

Thematic workshop 5.

The Italian Botanical Society and Botanic Gardens - raising awareness of conservation of plant diversity.

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The Italian Botanical Society was founded in Florence in 1888 with the aim of developing and promoting research in Plant sciences in Italy. Botanic Gardens were instituted in Italy almost five centuries ago as true scientific structures evolving over the centuries from static conservatories of living collections to true reservoirs of biodiversity. Besides their role in support of scientific research their educational and didactic activities - open to a large public - are of fundamental importance. The Botanical Society, sensitive to the problem, supported a working group interested in pre-university education. During these years a network was established involving Botanic Gardens as educational agencies, various organizations, local bodies and schools; some of the results were discussed during joint meetings or published in the *Informatore Botanico Italiano* in order to encourage plant-based education. Among others, the experience of the oldest Italian Botanic Garden - that of Padua - is here emphasized.