

A Renaissance garden

With the growth in popularity of the “Grand Tour” Giardino Giusti became an obligatory stopping off point for travellers visiting Verona, including poets, artists, and crowned heads of Europe. Among its distinguished visitors were Cosimo III, Charles de Brosses, Mozart, Goethe, Addison, Evely, Ruskin, Emperor Joseph II, King Carlo Felice of Savoy and Tsar Alexander I of Russia.

The garden, which is currently under restoration, is maintained “all’antica”, with the aim of preserving the restrained tone of the gardens of the past: emphasis is given to such elements as architectural features, references to mythology and links with the classical world while there are few flowers, shrubs and exotic species. Visitors can still see many items that were in vogue in sixteenth-century gardens: pots with citrus plants, statues of mythological figures, fountains, lemon houses, grottoes, grotesque masks, Roman remains and pavilions in which to rest and enjoy the panoramic views.

The lower garden is divided according to the giardino all’italiana style, into nine square sections, each symmetrical green room formed of box hedges and dominated by statues of Diana, Venus, Atalanta, Apollo and Adonis. The garden’s main axis is formed of the cypress alley leading to the grotto and the mask, with the labyrinth on the right, while on the left is a French-style parterre, the citrus garden and the so-called vaseria where plants in their pots are overwintered. This part of the garden, with its rigidly geometric design and straight lines speaks to us of men’s intervention, of order and symmetry.

The wooded part of the garden instead, is deliberately conceived in order to astonish the visitor as he climbs its steep and shady paths. The rocky precipice, the grotto, the play of light and shade and perspectives are all created artificially to elicit feelings of admiration, awe and wonder in the viewer. A secret staircase concealed in the little turret dug into the rock face leads up to the highest point of the garden. From the belvedere atop grotesque mask it is possible to enjoy one of the finest views of the city of Verona.

The plan

1 PIANO NOBILE

The main floor of the palazzo is divided into two large apartments and a central reception room. In the East wing, where the family’s collection of paintings and antiquities were once housed, the ceiling decorations of 1721 are by Louis Dorigny. The Sala dell’Aurora (Dawn Room) is situated in the west wing and was frescoed in 1766 by Francesco Lorenzi, a pupil of Giambattista Tiepolo.

2 CORTE D’ONORE

The main courtyard is enclosed by high brick wall ornamented with the distinctive swallowtail battlements of the Ghibelline faction, an allusion to the Giusti family’s origins. The entrance hall and courtyard were originally used for theatrical performances, such as the 1581 production of Torquato Tasso’s pastoral fable *Aminta*, and for musical events held by the Accademia Filarmonica.

3 CIPRESSO DI GOETHE

The Goethe cypress is more than six hundred years old and was admired by the German writer and statesman in 1786. It is mentioned in his “Italian Journey” of 1817.

4 EPIGRAFI E FRAMMENTI

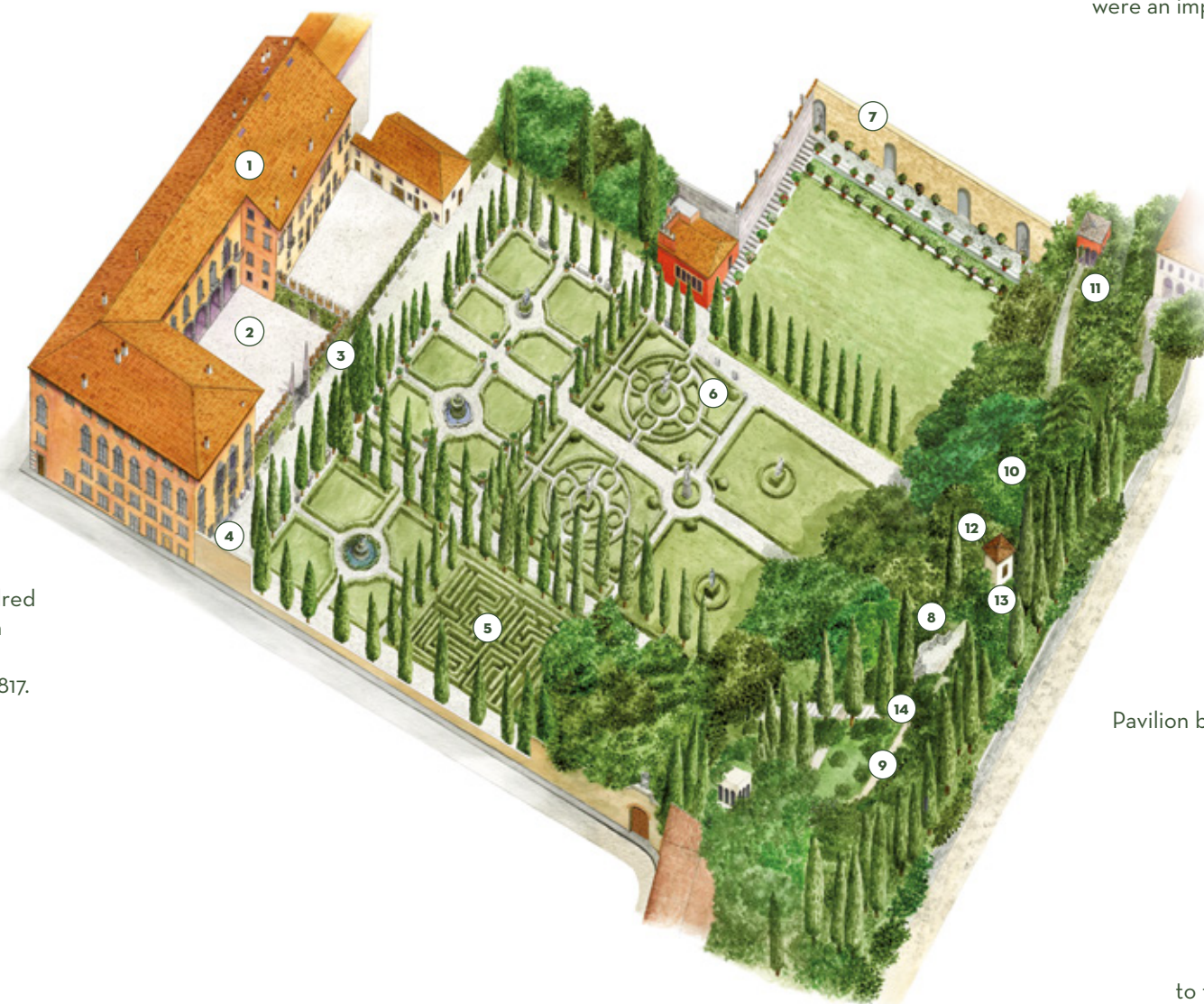
The collection of Roman epigraphs and archaeological fragments originated with Agostino Giusti, a keen antiquarian.

5 LABIRINTO

The labyrinth, redesigned by Luigi Trezza in 1786, may still be walked round today.

6 PARTERRE ALLA FRANCESE

The French-style parterre were designed in 1765 and statues of mythological figures placed in each section. All five are the work of the sculptor Lorenzo Muttoni: Diana, Venus, Atalanta, Apollo and Adonis.



7 CINTA MURARIA

City wall dating from the twelfth century, when Verona was a free commune. It was built on top of an earlier wall attributed to the Ostrogoth king, Theodoric (454 - 526). Three niches were carved into it in order to house sculptures of Bacchus, Ceres and Venus (the latter no longer present), Citrus fruit, which were celebrated as the mythical fruit of the Garden of the Hesperides, were an important source of revenue for Veneto gardens, and were sold as far afield as Russia.

8 GROTTA

Grotto with sixteenth-century architectural facade. The rear wall was covered with mirrors and the walls on either side were frescoed. Remnants are still visible of the original ceiling decorations, consisting of shells, corals, mother-of-pearl and sponges.

9 ORRIDO CON RUPE

The rocky precipice both impressed and frightened visitors.

10 BOSCO SACRO

The Sacred Wood was artificially planted with dark-leaved tree species such as laurel and yew, together with evergreen shrubs.

11 PADIGLIONE

Pavilion built with salvaged thirteenth-century columns. A secret passage leads to the green Tunnel.

12 GROTTA

Grotto-chapel, dating from 1591.

13 TORRE

Tower with secret winding staircase leading to the upper garden, adjacent to city walls dating from the fourteenth century.

14 MASCHERONE

Upper garden, with the grotesque mask-belvedere attributed to Bartolomeo Ridolfi. The mask was designed to belch flames and smoke from its mouth, causing consternation among visitors and guests.