



Mantova
play
ground

edited by Alkèmica and
Associazione Per il Parco

The gardens of Mantua

a guide to exploring Mantua
with children of all ages



WHAT IS MANTOVA PLAYGROUND?

Mantova Playground is a project promoted and supported by the Comune di Mantova and is born with the aim of transforming the city into a playground that children will use to approach the complexity of the world. Workshops, maps, events to help discover the city from unusual and unexpected viewpoints or to rediscover what you already know by suggesting a new perspective.
website mantovaplayground.it **fb** [mantovaplayground](https://www.facebook.com/mantovaplayground)

Mantova Playground is sponsored by



Edited by Alkèmica and Associazione Per il Parco.
For informations: www.mantovacollections.it

The following have helped in the writing of this guide:
Radiobase, the Biblioteca Mediateca G. Baratta and the Cinema del Carbone

Illustrations by Noemi Vola

The typeface of the texts is Biancoenero®, by biancoenero edizioni, high-readability font, designed by graphic designers Riccardo Lorusso and Umberto Mischi · biancoeneroedizioni.com



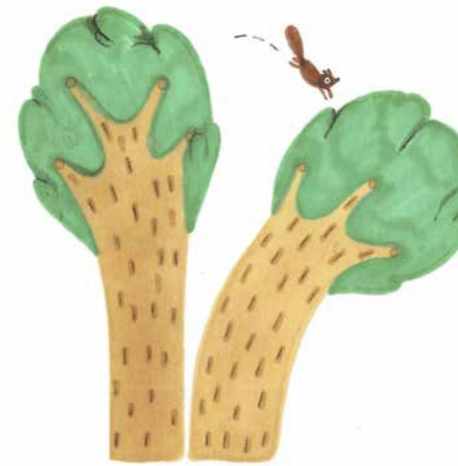
FILMS RECOMMENDED BY THE CINEMA DEL CARBONE

My Neighbor Totoro by Hayao Miyazaki, Japan, 1988, 86'

This film explores the unforgettable summer of two young girls who meet Totoro, the spirit of the woods who will accompany them as they explore a rhythmic and colourful nature that often becomes magical.

The Secret Garden by Agnieszka Holland, USA, 1994, 102'

This film shows how a young girl, Mary, discovers and cares for a secret garden, managing to reconstruct her own memories and bring peace to her family.



BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY THE BIBLIOTECA MEDIATECA G. BARATTA

Out there. Outside: A Guide to Discovering Nature by Maria Ana Peixe Dias and Inês Teixeira do Rosario, Mondadori, 2016

Even if we live in the city, nature is always out there, maybe it's just hidden by high walls: there are trees and flowers, clouds and stars, rocks and sand, birds, reptiles and mammals... This special guide helps you by giving valuable tips on how to observe and explore.

The Secret of the Old Woods by Dino Buzzati, Mondadori, 2000

The woods in Valle di Fondo have two new owners: General Procolo, a man who never smiles, and his nephew Benvenuto, an orphan who just wants to be loved. Unfortunately, the uncle doesn't know how to love another person. Love scares him so much that he just wants to send his nephew away. Luckily, the creatures of the forest are there to protect Benvenuto...



THE GARDENS OF MANTUA

Mantua is a huge garden, it's just that often the houses, historic buildings and roads don't let us see it. However, we can identify those viewpoints, corners and perspectives that allow us see the greenery all around us that we often fail to spot at first glance.

This guide gives you the opportunity to see some (just some!) of the green corners of the city, which conceal people and stories within them and which give us displays, colours, scents and landscapes that change throughout the year.

This guide will help you unearth the gardens amongst the walls of the city. If you find any others, please let us know by writing to us at:
info@mantovaplayground.it



THE TRANSFORMING GARDEN

Piazza Virgiliana

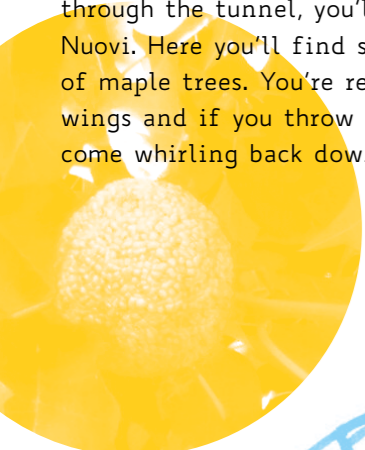
Is it a square? Or is it a public park? Well, before it was a piazza/garden, Piazza Virgiliana was a port! Until the end of the eighteenth century, a part of the Mincio flowed here, and it was called Ancona di S. Agnese, one of the city's two major ports. Now try turning your back to Virgil and look at the shape of the square: it looks like a creek! Can you imagine where you would have moored your boat...?

→ image taken from the site Mantovafortezza, Indian ink drawing by Guglielmo Calciolari (all rights reserved)

THE FLYING DRIVER AND THE FALSE ORANGE

Giardini Nuvolari, viale Piave

Once upon a time there was the Mantovano Volante, a car and motorcycle racing driver. Look for his bust in the Giardini di Nuvolari, also known as the Giardini Vecchi. A little bit further on, you will also find a false orange tree: the Osage orange does actually produce fruit which ripen in late summer. They are round, wrinkled and give off a citrus scent... but they're green! Don't try to taste them though, they're not edible! Now try and imagine yourself driving Nuvolari's racing car, guiding it down the path: once you pass through the tunnel, you'll find yourself in the Giardini Nuovi. Here you'll find some new treasures: the seeds of maple trees. You're recognise them because they have wings and if you throw them into the air they will come whirling back down, just like helicopters!

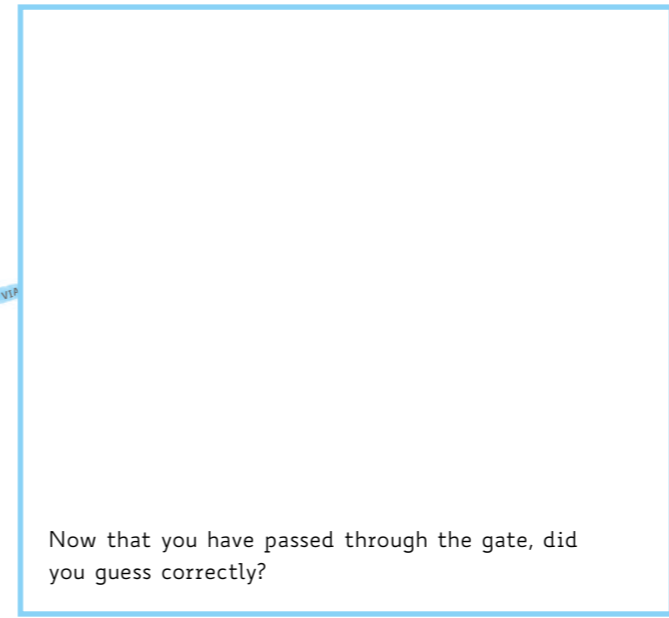


AN ALMOST SECRET PASSAGE

Giardini Valentini, corso Vittorio Emanuele II 52

There are some magical gardens which only appear to those who want to visit them... If you want to get inside, go to no. 52 Corso Vittorio Emanuele II (Palazzo Valentini), walk in and go across the small courtyard: you'll soon find yourself in an urban forest with tall trees that are hidden by the buildings in the city centre. To leave, you can also perform a magic trick: explore the park, cross it and you will see another gate appear.

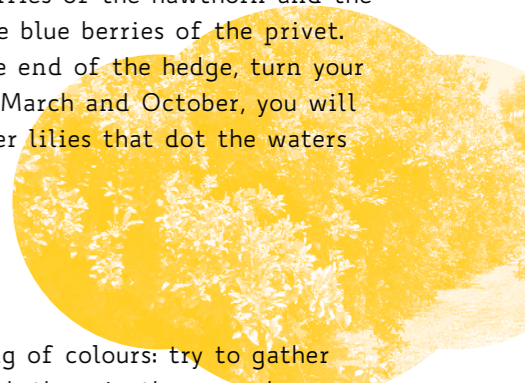
ACTIVITY Before opening the gate, stop and imagine what you might find on the other side. Draw it here below!



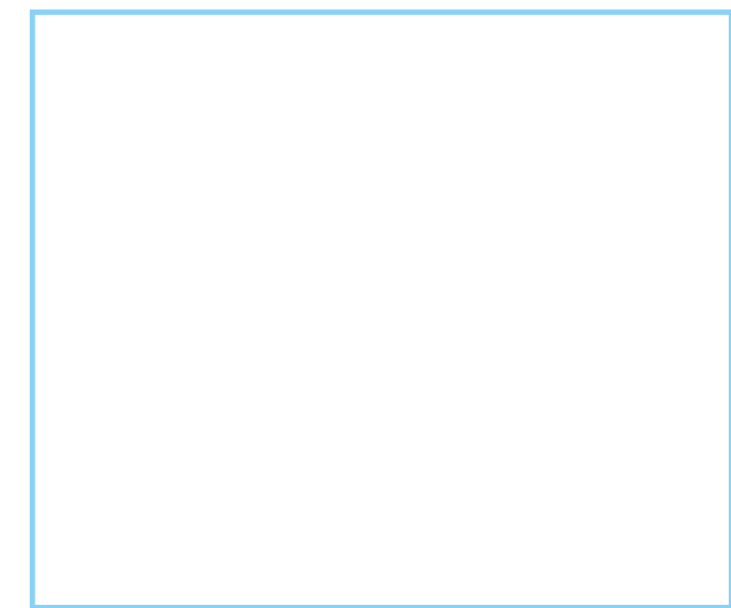
A COLOURFUL HEDGE

Lungolago Mincio and Lungolago dei Gonzaga

If you venture along the hedge that borders the Lago di Mezzo, you will come across a great number of plant varieties which cover the lake in different shades as the seasons change: during springtime, you can see the feathery bloom of the smoke-tree (*Cotinus coggygria*), the fragrant white flowers of the hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna* e *Crataegus oxyacanta*) and the fruit of the mulberry tree; during summer, there are wild cherries and mirabelles; in autumn, you will see the red berries of the hawthorn and the cornel tree, and the blue berries of the privet. When you reach the end of the hedge, turn your back and, between March and October, you will see the yellow water lilies that dot the waters of the lake.



ACTIVITY speaking of colours: try to gather some berries and rub them in the space here below. You'll soon see that you can get the colours red, blue and black from things other than pens and pencils... Mix together the stripes of colours you got from the berries: what other shades can you see?



A PLAYING FIELD FROM THE PAST

Piazza Lega Lombarda, known as piazza Pallone

Ask somebody from Mantua where Piazza Lega Lombarda is and they would have to think about it. But if you ask them where Piazza Pallone is, you'll see a smile pop up on their face! The garden square, the old entrance to Palazzo Ducale, was a field used to play the game pallone. Of course, it was a very different game to modern football and it seems as though nobody knows exactly what the rules were. Try to invent some rules as you walk through the shadow of the lime trees.

