

DOMESTIC AND HANDICRAFT FOLK USES OF PLANTS IN THE AMALFI COAST (SOUTHERN ITALY)

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Ethnobotanical uses are decreasing in modern societies and this process is often due to technological instruments and tools that tend to replace traditional handicrafts. In the Amalfi Coast, many handicrafts are still produced, even if some are disappearing or probably completely disappeared.

Data on domestic and handicraft folk uses were collected through random semi-structured interviews between april 2007 and september 2009. interviews were carried out with people born or who have been living most of their life in the amalfi coast, after prior informed consent was obtained.

During the field work, 214 interviews were performed. personal data on the informants and on uses of local plants were recorded, plants cited by informants were collected and classified. Interviews were conducted following the ISE code of ethics (ISE, 2006). All plants cited by informants have been taken into account, even when only mentioned by a sole informant. Ethnobotanical uses of the Amalfi coast were compared to other similar uses in italian regions and mediterranean countries.

Plants used for handicraft are in total 43, with 115 different uses. In agriculture, due to the isolation of many orchards and vineyards, some practices are still present, as for example the cultivation of small trees of *Salix alba* L. at the edge of terraces and fields: its branches are still widely used to tie plants to stakes which are commonly of chestnut wood. *Castanea sativa* Miller is indeed used both for pergolas in vineyards or citrus orchards and its branches are used as stakes for vegetables. Nowadays, some uses are obsolete: for the covering of orchards in the past were used mainly *Quercus ilex* L. branches, which are nowadays replaced by plastic black nets.

Some uses are widespread in other italian region: *Spartium junceum* L. is used to make brooms in Lucania, Marche, Trentino, Calabria (Guarrera, 2006) and in Sicily (Arcidiacono *et al.*, 2007) or the use of *Ruscus aculeatus* L. to make brooms as well. This plant is mentioned in Sardinia (Atzei, 2003), in Sicily (Arcidiacono *et al.*, 2007) and Lucania (Salerno *et al.*, 2005). On the other hand, a certain number of uses seems to be typical of the Amalfi coast: as for example the use of *Thymelaea tartonraira* (L.) All. subsp. *tartonraira* to make a particular broom to brush courtyards or the use of *Polystichum setiferum* (Forsskal) T. Moore ex Woynar for covering cover lemon orchards.

Recognition of the importance of non-wood forest products in developed countries has grown steadily in recent years (Novellino, 2007). Domestic and handicraft uses include different technological solution practiced with few tools and materials, which are disappearing, since new instruments are now easy to obtain from the market. However, this knowledge is worth to be protected as well, since it is part of a corpus of ideas and strategies and moreover, some traditional solutions and handicrafts are retained by local population more effective and practical than new commercial ones.

Some handicraft may be also reinvented and intended to the souvenir market sector: as for example the kitchen spoons or tools carved in *Acer opalus* Mill. subsp. *obtusatum* (Waldst. & Kit. ex Willd.) Gams wood or baskets made by *Castanea sativa* bark and fibers or *Olea europaea* L. branches and root suckers.

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