

**FORESTRY AND HEALTH: FORESTAMI ACADEMY,
AN INITIATIVE BY FORESTAMI IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PRADA GROUP
TO EXPLORE THE CORRELATION BETWEEN NATURE AND PHYSICAL AND MENTAL
HEALTH TOGETHER WITH INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS**

The second event focused on current urban ecosystems and the positive effect of biodiversity in cities on human health

*Talks by Francesco Ferrini,
Professor of Arboriculture and Tree Cultivation at the University of Florence, and
Federica Marando, Scientific Officer at the European Commission - Joint Research Centre*

Milan, June 21, 2024 – This morning, a new meeting was held at the Salone D’Onore of the Milan Triennale, as part of the second training year of the **Forestami Academy**, the initiative created by **Forestami in partnership with the Prada Group** to promote and disseminate the scientific foundations, principles and values of urban forestry.

The second edition – entitled **“Urban forestry: well-being and health”** –, was structured in three meetings coordinated by **Maria Chiara Pastore, Professor at the Politecnico of Milan and Scientific Director of Forestami**, with some of the most eminent national and international experts on green spaces and forestry in attendance, focusing on the **correlation between nature and physical and mental health**.

The **training day** entitled **“Why are urban forests so important for us? Talking about trees to talk about health”** was another successful event for the organizers.

Lorenzo Bertelli, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility of the Prada Group, commented: *“We are proud to see the positive reaction of the city of Milan to these initiatives, which always have a high attendance, a tangible sign of the constant interest of the citizens towards the issues that the Academy addresses.”*

The speakers included **Francesco Ferrini**, Professor of Arboriculture and Tree Cultivation at the University of Florence; and **Federica Marando**, Scientific Officer at the European Commission – Joint Research Centre.

Francesco Ferrini’s talk analyzed the extensive and varied **biodiversity in cities and investigated its role in the balance of a world that is constantly changing**.

“Cities, often seen as the epicenter of environmental destruction, are, in reality, hothouses of development and refuges for many species. From the hawks that nest on top of our monuments, to the plants that grow in the cracks in the pavements of our cities, life finds a way to flourish among the concrete and asphalt. Biodiversity in cities is an essential key to making urban environments more sustainable and resilient. Protecting and enhancing this green, “wild” treasure is not just a responsibility, but a necessity for a future lived in harmony with nature”, stated **Francesco Ferrini, Professor of Arboriculture and Tree Cultivation at the University of Florence**.

The variety of coexisting urban species also plays a crucial role in the destiny of humanity: it actually mitigates the effects of climate change, improves air quality and contributes to the psychological well-being of citizens.

Next, Federica Marando explored how **current urban ecosystems contain a variety of elements (forests, parks and agricultural areas) that play an important role as habitats for animal and plant species, but also for human health**.

“The urban ecosystem is a relatively new concept, especially against the backdrop of European and global policies, but one that is increasingly recognized. Indeed, certain characteristics of cities

can have a crucial impact on preserving biodiversity and improving living conditions for citizens”, explained **Federica Marando, Scientific Officer at the European Commission – Joint Research Centre.**

Her talk centered on providing an **overview of European policies on biodiversity and health, with a focus on urban areas.** Several recent studies were presented, which demonstrated the positive impact of urban ecosystems on the quality of life of citizens.

Both experts agree on the importance of being familiar with and valuing the enormous potential of biodiversity in urban settings, and its fundamental role in making cities more sustainable and resilient places.

The Academy’s final event of the year will take place on October 25 at the Parco Nord Milano, and will consist of an outdoor “Forest Bathing” lesson, the Japanese practice of total immersion in nature, to test out the skills acquired during the training course. In the context of the growing and widespread efforts of many cities around the world toward the reestablishment of urban forests for the ecological rebalancing of metropolitan areas and to create conditions for better population well-being, the search for solutions capable of offering opportunities to improve well-being through contact with the forest ecosystem becomes a necessary challenge for those who intend to promote the enhancement of urban forests.

“Forests are beneficial to our health. It is no longer just individual and personal experience that recognizes this, but a large body of studies and research that, since the 80s, has increasingly focused on the effects that time spent in forests and woodlands has on the human organism, such as reducing blood pressure, cortisol levels and improving memory and concentration.” said **Maria Chiara Pastore, Professor at the Politecnico of Milan and Scientific Director of Forestami.**

Prada Group

Prada Group is socially engaged to contribute to the sustainable development of the communities and stimulate the cultural debate in all its forms of expression. The Group partners with recognized players and international entities to develop educational and training programs, value talent, support scientific research, foster women’s empowerment, and promote local culture and artistic heritage. Prada Group operates in the luxury sector through the Prada, Miu Miu, Church’s, Car Shoe, Marchesi 1824 and Luna Rossa brands.

Forestami

Forestami is a project based on a research by Politecnico di Milano and promoted by the Metropolitan City of Milan, the Municipality of Milan, the Regional Council of Lombardy, Parco Nord Milano, Parco Agricolo Sud Milano, ERSAF (Regional Agency for Agricultural and Forestry), Fondazione di Comunità Milano Città, Sud Ovest, Sud Est e Adda Martesana Onlus, Fondazione Comunitaria Nord Milano, Fondazione Comunitaria del Ticino Olona, Università degli Studi di Milano and Università degli Studi Milano Bicocca. The aim is to increase the natural heritage and to plant 3 million trees (corresponding to the 5% increase of the tree canopy cover) by 2030 in Milan and in the Metropolitan City of Milan, in order to clean the air, improve living conditions in this area and counter the effects of climate change.

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Speaker biographies

Francesco Ferrini has been Professor of Arboriculture and Tree Cultivation at the University of Florence since 2005. He has published around 380 scientific and technical works (including 5 popular books in Italian and a scientific book in English), presenting research results at more than 300 conferences both in Italy and abroad. He held the post of President of the Italian Society of Arboriculture from February 2005 to February 2011, and was a member of the Board of Directors of the International Society of Arboriculture from 2005 to 2016. He received international recognition from the International Society of Arboriculture in the form of the L.C. Chadwick Award for Arboricultural Research in 2010 and the ISA Award of Merit in 2019. Member of the Academy of Georgofili since 2002, the Academy of Colombaria since 2021 and the Italian Academy of Forest Science since 2022. Member of the Scientific Committee of the Climate and Sustainability Foundation and Coordinator of the Scientific Committee of the GEA (Green Economy Agriculture). Coordinator of the Scientific Committee of the Accademia Italia di Biofilia. Coordinator for the University of Florence of the PNRR CN5 Spoke 5, which is part of the National Biodiversity Research Center, he is currently President of the Distretto Rurale Vivaistico-Ornamentale of the province of Pistoia.

Federica Marando is an ecologist and is currently a researcher at the European Commission – Joint Research Centre. She is involved in scientific support for European policies relating to natural and man-made ecosystems and restoring nature, specifically through the biophysical quantification of the ecosystems' conditions and the services they provide to man.