

The Local and the Global: The Flora of the Israeli Garden

TAL ALON-MOZES*

The floral palette of the Israeli garden is a rich and diverse mosaic, similar to the human mosaic of the country's population. Indigenous species mentioned in the Bible bloom in the Israeli garden alongside species that were introduced hundreds of years ago and that are now considered residents, as well as new introductions from around the world. This floral palette is not incidental, but is the product of the development of Israeli garden culture, a process not innocent of ideology, politics, economy and society.

*Dr Tal Alon-Mozes, Senior Lecturer,
Technion, Israeli Institute of
Technology, Faculty of Architecture
and Town Planning, Haifa, Israel.
Email: artal3@bezeqint.net*

THIS PAPER CHARACTERISES the floral palette of the Israeli garden from the beginning of the twentieth century to date, and examines the relationship between its local and global components. It addresses aspects relating to culture building, local identity and the politics of the Israeli garden's formation.

The Hebrew garden project comprised a part of the development of a comprehensive Hebrew culture for the emerging new society in the Land of Israel. Various cultural agents found it relatively easy to promote the use of local flora in decorative gardens because since it was mentioned in the Bible and held a special significance for the new settlers. Concurrently, other cultural agents strongly recommended the assimilation of a universal repertoire of plants, similar to the assimilation of global repertoires in other cultural fields, such as clothing, music and theatre.

The analysis of design works and professional literature from the beginning of the twentieth century reveals these two tendencies in the emergence of the Israeli garden. Since the establishment of the State of Israel (1948), introductions became more prominent because of massive immigration from around the world, global trade and the development of new plant introduction technologies. The local flora did not disappear but, rather, was assigned a special place in symbolic sites such as historical and commemorative gardens and areas of national significance. In a museum-like pattern these native plants were removed from their natural environments and replanted in man-made environments.

The development of the floral palette is studied through the analysis of various proposals from 100 years of gardening, the presentation of statistical data, and the detailed examination of local and global representative species. The layers of meaning attributed to the garden's flora in the past and present are discussed; the process of acceptance/rejection of species and the overt and hidden politics behind these processes are exposed.