



Orti comunali di via Saragozza 142

In the early 1980s, as part of concrete social policy actions for the elderly, the municipal administration of Bologna allocated some 2,500 urban vegetable gardens in various areas of the city. In 1986, the Saragozza district obtained its first vegetable gardens: 51 plots assigned through a ranking list, after application to the municipal offices in charge. Most of the vegetable gardens are cultivated by women, with one garden dedicated to educational activities for primary schools and adults alike, with guided tours and events open to the public, usually on Friday afternoons in spring. Many social projects and cooperation pacts have been implemented, including Apipista, within the Life 4Pollinators project in cooperation with Unibo, dedicated to the knowledge and protection of pollinating insects. Together with the Casa di Quartiere 2 Agosto, many gardeners are also taking care of the lawn in Via Turati, the restoration of the flowerbed in front of the monument to partisan women and, more generally, the enhancement of Villa Spada Park in collaboration with other associations.

These communal gardens have come into being in a rather unusual area compared to other situations in the city: they are indeed located at the foothills, embedded between the dwellings on the first slopes, completely invisible from the surrounding road system. They are accessible by walking up the driveway behind gate 142 within a very unusual setting among pleasant clearings. As Milana Benassi writes in her book "L'orto della socialità", these kitchen gardens allow the surrounding conurbation to 'breathe'.

In the 1980s, this community area, originally intended to house a kindergarten or a park, was an abandoned plantation with various fruit trees (apricot, kaki) between via Saragozza and via Malta. The land, formerly planted with vines and hemp, originally belonged to the ancient community of San Giuseppe, whose nearby parish church owned a large portion of convent gardens in 1756, more or less in the same location as today's municipal gardens.

Today's market gardeners grow all sorts of vegetables and flowers here, exercising great care to maintain order and a certain uniformity in the material used and the pleasantness of the communal areas, where a beautiful pergola is often used for convivial events and small neighbourhood and city events.

As we stroll carefully through the walkways between the gardens and observe the richness of shapes and colours of the various crops, we feel just as refreshed as if we were walking through a garden.

