to Palestine, Egypt, and Syria. The bitter orange tree is a precursor of globalisation: after the death of Muhammad, it spread from the Arabian Peninsula to Mesopotamia, North Africa and on to Spain, where the Arabs arrived in 711. Here it became the representative of botanical exclusivity, a feast for the eyes and nose. Having arrived as a botanical curiosity, it then became a symbol of beauty as well as being used to produce pharmaceutical and perfumery products. In Italy, or rather in Sicily, there are records of the bitter orange in Norman times. The myth claims that Hercules, on completing his labours, stole citrus fruit (perhaps citron) from

the gods in the garden of the Hesperides nymphs, hence the name Hesperides being given to the fruit of all citrus species. Historically, *Citrus aurantium* has been little used in cooking because of the strong sharp flavour of its fruit, except to make it into marmalades and candied fruit. The dried peel, on the other hand, is used to flavour some beers (such as the Belgian Orange Muscat) and liqueurs (Curaçao, Cointreau), but the fruit, flowers and leaves have always been used in traditional medicine. The distillation of bitter orange blossoms produces **neroli oil**, which is widely used in aromatherapy for its ability to relieve stress. This oil is a real luxury, as a lot of flowers are

needed to produce a small quantity. It was Marie Anne de la Trémoille (1642-1722) who gave the name neroli to the oil made from the bitter orange tree, in honour of the town of Nerola of which she was princess. Her habit of using the oil as a perfume became a trend in European royal courts. She was an influencer of the time.

Calamondin

[*Citrus mitis*]



The introduction of the calamondin into Italy is recent, presumably occurring sometime during the 20th century, and in Sicily it has found its most suitable environment for cultivation. It is a citrus tree that produces flowers almost all year round, from spring to autumn. The fruits are small, spherical, with

a thin, deep orange edible skin, with an acid pulp and few seeds. Their persistence on the plant makes the calamondin a superb ornamental plant. In Gabriella's Garden, large terracotta pots house two of them and hark back to the custom of growing citrus trees in pots as an ornament and as a collector's boast already in vogue during the Renaissance years.

Myrtle

[*Myrtus communis*]



In the garden, the scent of myrtle is unmistakable. Myrtle is an evergreen shrub that grows wild in the Mediterranean maquis, together with mastic, cistus and other thermophilous species. It is characterised by small, glossy, leathery leaves, the glossiness of the leaves being a strategy

adopted by some plants of the Mediterranean flora in order to limit the loss of water through transpiration during the summer. The shine is due to a waxy layer covering the leaf blade, which acts like a mirror reflecting the sun's rays and limiting excessive heating of the leaf surface. The fruits appear in late summer, as more or less globular, ovoid berries that are bluish black in colour, with a waxy coating and persist on the plant for a long time. They are a treat for birds, especially blackbirds, thrushes and starlings, who eat them and scatter the seeds in the wild. In mythology, the myrtle is also linked to Aphrodite, the goddess of love; in fact, the myth has it that Aphrodite, newly born from

the sea, sheltered behind a myrtle tree to escape the advances of a satyr. **In cooking**, myrtle is widely used to flavour meats; some identify myrtle, or rather *mortella* as it is called in some parts of Italy, as the origin of the word mortadella. In fact, it does seem that the name of this cured meat derives from the expression *myrtatum farcimen*, which indicated a pork preparation flavoured with myrtle.

Due to its balsamic, antiseptic, astringent and anti-inflammatory properties, myrtle is used to treat problems of the respiratory and digestive system: the liquor produced from the berries does in fact have digestive properties.

Laurustine

[*Viburnum tinus*]



Immersed in the garden's vegetation is the laurustine, an evergreen shrub with an abundance of flowers which last from winter to late spring and then go on to produce an ornamental fruit. The clusters of white flowers smell of honey and its fruits, which are small shiny

blue berries, attract blackbirds, which can frequently be seen in the garden and whose eggs can be recognised by their **turquoise colour**.

Strelitzias

[*Strelitzia reginae*]

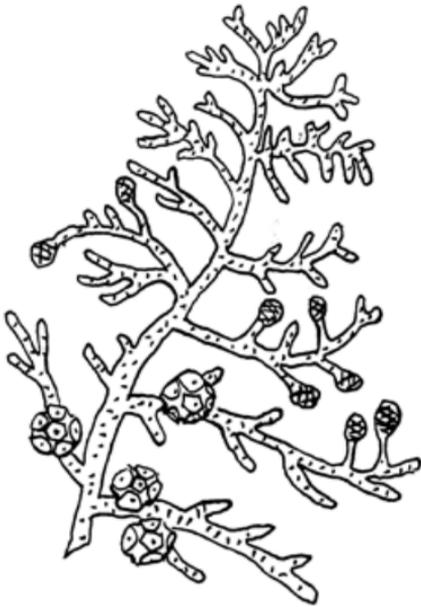


Strelitzias, originally from South Africa, are monocotyledons

belonging to the Strelitziaceae family, which includes five species, two of which, *Strelitzia reginae* and *Strelitzia augusta*, can be found in the garden. ***Strelitzia reginae*** is a herbaceous, virtually stemless evergreen with large leaves carried on long petioles. Also known as the “bird of paradise”, it is the most attractive species of strelitzia due to its eye-catching appearance, with its large showy flowers resembling the head of a tropical bird. The hermaphrodite flowers, which are rich in nectar, are usually pollinated by birds or bats. The species is named after Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, a lover of botany and wife of George III of England. The plant was

introduced to England by the curator of **Kew Gardens** at the end of the 18th century, while in Italy it first appeared in 1912 in Liguria, in the gardens of Villa Hanbury, commissioned by Thomas Hanbury of London. The other species of strelitzia in the garden is ***Strelitzia augusta***; it differs from *Strelitzia reginae* in that it is bigger in size and has white flowers surrounded by green bracts. It has large leaves with a long stalk that often appear frayed along the veins due to the wind, resembling those of the banana tree with which it is often confused.

Mediterranean cypress [*Cupressus sempervirens*]



Numerous cypress trees stand out in the garden, with their tapering, pyramidal crowns and small, scale-like leaves clinging to the twigs. The cypress belongs to the systematic group of the

gymnosperms (bare-seeded plants, i.e. plants whose seed is not enclosed in a fruit), which includes the more common conifers such as pines, firs, larches, and junipers, which are distinguished by their needle-like leaves.

Cupressus sempervirens is widespread throughout Europe and has become a characteristic element of Italian landscapes. It is native to western Asia and its spread in the Mediterranean region took place in ancient times. In the past especially, the cypress was highly valued in the medicinal field for its balsamic properties. Its wood is still prized today for its durability and is used to make furniture and in turnery and cabinet-making.

The etymology of the generic name *Cupressus* is controversial. According to some, the word derives from *Kypros*, the island of Cyprus, where this tree has always been widespread, while according to others, it derives from *Kyparissos*, the son of Telephus who, in mythology, was transformed into a cypress tree by Apollo.

Date palm

[*Phoenix dactylifera*]



The date palm has been known among the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans and Berbers since antiquity for its edible fruits. The trunk is very slender and the long, pinnate, glaucous-green leaves are clustered to form a sparse apical

crown. The flowers are small, whitish in colour, and the male flowers are on a different tree from the one bearing the female flowers. The fruits, commonly called dates, are oblong berries, dark orange when ripe, up to 5 cm long in cultivated varieties, with a sugary pulp, containing a woody seed. Because it has been cultivated for thousands of years (it was already being grown in Babylon in 4000 BC), its original range cannot be determined with certainty but probably included North Africa and possibly southwest Asia. Today it is planted throughout the Maghreb, Egypt, Arabia, the Persian Gulf, the Canary Islands, the northern Mediterranean area and the southern United

States. In Sicily, the date palm is widespread as an ornamental tree. The generic name, already mentioned by Theophrastus, means “Phoenician” because it would have been the Phoenicians who introduced these trees to the Greeks; the specific name is made up of *dactylus* (date, from the Greek *dactylos*) and *fero* (“I carry”).

African coral tree

[*Erythrina caffra*]



This exotic tree, native to South Africa, belongs to the Leguminosae family. It has a unique scarlet-orange blossom and is characterised by its greyish, longitudinally striped trunk and branches armed with short

thorns. The flowers, grouped in clusters, sprout before the new leaves, with their colour and good nectar production making them attractive to pollinating insects. The fruit is a small legume, the bean-shaped seeds are red and turn dark brown when ripe. They are used as good luck charms and to make necklaces, however they contain poisonous alkaloids and cannot be eaten.

Jacaranda

[*Jacaranda
mimosaeifolia*]



A deciduous species native to South America, it has now been introduced as an ornamental tree in many parts of the world. It is a tree belonging to the Bignoniaceae family with elegant, bright green, pinnate leaves

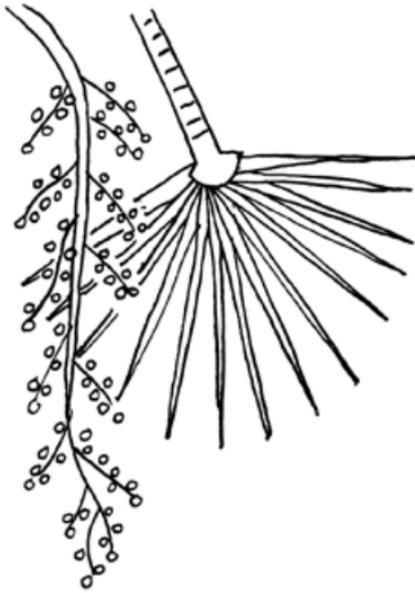
that are composed of numerous leaflets resembling those of the mimosa. The tubular flowers form showy pyramid-shaped inflorescences in a striking violet before the leaves appear.

The fruits, which ripen in winter and persist on the plant for a long time, are woody capsules containing multiple small seeds that are dispersed by the wind thanks to a membranous wing.

The jacaranda has a compact, hard, highly prized wood known as **Brazilian rosewood**, which is used for the production of guitars and pianos.

Mexican fan palm

[*Washingtonia robusta*]



The Mexican fan palm is a genus of the Arecaceae (palm) family, named after the first president of the U.S.A., George Washington (1732-1799). These palms are arboreal, long-lived monocotyledons with permanent primary growth, unique

characteristics that distinguish them and have always exerted a great fascination in the world of botany. In cross-section, the stem of palms differs from that of trees by the fact that palms do not possess growth rings, their trunk (stipe) is made up of many small bundles of woody material, which rather resembles an electrical cable made up of many wires. *W. robusta*, closely resembling *W. filifera*, is characterised by a columnar, slender trunk, progressively tapering from the base towards the crown. The large leaves are fan-shaped. The inflorescences are panicles up to 3 metres long that sprout between the leaves. The pea-sized fruits, which are produced in large quantities, are spherical, smooth,

dark brown. All palms have remarkable flexibility, so much so that a palm tree can bend as much as 50 degrees before breaking.

Norfolk Island pine [*Araucaria excelsa*]



The Norfolk Island pine belongs to the systematic group of

gymnosperms (bare-seeded plants, i.e. plants whose seed is not enclosed in a fruit). It is an evergreen tree native to Australia, introduced to Europe between the late 1700s and mid-1900s. It has an erect form and reaches a considerable height. It has a large trunk from which the branches protrude horizontally, verticillate (growing on the same plane), arranged in successive overlapping planes, positioned at regular intervals, creating a **pyramid-shaped crown**.

The leaves are persistently spiral, wedge-shaped and narrow. The flowers are unisexual and the female ones give rise to almost spherical cones containing winged seeds, the male ones are cylindrical.

The Gardens of Donnafugata: a project to enhance biodiversity

Sustainability is a value that forms part of Donnafugata's DNA. For over thirty years, the company has been committed to producing wines that respect both the environment and humanity, convinced that caring for the earth is caring for the quality of production, encouraging a mutually beneficial relationship between wine and the plant world. Since 2008 Donnafugata has been a supporter of **FAI - Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano** (National Trust for Italy), with which it shares the mission of preserving the Italian landscape. The decision to create gardens and green spaces and to contribute to the protection of

natural areas is a cultural gesture, to restore **biodiversity** and **beauty** to the landscape. A choice that takes practical form not only in the Randazzo estate and the unique landscape that surrounds it, but also in a series of projects conceived specifically for each of the estates. The restoration of a **Giardino Pantesco** (Pantellerian Garden) in the contrada Khamma winery, in Pantelleria; the **Contessa Entellina garden**, an embroidery conceptualised by Gabriella Anca Rallo's green thinking to connect the estate with the agricultural landscape in which it is immersed; the creation of **aromatic herb** tubs in the Acate winery, a perfect example of integration between the agricultural and natural landscape; and finally, the desire to house,

in fall, a **collection of ancient Kolymbethra citrus fruits** in the historic Marsala wineries. Thanks to this attention to green spaces, a visit to one of Donnafugata's five estates is an experience that involves several senses: the tasting exploration of the wines and flavours of the land is accompanied by a visual and olfactory discovery of nature that becomes memory, emotion and aesthetic gratification.



DONNAFUGATA®

Artwork Julia Binfield

La visita in una tenuta
Donnafugata si configura come
un'esperienza che coinvolge
più sensi: all'esplorazione
gustativa dei vini e dei sapori
del territorio si affianca una
scoperta visiva e olfattiva della
natura che diviene ricordo,
emozione e appagamento
estetico.

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