



UNIONE EUROPEA



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REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA  
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

# Church and monastery of San Nicola di Trullas

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology



## ■ *Hortus Simplicium*

In the Middle Ages, and in addition to being religious centres, monasteries played an important role in social and cultural life. In particular, Benedictine monasteries combined prayer with manual work, and contributed to the economic recovery of the countryside areas.

In fact, the monks were the only people who still held classical knowledge and managed to pass on centuries of this knowledge through their *scriptoria*, where copywriters copied ancient Greek and Latin texts. Botanical and medical sciences were also preserved and monks dedicated themselves to the growing of herbs and the study of herbal medicine in their cloistered gardens.

The *Hortus simplicium* (the Simple Vegetable Garden) was the garden where herbs and plants were grown (and are still grown today) that were used for their medicinal properties, and takes its name from the term *medicamentum simplex*, i.e. Medicinal herbs.



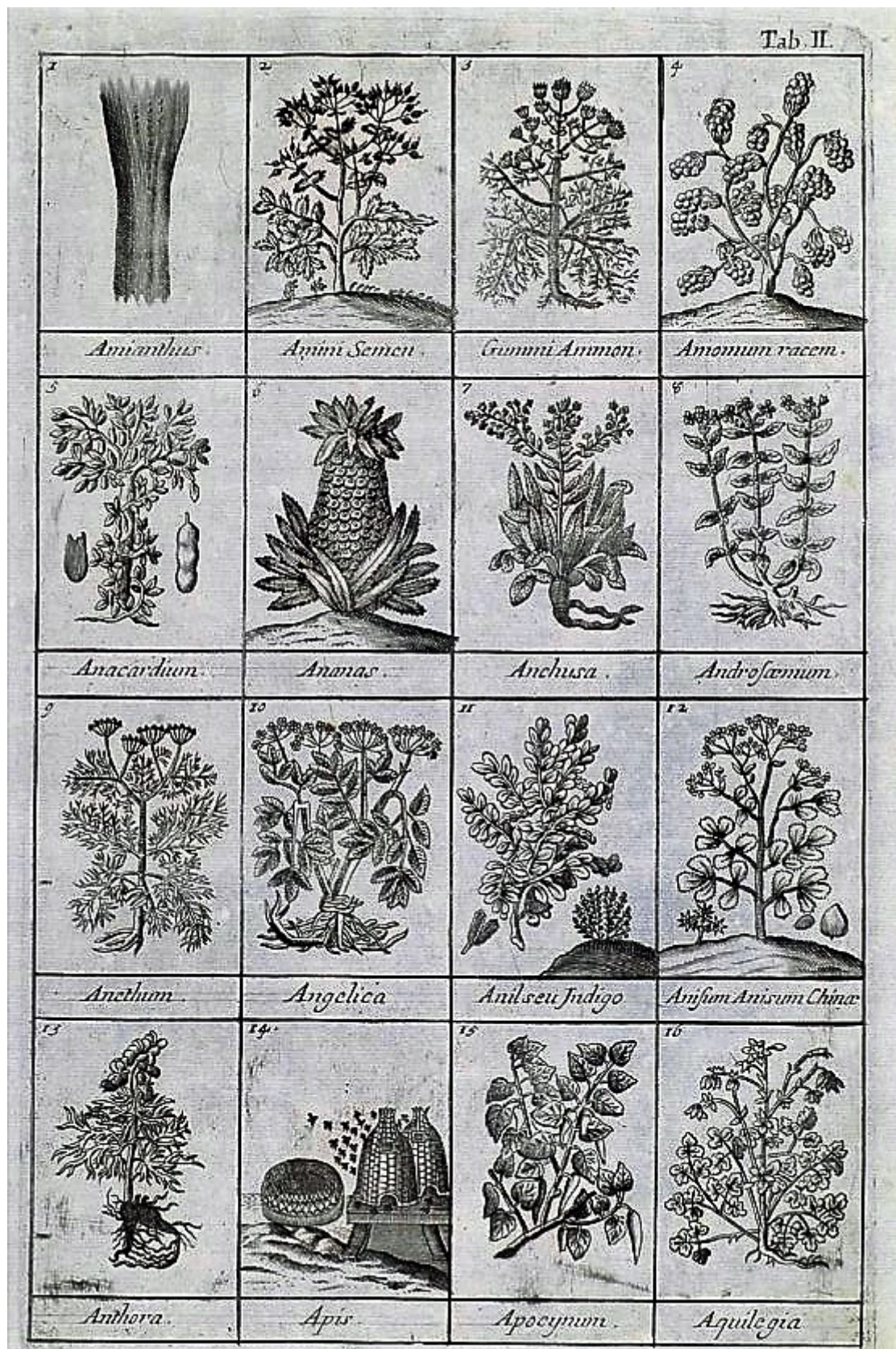
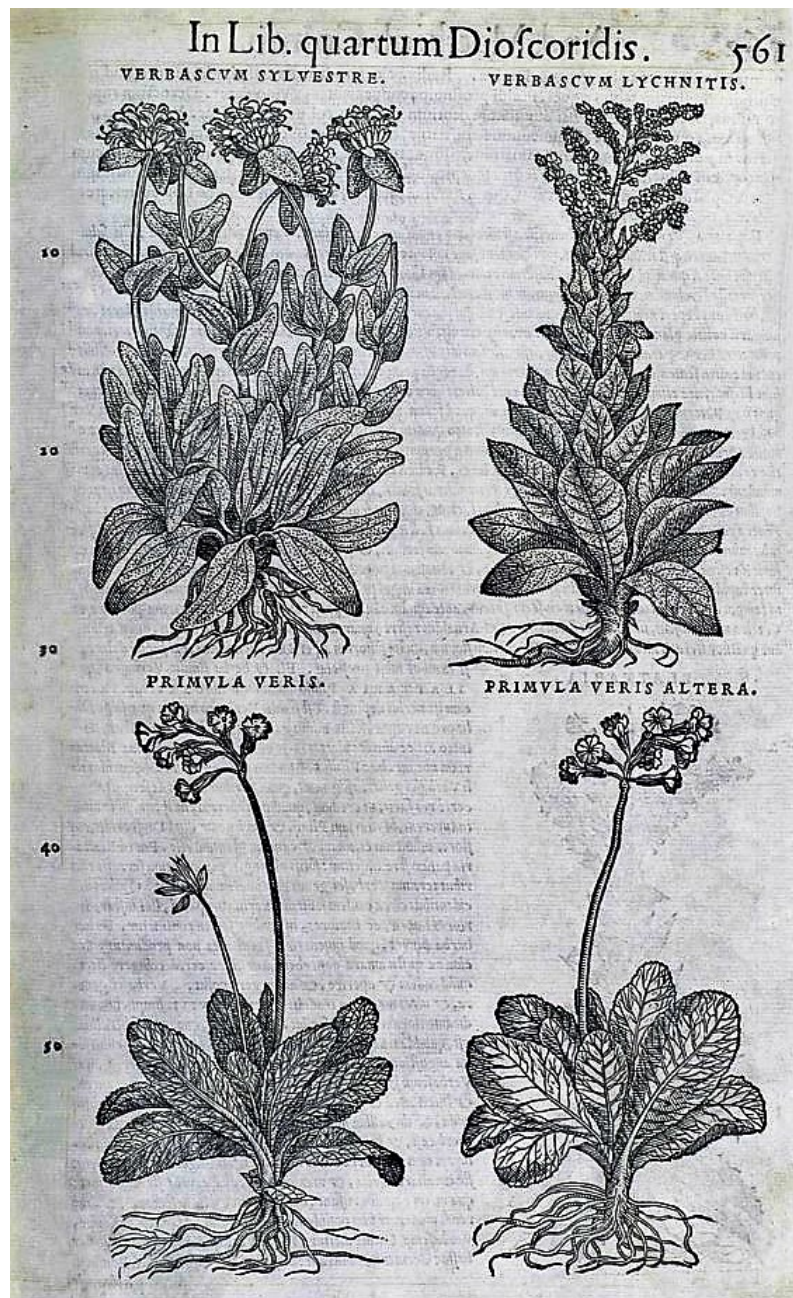


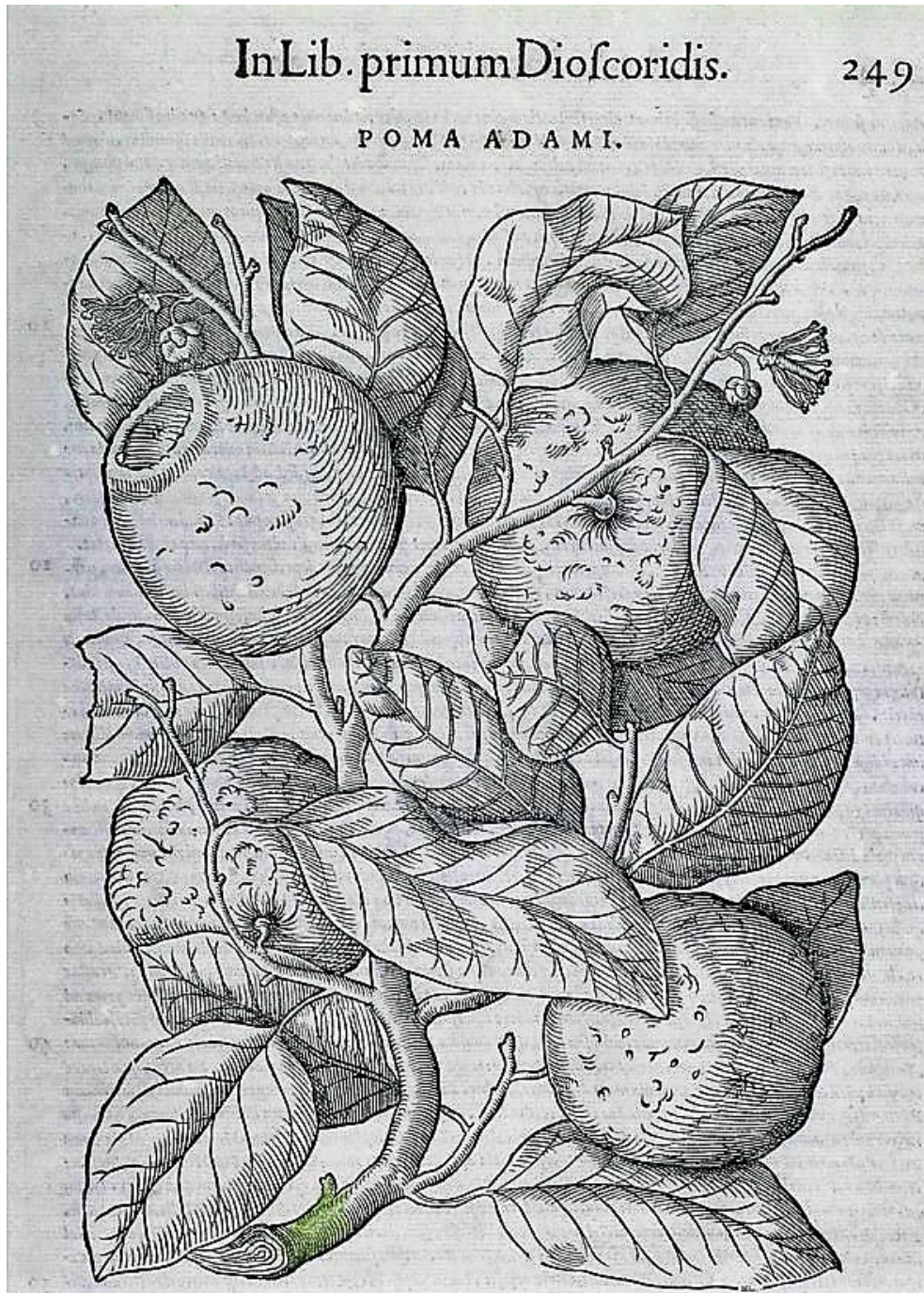
Fig. 1 - Trattato universale delle droghe semplici (from Lemery 1751, Table II).

For centuries in the monasteries, in rooms called “officina” (from where the word “officinalis” for plants comes), these herbs were dried and preserved in special cupboards, before being used to make medicinal products: essential oils, syrups, teas, ointments and creams were obtained from the leaves, flowers, roots and bark steeped in alcohol or infused in water. Hospices and hospitals soon sprung up alongside the monasteries, where the sick, needy and pilgrims could find assistance and care.



**Fig. 2** - *Verbascum silvestre*, *Verbascum Lychnitis*, *Primula veris*, *Primula veris altera*  
(from Matthioli 1558, Lib. IV, chapt. XCIX, p. 561).

Precious studies and cataloguing of medicinal plants carried out by the monks allowed a rapid development of pharmaceutical science, also spread through depicted catalogues of all the herbs, called *Hortuli*, in which the characteristics and virtues of each plant were illustrated.



**Fig. 3 - Poma Adami** (from Matthioli 1565, Lib. I, chapt. CXXXI, p. 249).

## ALOE CVM FLORIBVS.



Fig. 4 - *Aloe cum floribus* (from Matthioli 1565, Lib. III, chapt. XXII, p. 684).

## ■ Credits

Coordination Prof. Rossana Martorelli

Deepening card edited by: Dr. Maria Grazia Arru, Dr. Alberto Viridis, Dr. Cristiana Cilla, Dr. Silvia Marini, Dr. Marco Muresu

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## La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



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