Cultivating the City in Early Medieval Italy

Food-growing gardens first appeared in early medieval cities during a period of major social, economic, and political change in the Italian peninsula, and they quickly took on a critical role in city life. The popularity of urban gardens in the medieval city during this period has conventionally been understood as a sign of decline in the post-Roman world, signalling a move towards a subsistence economy. Caroline Goodson challenges this interpretation, demonstrating how urban gardens came to perform essential roles not only in the economy, but also in cultural, religious, and political developments in the emerging early medieval world. Observing changes in how people interacted with each other and their environments from the level of individual households to their neighbourhoods, and the wider countryside, Goodson draws on documentary, archival, and archaeological evidence to reveal how urban gardening reconfigured Roman ideas and economic structures into new, medieval values.

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Cultivating the City in Early Medieval Italy

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Like gardens, books flourish in fertile ground. This project began in Berkeley and was transplanted to London and finally brought to fruit at Cambridge. At home with a small baby, on maternity leave in California, I read Novella Carpenter’s *Farm City: The Education of an Urban Farmer* (New York, 2010), an account of her transformation of an empty lot near her house in Oakland into a food-producing garden for her neighbourhood. As a Visiting Scholar in the Department of History, University of California, Berkeley in 2012–13 (with the baby in Cal’s amazing Haste Street Child Development Center) I surveyed the charters of early medieval Italian cities and kept seeing gardens and orchards. The parallels between the Bay Area’s urban deserts and alternative foodways and the transformations of early medieval Italian cities were striking to me then, and the research carried out at Berkeley and elsewhere in the USA on urban ecology and community agriculture was – and continues to be – very exciting. I remain enormously indebted to Maureen Miller for her friendship and intellectual support at Berkeley and to the Department for making available the resources of the University to me as a Visiting Scholar. My garden project was put to one side when I returned to London and teaching at Birkbeck, but my colleagues there in the department of History, Classics, and Archaeology asked so many good questions about the subject and provided such helpful answers to my questions as they arose that with their stimulus and encouragement I applied for a Research Fellowship from the Leverhulme Trust to concentrate on the project. I am very grateful to my colleagues at Birkbeck for encouragement, solidarity, and for always having a moment to answer a question, especially Fred Anscombe, Jen Baird, Christy Constantakopoulou, Serafina Cuomo, Rebecca Darley, Filippo de Vivo, Catharine Edwards, Vanessa Harding, John Henderson, Lesley McFadyen, Jessica Reinisch, Jan Rüger, and Frank Trentmann. The Leverhulme Trust has been generous in awarding me the grant, which afforded me a year away from teaching to develop interdisciplinary and unconventional research. This research fellowship coincided with
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In writing this book I have been reminded of how much of what we do—and what we believe is possible or what we ought to do—is shaped by what our families did. In my family there is a habitus of urban gardening. My father was a top-notch urban gardener in South Texas, growing sweet-corn, green beans, tomatoes, and excellent jalapeño peppers behind the garage, and oranges, lemons, and bananas in the yard. My maternal grandmother had been a farmer and when she retired to the city, she converted the yard of her house to an extraordinarily productive food garden with the best peas, carrots, and rhubarb in Calgary, Canada. My own efforts have never matched their successes, but from childhood I understood not only that it was possible to have a place to grow fresh food next to your house, but also that it was a very good thing. Wendy Davies, Lisa Fentress, and Marina Hamilton-Baillie have provided admirable examples of vegetable gardens and given me advice on planting, pruning, pea-sticks, and purslane. My family has been very forbearing about this project. This project began with my daughter’s infancy and has been around for all of my son’s life thus far. At various times they both have made toy computers to play with as too often they have seen me typing away on mine. John and Mary Pinkerton have countless times gracefully stepped in to look after babies while I’ve been away or in the library; my research life would hardly exist without their help. My partner, Mark, has heard too much and too often about the vexations of early medieval charters, the gaps in the archaeobotanical record, my perennial problem of needing books which are in a different city or another country, and many other laments about research and book-writing. With gratitude, appreciation, and love, I dedicate this to him.
Terms and Measurements

**Pertica** (measure of length): either 5.25 m (12 piedi of 43.75 cm each)\(^1\) or 2.057 m (6 piedi).\(^2\) For the documents discussed in this volume, I believe that Ruggini’s measures are more likely and have used 5.25 m (see ‘Berengar’, p. 212, note 147).

**Tavola** (measure of area): in (modern) Milan is 0.273 acres (4 sq. *trabucchi*).\(^3\)

**Iugerus** (measure of area): 2,500 sq. m. \(^4\)

**Decimata** (liquid measure): used in late antique and early medieval sources from central Italy, uncertain capacity

**Salma**: a measure or load (as in saddle-pack) of liquid, grain, or salt, in Southern Italy = 270 L.\(^4\)

**Libra** (measure of weight): Roman period = 328.9 g; Carolingian *libra*: 489.6 g

**Modius** (variable unit of capacity and also of area):

- Capacity: a volumetric dry measure, about 8.7 L (6.7 kg) of wheat.\(^5\) As a point of comparison, the ration from late Roman *annona* was 5 *modii* per month (33 kg of wheat, equalling 1.1 kg per day) per citizen.\(^6\)
- Area: the amount of land which could be sown with one *modius* of grain. Dimensions varied from region to region, Pierre Toubert calculated that in Lazio in the central Middle Ages, 1 *modius* : 2,300 sq. m.\(^7\)

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\(^1\) Cracco Ruggini, *Economia e società nell’Italia annonaria*, p. 505.
\(^2\) Zupko, *Italian weights and measures*, p. 189.
\(^3\) Zupko, *Italian weights and measures*, p. 306.
\(^4\) Zupko, *Italian weights and measures*, p. 252.
\(^6\) Durliat, *De la ville antique*, p. 113, note 195.
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>circa</td>
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<tr>
<td>ch.</td>
<td>chapter</td>
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<td>d.</td>
<td>deceased</td>
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<td>reg.</td>
<td>ruled</td>
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<td>s.</td>
<td>century</td>
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<td>ASRSP</td>
<td><em>Archivio della Società Romana della Storia Patria</em>.</td>
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*CDB* *Codex diplomatico barese*, 19 vols. (Bari, 1897–1971).

*CDC* *Codex diplomaticus cavensis*, ed. Michele Morcaldi, Mauro Schiani, and Silvano De Stefano, 8 vols. (Naples, 1873–93).


*CDV* *Codex diplomatico veronese*, ed. V. Fainelli, 2 vols. *Monumenti storici* ns 1, 17 (Venice, 1940).


*CIL* *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, ed. Th. Mommsen et al., 17 vols. (Berlin: 1842–)
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**Cod.Per.**  

**CSS**  

**DBI**  

**Dial.**  

**Dionisi**  

**Dioscurides**  

**DGL**  

**DKar I**  

**DLoI**  

**DLo**  

**DMLBS**  

**DOI**  

**DOIII**  
List of Abbreviations

**DUL**

**ILS**

**Jaffé**

**LP**
The lives of the eighth-century popes (Liber pontificalis): the ancient biographies of nine popes from AD 715 to AD 817, trans. R. Davis, Translated texts for historians 13, rev. ed. (rev. ed. Liverpool, 2007);

**LSA**
Last Statues of Antiquity, http://laststatues.classics.ox.ac.uk

**LTUR**

**LTUR Suburbium**

**Manaresi**

**MEC 1**

**MEC 14**
Medieval European Coinage with a catalogue of the coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Vol.
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MÉFR Mélanges de l’École Française de Rome

MGH Monumenta Germaniae Historica

AA Auctores antiquissimi

Capit. Capitularia regum Francorum

Conc. Concilia

DD Diplomata

EE Epistulae

Form. Formulae Merovingici et Karolini aevi

LL Leges

SS RG Scriptores rerum Germanicum in usum scholarum

SS RL Scriptores rerum Langobardum

SS RM Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum

Poet. Poetae Latini


PG Patrologiae cursus completus: series graeca

P.Ital Die nichtliterarischen lateinischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445–700, ed. Jan Olof Tjäder, Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet i Rom, 8o XIX, 1, 2, 3, 3 vols. (Lund and Stockholm, 1954–82). Transcriptions have been given from ChLA.


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**RF**

**RN**

Rossini

**RS**
Il Regesto sublacense dell’undecimo secolo, eds. L. Allodi and G. Levi (Rome, 1885).

**SMCM**

**SMVL**

**TSMN**
Figure 1 Map of places discussed.