

# THE KITCHEN GARDEN



Photo of Stefano Castagnoli, 2020 © FAI

**A**longside the gardens, the grounds include two-and-a-half hectares of meadows and cultivated terraces that constitute a typical kitchen garden, known as an *ortaglia*: a productive piece of land used at one time to meet the needs of the palazzo, the like of which only very rarely remains intact in urban surroundings such as these. **It is a substantial segment of the authentic Lombard countryside, safeguarded in the heart of Bergamo's Upper Town**, of which it occupies around one-tenth of the surface area. The combined presence and integration of city and countryside in the microcosm of this palazzo is a very unusual feature, eulogised by literary sources since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. To this day, the *ortaglia* remains an oasis of biodiversity: together with the numerous other animals, it is home to a badger colony, and FAI has set aside a large area for their protection.



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## DID YOU KNOW...?

In the book about the palace written in 1655 by Donato Calvi, the Prior of the nearby monastery of St Augustine and a well-known figure in Bergamo's cultural circles, Palazzo Moroni is oddly defined as “the Androgyne of the Bergamo Palaces” because according to the author it combined both “sexes” – the urban luxury of cultured, refined citizens and “that most pleasing cheerfulness which is the prerogative of countryfolk”. Today the kitchen garden is still productive, as illustrated by the figs to the left.



Marco Gozzi, *The Fortress of Bergamo from Sant'Agostino* (detail), c. 1800,



Fox grape (*Vitis labrusca*) cultivated in the pergola of the kitchen garden



The initial maintenance works on the pergola

The kitchen garden that we see today was gradually annexed by the property in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, by brothers **Pietro** (1792-1858) and **Alessandro Moroni** (1790-1869), the latter having studied agronomics. Fields and terraces covered the slope of the Hill of Sant'Eufemia, rising up to the walls of the *Rocca Civica*. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the kitchen garden was more extensive, reaching as far as the “Foppone di Sant'Agostino” (or “della Fara”), a hollow in front of the church of the same name. To this day, the kitchen garden is home to pergola-trained vines and

fruit trees such as cherry and white mulberry near the cistern, and fig trees along the ridge that leads to the farm building. Further down, the area is occupied by partly unmown meadows, awash with flowers and herbs that attract butterflies and pollinators, while another section is regularly mown and is accessible to the public. Above the meadowland, we come to the bird snare, which was constructed recently on the basis of a time-honoured piece of organic architecture, formed by a circle of hornbeam trees, whose intertwined branches served as nets

to catch birds. The landscaped areas have been regenerated by FAI to allow visitors to make the most of this large slice of urban parkland. The works carried out have encompassed mowing the lawn, pruning the trees, reshaping the yew trees, planting the flowerbeds, restoring the pergola, making the walkways safe and cleaning and stabilising the ledges. The existing routes of the second and third terraces were upgraded - the new pathways being delineated with edging using local stone - and the flower beds were revamped.



The kitchen garden before FAI's restoration



The kitchen garden after FAI's restoration



The maintenance of the kitchen garden unmown