

FLORA ANTICA – A DATABASE OF TREES OF ANCIENT ITALY

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The “Flora Antica” database was developed within a doctoral research project and tries to collect information on trees and their remains to be found in Italy during the first centuries of the Roman Empire (1st – 3rd centuries AD). The focus of the research is Pompeii with its extensive possibilities to combine archaeobotanical and iconographical sources; further evidence comes from Rome and research throughout the Italian peninsula. Very important references for plants in the Empire are also ancient literary sources such as Pliny the Elder, Dioscorides and Columella, to name only a few. These three types of testimonials – archaeobotany, literary sources and iconography – are the basis of the “Flora Antica” database.

The data is presented online at www.flora-antica.de. The website allows viewing of the information according to modern botanical nomenclatural systematics. As much information as possible is presented for each species: introductions on the archaeobotanical finds (seeds and fruits, wood and on-site pollen), knowledge about the referred plant in ancient times according to Latin and Greek sources, as well as its representation in ancient frescoes. All archaeobotanical entries cite the responsible scientists; bibliographical hints are also often given for identifications in art. If possible, the archaeobotanical data is presented in plant use categories like food, medicine etc.; these categories are comparable to those found within literary sources. As a database like “Flora Antica” can only be a “work in progress”, further input on literature or representation in art is welcome.

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