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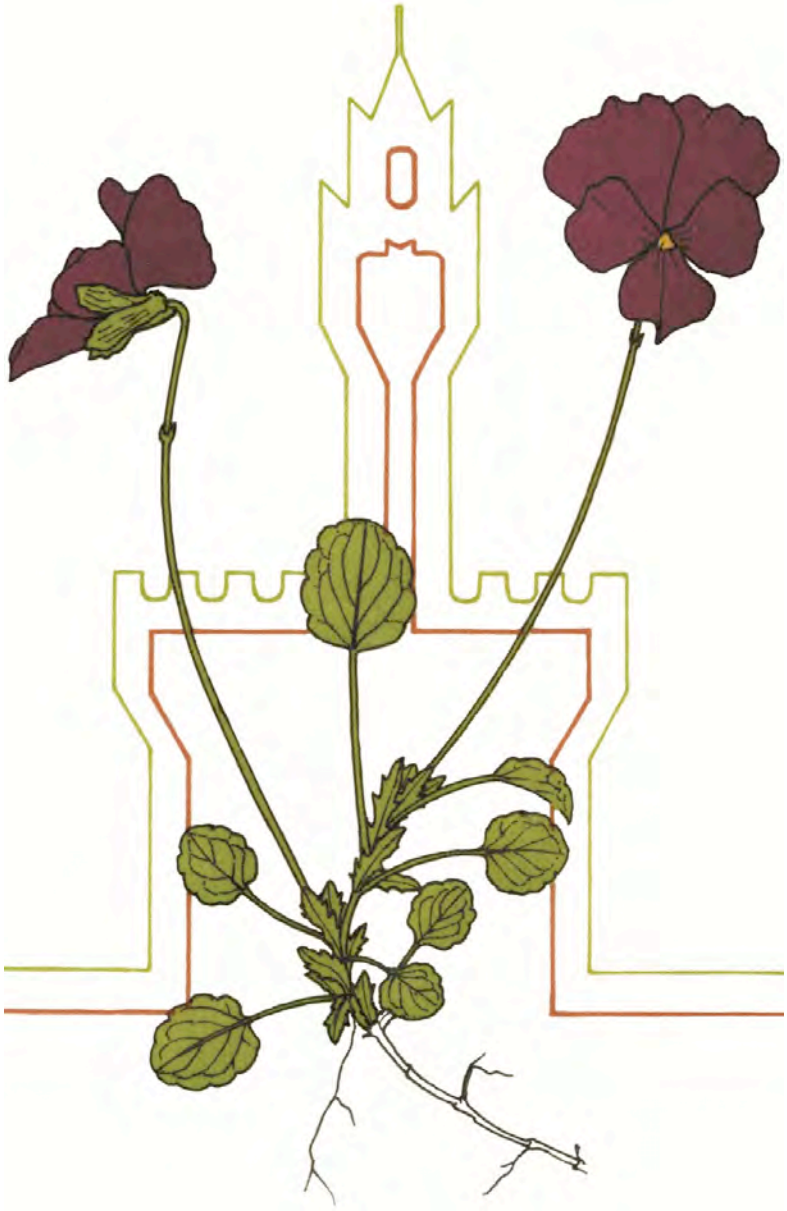

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4.6 = THE PALMETUM, A NEW SECTOR IN THE PALERMO BOTANICAL GARDEN

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The Palermo Botanical Garden has evolved over a period spanning more than 200 years. Thus, the evolution of the Plant Sciences, both regarding Systematics as well as changing visions of the utility of plants, can be seen in the layout and organization of the Garden's collections.
Today, the Botanical Garden is made up of two principal bodies; the oldest area, built at the end of the seventeen-hundreds next to the historic "*Gymnasium*", where the collections are laid out according to Linnaeus's system of plant classification, and the most recently built area, added on between the mid eighteen-hundreds and the beginning of the nineteen-hundreds near the Botany Department, and where Engler's classification system can be found. Various organizational methods are used throughout the garden, including a systematic layout, a taxonomic layout, an ecological layout, a phytogeographical layout, as well as layouts based on plant uses (food, medicine, coloring agents, and textiles) (1).
One of the most prized areas that follows a taxonomic layout is the *Cycadetum*, dedicated to the Cycadopsida group (2). Just next to the Cycad collection, we can find one of the most recent areas developed in the Botanical garden (which is still in progress) the Palm collection. The *Palmetum*, whose construction began in 1990 in an area that then belonged to the experimental sector, has greatly increased the number of species represented in respect to the few generainherited from the precedent century.
Today, the Palermo Botanical Garden's *Palmetum* hostsan important outdoor collection, holding genera that are spread throughout the continents in nature. Thanks to the area's favorable climate, specimens from more than one hundred species have been planted in this large area in the middle of the Garden.
The Garden's collection currently contains 140 *taxa* for a total of 630 live specimens. Of these, 110 are planted in the ground and 30 are in pots.
As for their origins, 54% are American, 23% are Asian, 16% come from Australia, and the rest come from Africa and the Mediterranean.
Some noteworthy specimens in the collection are *Roystonea regia* from Cuba, *Bismarckia nobilis*, *Dypsis decaryi*, and *Ravenea rivularis* all from Madagascar, *Serenoa repens* (well known for its medicinal properties) from Florida, *Wallichia densiflora* from the Himalayas, and *Crysophila argentea* from Central America. A large part of the *Phoenix* genus is also represented, including *P. theophrasti* from the eastern Mediterranean, as well as *P. humilis* and *P. sylvestris*, which are both Indian; there are also some *Arenga* species, including *A. engleri* from Taiwan and *A. caudata* from Thailand, as well as some *Caryota* species (*C. maxima* from Java, *C. ochlandra* from the Himalayas), *Trithrinax* species (*T. brasiliensis* and *T. campestris* from Brazil and Argentina respectively), *Archonthophoenix* species (*A. cunninghamiana* and *A. alexandrae* from Australia) and also various species of the *Chamaedorea* genus.

1) F.M. Raimondo (2010) Provincia Regionale di Palermo. Pp. 53-66
2) M. Speciale, F.M. Raimondo (2000) Quad. Bot. Amb. Appl. (1997), 139-144